西方语言学丛书

语言学的人类学阐释

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

ALESSANDRO DURANTI

PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY,
UNIVERSIYT OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES

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出版说明

乔姆斯基的转换生成语法强调人类语言的普遍性，试图从语法原则与参数的高度揭开人类语言的普遍结构，更进一步揭示人类认知的奥秘。人类历史上似乎从未有哪一门学科如此富于创造性和挑战性，也很少有一种科学能够如此深刻地对相关学科产生如此广泛而深远的影响。这一理论在不断拓展的语料视野面前，在不断回应新思想方法的挑战过程中，不断地调整自己的思路和方法，跋涉了半个世纪，其所取得的成就不仅使语言学家激动和自豪，也令当代哲学、心理学、信息学、计算机科学、人工智能等众多领域的学者所瞩目。

乔姆斯基自称其理论远绍十七世纪法国普遍唯理语法。1898 年，马建忠在他的《马氏文通》后序中这样说："盖所见为不同者，惟此已形已声之字，皆人为之也。而亘古今，塞宇宙，其种之或黄或白，或紫或黑之钧是人也，天皆赋之以此心之所以能意，此意之所以能达之理。则常探讨画革旁行诸国语言之源流，若希腊、若拉丁之文词而属比之，见其字别种，而句司字，所以声其心而形其意者，皆有一定不易之律；而因以律吾经籍子史诸书，其大纲盖无不同。于是因所同以同夫所不同者，是则此编之所以成也。"马氏是留法的，普遍唯理语法对他的影响同样是深刻的。

不过，在中国，普遍主义的思想也就此昙花一现，很快就湮没在强调汉语特点的思路中。半个多世纪之后，转换生成语法逐渐为中国学者所知，可是很多人都认为它不适合汉语语法研究，只有在国外的学者在这方面做了些工作，取得了不少成绩。这种研究尽管还存在许许多多的问题，但至少可以说明，汉语研究同样可以走普遍语法的道路。

马氏的模仿是显然的。然而我们今天的研究就能肯定不是模仿了么？朱德熙先生曾经说："长期以来印欧语语法观念给汉语研究带来的消极影响……主要表现在用印欧语的眼光来看待汉语，把印欧语所有而汉语所无的东西强加给汉语。""我们现在在这里批评某些传统观念，很可能我们自己也正在不知不觉之中受这些传统观念的摆布。

这当然只能等将来由别人来纠正了，正所谓后之视今，亦犹今之视昔。”其言盖有深意焉。然而问题其实并不在于是否模仿，而在于模仿来的方法、视角是不是可以得出符合汉语事实的结论。反对模仿蕴涵着一个前提：即汉语与印欧语的结构没有相同之处。但是今天的我们对汉语的结构究竟了解了多少呢？

任何语言都有自己的特点，这一点毋庸置疑。但是不了解语言的普遍性，也就谈不上特点，也就无所谓走自己的道路。而且，在某一水平面上成为特点的规律，在更高或更深层的水平上也许就不成其为特点，而仅仅是普遍性的一种特殊表现而已。

当代社会文化领域中多元化是主流，当代语言学理论也趋于多元。在西方，形式语言学不大可能再如以往如此这般地波澜壮阔，而是进入一个相对平静的稳定发展的时期，语言的功能方面的研究已经占据一席之地。在未来的一段时期内，语言学将是一个酝酿期，为下一个重大突破作准备。而在中国，语言学在长期的“借鉴”之后，也在思考如何能够从汉语出发，取得重大突破，反哺世界学林。语言学发展到今天，又重新面临着路怎样走这一根本问题。

不管下一步怎么走，充分了解西方学者的成绩，借鉴他们的思路和方法无疑是必不可少的。特别是对于取得了如此重大成就的当代西方语言学，如果不能有正确的了解，无异于闭门造车，要想出门合辙，不亦难乎？

北大出版社多年来坚持学术为本的出版方针，我们愿意为语言学在新世纪的发展尽一分绵薄之力。为了推动我国语言学事业的发展，在总编张文定先生的主持下，我们将原版引进一批高质量的语言学专著和教材，命之曰“西方语言学丛书”，以飨学林。引进的作品将包括语音学、韵律学、句法学、语义学、语言史、词源学、方言学等各个领域；既包括宏观的理论研究，也包括重要问题的个案研究；既包括形式语言学的方法，也包括认知、功能等视角。但不管是哪一种，都是经过精挑细选，庶几开卷有益。

我们期待着中国语言学的新突破！

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In this innovative textbook Alessandro Duranti introduces linguistic anthropology as an interdisciplinary field which studies language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. He shows that it relies on ethnography as an essential element of linguistic analyses, and that it draws its intellectual inspiration from interactionally oriented perspectives on human activity and understanding. Unlike other current accounts of the subject, it emphasizes that communicative practices are constitutive of the culture of everyday life and that language is a powerful tool rather than a simple mirror of pre-established social realities. An entire chapter is devoted to the notion of culture, and there are invaluable methodological chapters on ethnography and transcription. The theories and methods of linguistic anthropology are introduced through a discussion of linguistic diversity, grammar in use, the role of speaking in social interaction, the organization and meaning of conversational structures, and the notion of participation as a unit of analysis.

