Words, Worlds, and Material Girls
Words, Worlds, and Material Girls
Language, Gender, Globalization

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Introduction
Language, gender and economies in global transitions:
Provocative and provoking questions about how gender is articulated

Bonnie McElhinny

1. Gender and language as terrains for working through globalization

It is striking how thoroughly the debates in socialist, Marxist, materialist, global, postcolonial and transnational feminism have bypassed studies of language and gender. From older theoretical debates about the unhappy marriage of feminism and Marxism and the relative significance of production and reproduction to newer debates about the relative value of affirmative action, comparable worth campaigns and stratified reproduction, from older debates about the value of household work to more recent discussions about the taylorization of work in cleaning agencies and transnational domestic labor migration, from discussions of the gender-segregation of work and the feminization of work in the service economy to the effects of structural adjustment, from what helps facilitate the emergence of feminist activism to debates about imperialism and colonialism and their effects on the elaboration of gender and sexual identities both in the colonies, the neocolonies and the metropole – much of this goes largely uncited, and unaddressed in the body of literature on language and gender, which is now about 30 years old. This is hard to account for as an empirical gap. Instead, some of ways that we define gender as we undertake linguistic studies may be at stake (see McElhinny 2003). To begin thinking about how we understand gender, it is helpful to start with historian Joan Scott’s comprehensive essay, “Gender, A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” which, though it is now two decades old, remains one of the most nuanced approaches to the study of gender. She argues that any definition of gender must recognize that it is both “a constitutive element of social relationships based on
perceived differences between the sexes” and “a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (1986: 1067). When understood in the first sense, gender encompasses four elements: (1) culturally available symbols (like Adam and Eve or witches), (2) normative concepts (which are embodied in religious, educational, scientific and political doctrines), (3) forms of subjective and intersubjective identity, and (4) forms of social organization in families, labor markets, education, and politics. Studies of subjective and, especially, intersubjective identities have long been the strength of feminist work in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (for a few key works in studies of language and gender see Bucholtz and Hall 1995; Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Bucholtz, Liang and Sutton 1999), and the papers in this volume continue to attend to these, but in general they also go beyond this emphasis to recognize that to understand social meaning “we need to deal with the individual subject as well as social organization and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how gender works, how change occurs” (Scott 1986: 1067).

What does it mean to study gender as “a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated” (1986: 1069)? Why might understanding gender in this way be particularly helpful for studying language now, in today’s version of a global economy? Scott’s formulation picks up on one of the most important lessons of feminist thought, namely that gender categorization can structure nodes of thought whose thematic subject is not explicitly gendered at all (cf. Sedgwick 1990). Private/public, nature/culture, and rational/emotional are some famous binary categories, with implications for gender categorization. The inverse is also true, though perhaps less widely investigated: in some situations where gender (and other social categories) seem to be the explicit subject matter, other kinds of social structurings may also, or even more centrally, be at stake. Edward Said (1978) has famously argued that the sexual submission and possession of Oriental women by European men stands in colonial discourse for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, such that sexual images are construed as the iconography of rule (though see Stoler 1991 for a critique of this position). Gender often becomes a key tool for signalling differentiation, and is used as a form of legitimation, especially at moments of significant social change. In this, it is not so different from language. When entities are understood as outside human political or economic activity, as part of the natural or divine order, they are often used to justify and rationalize political power (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Gal and Woolard 2001). To vindicate political power, the reference must seem sure and fixed, outside
human construction. Gender and language have, individually and together, been summoned up to undergird or legitimate other social relations, as when Edmund Burke’s attack on the French revolution was built around a contrast between ugly sans-culottes hags and the more “natural” softly feminine Marie Antoinette (Scott 1986), or when nineteenth century scholars of African linguistics suggested that the way a language handles grammatical gender helps establish its place in a racial hierarchy (Irvine 2001). Nakamura (2004, 2005) shows how debates about how Japanese women “naturally” speak undergirded, as they arose from, debates about gender and occupation in Japan after World War II. The American occupying army – like many other imperial occupiers – proposed to liberate women and others from “traditional” educational and economic systems with, for instance, a co-educational school system. The ideology of Japanese Women’s Language had become a symbol of the Japanese imperial tradition during the war, and was criticized afterwards as a key factor preventing women from gaining social status. Given the difficulties of building counterarguments that supported imperial tradition or argued against equality, the opposing discourse simply argued for Women’s Language as an outcome of women’s nature. Women were thus construed as socially equal, but biologically different. Debates about gender and language during the U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II were debates about whether or how to modernize gender, as they naturalized certain ideas about how language and gender each work. They were also, however, debates about modernity and tradition, nationalism and the meaning of military occupation. We can see why questioning the significance of language or of gender is often questioning an entire political edifice. The prevalence of naturalizing accounts of language and of gender may explain some of the challenges that have faced scholars in linking up studies of language and gender, history and political economy, since we are not ourselves immune from such ideologies (Irvine and Gal 2000). Several papers in this volume (Yang, Inoue, Weidman, Gaudio) suggest what it means to try to study gender and language as a terrain on which other issues are worked through. Yang’s research (2006 and this volume) on language, gender and neoliberal restructuring in China and Inoue’s on the language of Japanese schoolgirls (2006 and this volume) show, in a particularly compelling way, how language and gender can become an idiom through which other social transitions are contested and constructed (see also Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Poovey 1998).
Gender always seems to be available as a tool for signaling differentiation; nonetheless, there are some points at which gender is foregrounded as the idiom through which difference and inequity is understood. Rather than assuming the centrality of gender, in ways which can often isolate it from other axes of differentiation, the key analytic dilemma such moments present are precisely WHY gender has become so prominent. Some scholars have argued that gender and ethnicity and perhaps also sexuality have been markedly foregrounded in recent years, while class has faded in salience. Linguist Deborah Cameron (2000a) has noted that the rise in interest in self-help books dealing with gender conflict may be linked to the shift from an industrial to a service economy, and linked also to the tensions that arise as men take on “feminine” work. Literary critic Frederic Jameson (cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 10–11) is worried that gender and “race” have become the focus for comment precisely because they are so easily reconciled with the demands of liberal ideology. Journalist Naomi Klein (2000) argues that the putatively progressive focus on sexual and gender diversity in identity politics, on multiculturalism and gender-bending, dovetails neatly with, and has been quickly harnessed by advertisers and corporations, in ways that obfuscate poverty, global economic inequities, and class. Diversity, she argues, turns out to be a great tool for marketing to multiple consumers in a global market. Provocatively, Klein argues that the “abandonment of the radical economic foundations of the women’s and civil rights movements by the conflation of causes that came be called political correctness successfully trained a generation of activists in the politics of image, not action” (2000: 124).

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner has argued that gender and ethnicity have come to carry a “surplus antagonism” over and above whatever historical and structural friction they embody in their own terms (1991: 185). Ortner (1991), in a study of her own high school graduating class, points out that though most Americans do not talk about class, class becomes displaced onto other categories. Because hegemonic American culture takes both the ideology of mobility and the ideology of individualism seriously, explanations for non-mobility not only focus on the failure of individuals (because they are said to be inherently lazy or stupid), but shift the domain of discourse to arenas that are taken to be ‘locked into’ individuals – gender, race, ethnic origin, age and so forth (171). This locking in is understood in biological terms. What Ortner explains in political and national terms, the anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff, like Klein, have recently discussed in economic and global terms. They argue that the flexible relation
or labor to capital has eroded the conditions that give rise to class opposition as an idiom of identity and/or interest (2001: 11). If it is true that class conflict takes place on the terrain of nation-state, the global dispersal of manufacture fragments class consciousness and class alliance (12). Then, they argue, “gender and race, even if not in themselves explicit vehicles for [an autonomous discourse of class], are frequently “reinvested” with its practical dynamics and express its stark antagonisms” (15). Perhaps, then, social scientists and activists need to “find class.” This is the approach taken in a long, dogged, brilliant article by Ben Rampton (2003), as he tries to find linguistic evidence of class consciousness amongst British youth who themselves focus on gender, ethnicity and sexuality when talking about identity. But the Comaroffs would argue otherwise. They think we need to develop a richer understanding of why and how gender, race, ethnicity and generation have become such compelling idioms of identification and categorization, mobilizing people for and against reigning hegemonies (2001: 11). Charles Briggs’ work (1997, 2004; Briggs with Briggs 2003) on the mobilization of gender and “culture” during a recent cholera epidemic and infanticide trials in Venezuela does precisely this. He shows how structural adjustment, which often weakens financial support for state-run health, education and welfare institutions led to a defensive discursive stance in national legal and medical institutions in Venezuela, at the cost of those thrust to the margins of that state. He considers these effects by analyzing media debates and legal, medical and police discourse about a purported epidemic of infanticides which serves to exoticize and demonize certain indigenous women; he also analyzes medical and political rationalizations for the high rate of death of indigenous people in a predictable and preventable cholera epidemic. “Cultural” difference becomes the terrain on which political and economic inequities are naturalized.

Whether, indeed, and when gender, ethnicity, generation and sexuality have become foregrounded is the first question that the wide range of national and social contexts considered in this volume helps us to consider. Papers in this volume analyze language, gender and globalization from 10 different national sites: Catalonia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Nigeria, Vietnam, Philippines, Tonga and the United States. Where and when they are foregrounded, is it true that these identities carry “surplus antagonism”? What does this look like, on the ground? How do we give gender and ethnicity their due, not reducing them to other categories of analysis, as was so often done in earlier Marxist work, while trying to discern when and how they are bearing a burden over and above their own weight? We need at
least to push beyond an approach which asks how political economy affects
gender or language, a formulation which construes each of these terms as
independent. Instead, we need to consider how gender, language and politi-
cal economy are articulated, that is, how certain notions of language and of
gender are produced through certain theories and practices of political
economy (see also Scott 2000: 79), as well as how certain ideas about poli-
tical economy are produced through certain theories and practices about
gender and about language.

2. Studies of language and globalization

In much recent scholarship, globalization has been offered as an explana-
tion for the changing ways that people understand interactions and social
relations. Harvey (1989) conceptualizes globalization as changing experi-
ences of space and time, shaped by the periodic crises of capitalist over-
accumulation. He argues that the Fordist regime of mass production of
standardized products in Western economies became so successful and
efficient that it began to overproduce, leading to the lay-off of workers and
a reduced demand for products. A post-Fordist regime of flexible accumu-
lation has emerged in its place, with a focus on flexible labor processes,
production arrangements, and consumption focused on niche markets vs.
mass production, all of which have transnational implications (see Lancas-
ter (2003: 320) for a useful chart comparing some of the key social forma-
tions and practices associated with Fordist and post-Fordist regimes). Oth-
ers less wedded to the language of economic determinism (cf. Inda and
Rosaldo 2002) also note the ways economic changes have been linked to
changes in the flow of capital, people, commodities, media and ideologies.
These changes are often linked to changing understandings of the global
and the local. Giddens (1990: 64) defines globalization as “the intensifica-
tion of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a
way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away
and vice versa.”

If the focus on intersubjective accounts of how gender works in socio-
linguistic studies has not always fully opened linguistic studies of gender to
studies of political economy, we can also argue that recent studies of politi-
cal economy focused on global issues have often seemed bereft of gender
and linguistic analysis. Freeman (2001) asks what the implications are for
the fact that the most frequently cited “theoretical” treatises on globaliza-
tion (Appadurai 1990; Hannerz 1996; Harvey 1989; Featherstone 1990; Robertson 1992; Waters 1995) ignore gender as an analytic lens (Sassen 1998 is a significant exception), while many local studies, labeled, not uncontroversially, as “empirical,” do focus on gender. How might globalization be understood differently, if gender is taken seriously? Do we get a different take on globalization if we center on language?

We need to begin, however, by noting that it would be a mistake to fix the definition of globalization too quickly. “Globalization” is best understood as a keyword, in the sense originally elaborated by Raymond Williams (1976). It is a site at which the meaning of social experience is negotiated and contested. Lexical labels are one kind of contested representation. Indeed, rather than being dismissed because they are minimal, this minimalism itself requires explanation: how do complex, contextually nuanced discussions get summed up in, entextualized through, a single word, like globalization and terrorism and risk (see Miskimmin, this volume) or fundamentalism (see also Collins and Glover 2002)? How do words become compacted doctrines? How do key terms and concepts circulate, become coopted, or embody critique (Grewal and Kaplan 1994: 2)? Marchand and Runyan (2000) argue for talking in terms of global restructuring rather than globalization to signal the fact that the processes being discussed are multidimensional, multispeed, disjunctive and indeterminate. Tsing offers a similar caution, arguing for carefully considering the ways that a global frame allows us “to consider the making and remaking of geographical and historical agents and the forms of their agency in relation to movement, interaction, and shifting, competing claims about community, culture and scale” (2002: 456). Grewal and Kaplan (1994: 10) argue for a critical discursive approach to some of the theoretical and terminological debates over the relative advantages and disadvantages of centre-periphery, global-local and transnational, emphasizing that we need to ask who is using these terms, where, to whom, and why are they useful. They argue that the distinction of centre-periphery (linked to Wallerstein’s influential notion of a world-system), like other binary distinctions such as colonizer-colonized or dominator-dominated, may have the advantage of accounting for conflict, history and asymmetry in world history, but nonetheless tends to sneak in a Eurocentric perspective by suggesting that the “centre” is the key mover and shaker in world affairs, as it obscures the complexity and variability within each of the categories so labeled. In particular, it can obscure inequalities (including those linked to gender) in each category. Global-local, another binary formulation that has emerged to talk about world-scale so-
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Conflicts, seems to address some of those problems because it is not so clearly linked with spatial boundaries and geographical regions, and it encompasses unequal relations within as well as between nations and regions. However, Grewal and Kaplan (1994: 11) point out that “what is lost in an uncritical acceptance of this binary division is precisely the fact that the parameters of the local and global are often indefinable or indistinct – they are permeable constructs. How one separates the local from the global is difficult to decide when each thoroughly infiltrates the other. Global-local as a monolithic formation may also erase the existence of multiple expressions of ‘local’ identities and concerns and multiple globalities.” Furthermore, a reification of these differences may overlook precisely the ways in which labeling a perspective as “local” – the process of localization – could be a way of dismissing it (cf. Briggs’ 2004 nuanced work on the way that any simplistic or dismissive understanding of indigenous people’s discourse about the origins and impact of a recent cholera epidemic in Venezuela may not fully take into account the ways in which their views are global, too). And the focus on global-local, despite claims to the contrary, may not, in the end, fully take into account complex social divisions (including gender) on the “local” level. The debate about “globalization” also often assumes, though it need not do so, ethnocentric/Eurocentric overtones, since it focuses on the homogenizing effects of the West, or the question of assimilation or opposition to the West.

There can, sometimes, be curious collusions between neoliberal and critical (including Marxist) discussions about capitalism’s extension when the movement of capital seems inevitable, when agency seems to belong mostly to capitalism, and when the appearance of capitalism seems to taint all as capitalist. Certain varieties of neoliberalism and of Marxism often make capitalism’s penetration of new markets, and areas of life, seem unstoppable, varying only in whether this is seen as cause for celebration or lamentation. Fairclough (2000), however, points out that an assumption of the inevitability of “globalization” is part of the ideology of neoliberalism, and sets out to unpack how this impression is created in the speeches and documents produced by the Blair government in the U.K. Gibson-Graham (1996) considers the ways that “globalization scripts” and “rape scripts” share not only a lexicon (the terminology of “penetration” and the opportunities to tap “virgin” markets) but also a narrative about how power works, as an act of non-reciprocal penetration, after which something is lost, never to be regained (see Freeman 2001 for a helpful critical overview of this argument). To challenge metaphors of monolithic discourses about global-
ization is to challenge monolithic understandings of capitalism’s form and meaning, and the inevitability and invulnerability of commodification, market incorporation, proletarianization, and multinational invasion as dominant social processes. In their fine analysis of the semiotics of route maps in in-flight magazines, Thurlow and Jaworski (2003) point out that the magazines are not just global in their themes and format, but globalizing, in that they have a “constitutive role in the processes of globalism and the discourses of globalization” (591). The world is presented as already globalized in these magazines, in a way that naturalizes that assumption or that hope. The maps show the airlines appropriating the world in webs of commercial influence, a world in which often and oddly enough individual countries are not represented by colour-coding. The papers in this volume resist reifying the “global” and “local”, in favor of considering how ideologies of globalization and localization shape the politics of inclusion or exclusion on the terrains of gender and of language.

3. Organization of this volume

This volume is organized into four sections, each of which takes up and investigates some of the key questions thrown up in debates about what globalization means and does. Scattered Hegemonies includes papers which take up the question of what hegemony might look like in new configurations of political and economic power in Tonga, China, and for Aboriginal groups in Canada. Emerging into History includes papers which investigate the role that language played in contests over modernity, nationalism, colonialism, and cosmopolitanism in the early 20th century in India, Japan and the Philippines, as they offer examples of what a historical linguistic anthropological approach might look like. Studies of multilingualism have long been one of the key sites for the study of language, gender and political economy. Multilingualism, Globalization and Nationalism considers the ways that what language and what nationalism mean may change during moments of significant industrial restructuring, heightened immigration and national disruption due to war in Canada, Catalonia and Vietnam. Chapters in Commodities and Cosmopolitanism challenge the idea that globalization means homogenization by interrogating the meanings that global commodities and worldliness have in interactions in the China, Tonga and the U.S. Many of the papers address their topics in ways that could easily fall under other section headings.
3.1 Scattered hegemonies

Susan Philips (1998) has recently challenged linguists studying institutional discourse to move beyond strictly Gramscian approaches to hegemony in nationalist contexts to an approach which thinks about how language and power are organized across institutions and groups, both within a nation and transnationally. A number of papers in this volume (Philips herself, Yang and Miskimmin, as well as Gaudio and Besnier) take up ethnographic perspectives on language, gender and “scattered hegemonies.” Scattered hegemonies is a notion developing by the feminist literary theorists Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. They argue that if feminist political practices do not acknowledge transnational cultural flows, feminist movements will fail to understand the material conditions that structure women’s lives in diverse locations. If feminist movements cannot understand the dynamics of these material conditions, they will be unable to construct an effective opposition to current economic and cultural hegemonies that are taking new global forms. Without an analysis of transnational scattered hegemonies that reveal themselves in gender relations, feminist movements will remain isolated and prone to reproducing the universalizing gestures of dominant Western cultures” (1994: 17). To do this, we need to address the relationship of gender to a number of different hegemonic forces, which are also differently hegemonic: global economic structures, patriarchal nationalisms, “authentic” forms of tradition, local structures of domination, legal-juridical oppression, and even certain approaches to feminism (1994: 17). Analyzing scattered hegemonies thus requires analyzing multiple, overlapping and discrete oppressions in ways attentive to transnational flows.

Philips’ own chapter in this volume takes up this (and her own) challenge by considering how the marked disjuncture between the symbolic capital of women engaged in traditional and highly valued Tongan practices might serve to obscure the economic disadvantage of being a woman engaged in these very activities. To do this, she analyzes how the language of Tongan women who participate in a koka'anga, a traditional women’s work group that produces large pieces of decorated bark cloth (ngatu), is marked by their position within national and transnational economies. Tonga’s economy relies heavily upon remittances from overseas migrants and sales taxes on products purchased with this money. Women in Tonga who produce ngatu are interpolated into a global economy both through sale of their products and through exchanges with Tongan women overseas, for whom the procurement of ngatu and its use in ritual gifting and ex-
changes is an important way to continue to be Tongan. For the women who stay in Tonga, the exchanges are an important way to gain access to Western manufactured goods and to sustain the ties that keep the remittances coming, though the amount of money earned from making ngatu is modest. Philips considers the ways that love songs and sexual joking told during the work itself establish moral ideologies for the dilemmas women face in a village markedly shaped by transnational labour migration.

In her chapter for this volume, Yang documents the forms that neoliberal discourse takes in China, a society which still also pays homage to socialism and draws on socialist discursive forms, as she considers the ways that the state’s over-emphasis on gender tends to downplay class frictions which are intensified by economic restructuring. A number of scholars (Afshaar and Dennis 1992; Beneria 1992; Kingfisher 2002; Thomas-Emeagwali 1995) have pointed out how welfare state reform and structural adjustment policies since the 1980s have accentuated the feminization of poverty, in both the global north and the global south, by cutting back on funds for state bureaucracies, health and education. In general, these studies have focused on “Western” welfare reform or structural adjustment policies in countries of the “South.” But China presents a distinctive case, since the transition to neoliberal policies is also a transition from a Maoist planned economy to a Dengist market economy. Yang considers how the focus on women’s liberation, a centerpiece of the communist gender program since the 1920s, has been replaced by a rationalization of women’s unemployment as liberatory. The former ideology of equality is presented as resulting in “unnatural” burdens on women who had to bear the double shift of work and household tasks. Yang tracks how dominant ideologies supportive of neoliberal restructuring are legitimated in public discourses and in institutional practices, even as this leads to massive layoffs of women (over 60% of the workers laid off in recent reforms are women), and how these ideologies are understood and contested by the women who are affected. She examines media narratives about “reemployment stars” (women who succeed as entrepreneurs) and contrasts this with personal narratives about the increasing difficulty in finding work and mounting economic hardship told by women from a factory. Her analysis does not simply argue that there has been a rapid and sudden change in discursive forms and ideological stances (see also Gal and Kligman 2000 for critiques of ