



BRILL

## *Book Review*



Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, R. M. W. Dixon, Nerida Jarkey (eds.), *The Integration of Language and Society: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2021. 408 pages, ISBN: 9780192845924.

Pragmatics and sociolinguistics research has long been interested in the interplay between language and societal dimensions. It understands language as both shaping and being shaped by social contexts. In every interaction, language is used to index, create, reproduce, and reinforce individualized and/or shared knowledge of contextual information, including both macrosociological categories (e.g., social stratification) and situational settings. Through analyzing texts, discourses and even speakers' metalinguistic comments, pragmatics and sociolinguistics scholars link linguistic forms to their pragmatic meanings, while relating the meanings to speaker identities, ideologies, norms, and moral order (Chen and Lee 2021; Kádár 2020). In addition, studies of grammaticalization provide insight into how specific lexical or morphological forms acquire pragmatic functions through conventionalizing their recurring use in certain contexts (e.g., Brinton 1996). However, when zooming further out for a wider view of the connection between language and society, we also wonder how the broad linguistic categories, such as lexical and grammatical systems, become the way they are in a language and what are the correlations between their typological patterns and societal properties. This edited volume explores these questions by surveying a variety of languages, including three Asian ones, two Oceanian ones, three Amazonian ones, one African language and blended use of multiple languages. Chapters endeavour to identify the 'integration' points between language and society as well as their 'disintegration' and 're-integration'.

It is worth highlighting two features of the book. First, it predominately focuses on revealing conventionalized connections between lexical and grammatical patterns and social dimensions. Unlike pragmatics and sociolinguistics which are interested in how conventional meanings are acquired, deployed,

or created in specific contexts, what the book attempts is to identify where language and society are likely to meet and thereby explains why the lexical/grammatical system works in one way than another. Second, the book seems to have a particular interest in less-spoken languages and their small speech communities, for example, endangered languages spoken by only a few villages. In comparison to large languages and their fast-evolving societies, the small-scale speech communities investigated in this book have provided the advantage of outlining the correlations between language and social aspects. In fact, many chapters include more anthropological accounts for the patterns identified than pragmatic analysis.

The book has a total of 11 chapters. In chapter 1, the editors “put forward inductive generalizations concerning recurrent correlations underlying the congruent, or mutual integration, of language and society” (p. 3). They summarize five linguistic patterns that are widely associated with six social dimensions (Table 1). Chapters 2 to 10 separately discuss one language and some of its variations. The last chapter (Chapter 11) examines mixed, emergent, and accepted language practices and their connections to specific local societies.

TABLE 1 Summary of linguistic and societal parameters (see also the table on p.32)

Linguistic parameters	Societal parameters
Reference classification	Relations within a community, social hierarchies, and kinship categorization
Types of possession	Social constraints (taboo, avoidance)
Directing, addressing	Principles of interaction, and attitudes to information and its sources
Information source	Beliefs, religion, spirits, and dreams
Speech styles	Means of subsistence, physical environment Role in language awareness, language engineering, and sensitivity to societal changes

In Chapter 2, Jarkey discusses the relationship between Japanese honorifics and the social concepts of in- and out-group. While admitting that a number of contextual variables, such as age and social status, play a role in Japanese honorific usage, the concept of in/out-group becomes decisive when making choices of referent honorifics. Jarkey explains the finding by referring to the historical changes that occurred in the Japanese regime and society, which include an increasing centralization in the pre-modern period and the

emergence of new power due to modernization. Notably, changes are still ongoing. The group membership indexed by Japanese honorifics is manifested into further indexical meanings (Silverstein 2003), indicating, for example, public context or good demeanor.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the national language (Dzongkha) and a dialect (Brokpa) spoken in Bhutan, respectively. Both have honorific morphemes derived from nouns of body parts. For example, in Dzongkha, the nominal root 'mi-' (person) can be replaced by an honorific root 'ku-' (body) and formulates the meaning 'life' (*kutshe*). In Chapter 3, Watters attributes the typology of honorific nouns and verbs to the Dzongkha ideology of harmony, which was promoted by the government to integrate modernization into traditional Buddhist culture. In contrast, the structure of honorifics in Brokpa was associated only with Buddhist values by Wangdi in Chapter 4. Their differences possibly have reflected the different social status of the two languages as being dominant or peripheral in Bhutan.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 9 examine two Oceanian languages, Dyirbal spoken in Northeast Queensland and Idi in New Guinea. In Chapter 5, Dixon focuses his discussion on the extinct avoidance style (*Jalnguy*), while, in Chapter 9, Schokkin's focus is on possessive markers. The avoidance style once used in Dyirbal before 1930 was employed in the context where an in-law presented. Its lexical system tended to be brief and vague, having a one-to-many corresponding relationship with vocabulary in modern Dyirbal. For example, when expressing recondite qualities, *Jalnguy* used only 'good' and 'not good' to cover them all. Although not explored in Chapter 5, the brevity and vagueness of *Jalnguy* expressions seem to be a result of the intended distance with in-law relationships. Chapter 9 divides possessive markers in Idi into 'close possessive' and 'distant possessive'. The choice of different possessive markers depends on a variety of social factors, such as alienability between possessor and possessee. Using distant possessive forms also takes into consideration the time of possession, death of possessee, sickness or injury, and physical distance. The close possessive is, on the other hand, used with close kin, central inherited attributes, and abstract concepts (e.g., knowledge). In addition, legitimated languages (e.g., father's language) can be closely possessed, while languages that were picked up occasionally combine with distant possessive markers. The variety of factors considered is argued to have a connection with the New Guinea society, where small-scale multilingual ideologies and ideologies of language purism intertwined. In actual use, it is thus not a surprise to find that distant possessive expression may be used to describe the language that one grows up with, because the language does not match the speaker's tribe identities.

Chapters 6 to 8 examine three Amazonian languages, namely, Tariana, Murui-Muina, and Zamucoan, and their varieties, respectively. Despite their geographical affiliation, the three languages have saliently different gender ideologies and relevant expressions. In Tariana, Aikhenvald finds that women were stereotyped as dangerous outsiders. This is an ideology that can be attributed to the marital convention that the wife moves to the husband's village and should teach their children the father's language. Only those knowledgeable and important women were treated as honorary men, who can then be referred using non-feminine prefixes and pronouns. In Murui-Muina, Wojtylak finds that gender was assigned morphologically to some animals based on human judgments of their harmfulness. Regardless of their natural genders, harmful animals were assigned to be masculine, while harmless ones were feminine. Hence, gender appears to be a social category instead of a biological division to Murui speakers. In Zamucoan, speakers share egalitarian gender ideologies. They assign genders to all their nouns and nouns are attributed to mythology where characters of the story have the same gender. For example, a man who invented drinking tubes becomes a drinking tube and hence this noun ('drinking tube') is masculine. It is worth highlighting that new mythological stories are still being made in Zamucoan to accommodate their gendered nouns. As Giucci argues in Chapter 8, Zamucoan observes the 'reversed' influence that language has on society.

Besides the differences found in gender ideologies, the three Amazonian languages share some similarities. Their classifiers tend to reflect the community members' awareness of the physical environment and lifestyle. Shaman plays a special role in their ways of describing the world, such as what can be 'seen' and what can be 'heard' spiritually. Meanwhile, the three languages have all experienced an extent of 'disintegration' and/or 'reintegration' due to the introduction of English and Spanish to this area and their societal changes. For example, in Murui, the young generation now has little knowledge of the avoidance style, which was once used in hunting activities.

In Chapter 10, Mous examines two social concepts, the concept of togetherness and the non-chronological concept of time, and their connections with the Iraqw language, a language spoken in Northern Tanzania. The concept of togetherness is found to be manifested in the names of community activities, songs and curses as well as in measurement words, nouns, verbs, adverbs and subject markers. The non-chronological concept of time was reflected in the lack of absolute time expressions and the use of spatial demonstratives for the temporal organization.

The last chapter, Chapter 11, turns the attention to multilingual practices and semiotic behaviours that emerge in the context of waiting. Stuck in a

waiting space, speakers often do not have existing common-ground knowledge to build a coherent conversation and are exposed to the potential of encountering random communications. On several occasions, such as a restaurant on the border, a club on an island visited mostly by foreigners, Storch, the chapter author, finds that mixed and emergent multilingual practices, together with semiotic behaviours, construct 'in-between' cultures and social meanings, such as belonging. Language in this context thus became hospitable, inclusive and generous for all participants and newcomers to the waiting space.

Overall, the book has presented a variety of discussions on the integration points found between linguistic typology and society. It serves as a good starting point for typology studies to extend their interest to social meanings encoded in the lexical and/or grammatical patterns, and for pragmatics and sociolinguistics studies to broaden their research focus to larger linguistic units. Meanwhile, pragmatics and sociolinguistics studies can develop from its general arguments to explore how specific forms in a typological category change against the language-society correlations found in this book. Linguistic anthropologists could be interested in the many insights provided by the chapters into several endangered languages and their societies. If skipping those professional and recondite literature reviews, the book also offers an enjoyable reading for ordinary readers who would like to peek into episodes of languages in different societies.

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