Original in its treatment and yet eminently clear and readable, *Linguistic Anthropology* will appeal to upper-level undergraduate and graduate students.

To my students

PREFACE

Linguistic anthropology has undergone a considerable transformation in the last few decades. In this book I present some of the main features of this transformation. Rather than striving for a comprehensive treatise of what linguistic anthropology has been up to now, I have been very selective and often avoided topics that could have reinforced what I see as a frequent stereotype of linguistic anthropologists, namely, descriptive, non-theoretically oriented, technicians who know about phonemic analysis, historical linguistics, and "exotic" languages and can teach these subjects to anthropology students who may be wary of taking courses in linguistics departments. Rather than a comprehensive "everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-language-but-were-afraid-to-ask" for cultural anthropologists and other social scientists, this volume is conceived as a statement about contemporary research on language and culture from a particular point of view. This view is my own but it also echoes the work of a number of productive researchers in departments of anthropology, linguistics, applied linguistics, sociology, folklore, performance studies, philosophy, ethnomusicology, and communication. Whether or not they see themselves as doing linguistic anthropology, the researchers from whose work I extensively drew are all concerned with the study of language as a cultural resource and with speaking as a cultural practice, rely on ethnography as an essential element of their analyses and find intellectual inspiration from a variety of philosophical sources in the social sciences and the humanities. What unites them is the emphasis on communicative practices as constitutive of the culture of everyday life and a view of language as a powerful tool rather than a mirror of social realities established elsewhere.

The focus on the history, logic, and ethics of research found in this book is unusual in linguistics but common among anthropologists, who have long been concerned with the politics of representation and the effects of their work on the communities they study.

Like any other writer of introductory books, for every chapter, section, or paragraph I had to choose among dozens of possible ways of presenting a

concept, making connections with other fields, or finding appropriate examples from the literature or my own research experience. Simplicity of exposition and recognition of historical sources were often in conflict and I am aware of the fact that I have not given adequate space to many important authors and topics. In particular, I said very little about three areas that are traditionally associated with linguistic anthropology, namely, language change, areal linguistics, and pidgins and creoles. These and related topics are however dealt with in other volumes in this series such as Hudson's *Sociolinguistics* and Bynon's *Historical Linguistics*. I have also said relatively little about such classic pragmatic notions as conversational implicatures and presuppositions; these themes receive adequate attention in Levinson's *Pragmatics* and Brown and Yule's *Discourse Analysis*, also in this series. Finally, I hardly touched the burgeoning literature on language socialization and did not include the impressive body of work currently devoted to literacy and education. I hope that future volumes in the series will develop these important areas to the readers' satisfaction.

There is another way in which this volume complements the other volumes in the series, namely, in the attention given to culture and the methods for its study. I have dedicated an entire chapter to current theories of culture. I have also written two methods chapters: one on ethnography and the other on transcribing live discourse. Finally, I have discussed several paradigms – structuralist analysis, speech act theory, conversation analysis – from the point of view of their contribution to an anthropological theory of language.

The book is aimed at upper-division undergraduate courses and introductory graduate seminars on linguistic anthropology or (as they are often called) "language *and* (or *in*) culture" courses. Instructors who like challenges should be able to experiment with at least some of the chapters for lower division classes that deal with culture and communication. I have for instance used the chapters on theories of cultures and ethnography with some success with freshmen. I also believe that instructors can easily remedy whatever thematic, methodological, and theoretical lacunae they will detect in the book by integrating its chapters with additional articles or monographs in linguistic anthropology. Finally, all chapters are written to stand on their own. Hence, students and researchers interested in selected issues or paradigms should be able to read selectively without feeling lost.

When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Rome, one day I discovered a small library on the third floor of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. It was filled with books and journals about languages, many of which had names I had never heard before. As I became acquainted with the people who frequented that library – instructors, students, and visiting scholars from other parts of Italy or from other countries –, I also developed a sense of

curiosity for the knowledge contained in those rich descriptions of linguistic phenomena. My later experiences – as a graduate student, fieldworker, university researcher, and teacher – have not altered that earlier curiosity for linguistic forms and their description. In the meantime, I have also developed something new: a commitment to understanding language as the voice, tool, and foundation for any human experience. It is this commitment that I have tried to articulate in this book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the last twenty-five years I have ventured into a number of fields and paradigms, searching for a way of studying languages that would preserve the richness of linguistic communication as we live it and know it in everyday encounters. This book is my first attempt to put many of these strands together in a systematic way. Many teachers and colleagues have guided me in this unending quest, suggesting models of communication, cognition, and interaction that are increasingly sensitive to the fluid, co-constructed, constitutive force of language as a system of tools among other tools, stock of knowledge among other stocks of knowledge, semiotic resources among other resources, physical sounds or marks on paper among other physical objects in our lifeworld. At the University of Rome, in the early 1970s, I was fortunate to be around a group of young and innovative scholars who were shaping new ways of making connections between language, cognition and culture. Among them, it was Giorgio Raimondo Cardona who first introduced me to linguistic anthropology and encouraged me to work on my first article, on Korean speech levels. My graduate years in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Southern California coincided with what I regard as the golden age of that department and perhaps of linguistics in the US, when linguistics students and teachers with the most diverse backgrounds and interests easily conversed with each other and believed that no one paradigm could alone provide all the answers or should be used as a measure for the success of everyone's accomplishments. My two postdoctoral experiences, at the Australian National University, in the Department of Anthropology of the Research School of Pacific Studies in 1980–81, and at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition at the University of California at San Diego in 1983–84, opened up several new intellectual horizons, including an interest in new technologies for research and education, Vygotskian psychology, and Bakhtinian linguistics. During the 1980s, I held positions at the University of Rome, in the newly formed department of Studi Glottoantropologici, at the University of California, San Diego (Department of Communication) and at Pitzer College, where I taught courses

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on linguistics, computers as tools, and film theory and production. These appointments and the people I interacted with kept me intellectually engaged and hopeful during difficult years, when I wasn't sure I would be able to stay in academia. My appointment in linguistic anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1988 provided an ideal working environment that has recently culminated with the establishment of an interdisciplinary center for the study of language, interaction, and culture. It is quite obvious to me that this book is partly coauthored by the voices and ideas of the many scholars I interacted with in these and other institutions over more than two decades. Among them, I owe the most to one person: my wife Elinor Ochs, the most creative linguistic anthropologist I have ever met. From our fieldwork experience in Western Samoa to the postdoctoral fellowship at ANU and all the way to the more recent years together at UCLA, Elinor has shown me again and again how to transform primitive intuitions and precarious associations into stories that can be shared with an audience. I hope this book will be one of those stories.

A number of people generously gave me feedback on earlier drafts. Elizabeth Keating worked as my editor for my first draft, providing many crucial insights on content and format; Rowanne Henry, Jennifer Schlegel, and Diana Wilson gave me useful comments on several chapters; Jennifer Reynolds and Melissa Lefko Foutz helped me locate references. Special thanks go to Asif Agha and Lisa Capps for many detailed suggestions and positive reinforcement on my second draft. Finally, I owe a great deal to four colleagues who acted as reviewers for Cambridge University Press: Jane Hill (who carefully read and gave feedback on two drafts), Paul Garrett, Susanne Romaine, and Bambi Schieffelin. Their comments and questions made the text more readable and hopefully more useful. Any remaining shortcomings are, of course, my own responsibility.

The idea of this book came out of a conversation at the Congo Cafe in Santa Monica with my editor Judith Ayling in the Spring of 1992. She didn't know then how much work – including countless messages over electronic mail – this would cost her. I am very thankful to Judith for her encouragement and her wise decisions at different stages of this project.

The less obvious and yet most important help in writing this book came from my family. The warm and stimulating environment Elinor and I routinely enjoy in our house owes a great deal to our son Marco's affection, generosity, and unique thirst for learning. My parents' emotional and material support in running our household during the winter, when they come to stay with us in California, is invaluable. Between Christmas and Easter, I can afford to sit writing at the computer or reading an article only because I know that my mother is preparing a delicious dinner and my father is fixing the latest problem with the roof in some very original and inexpensive way.

This book is dedicated to the people that have made this effort meaningful, my students. In large undergraduate courses just as much as in small graduate seminars, I often perceive the overwhelming passion and determination with which many students implicitly ask for a lesson about language that could go beyond the rigid canons of academia and reach into the meaning of life. Needless to say, very rarely do I feel able to even come close to delivering such a precious message, but their confidence that I might do it one day is a reward for my efforts to communicate across generational and cultural boundaries. This book is a modest but sincere acknowledgment of their trust and an invitation to continue our conversations.

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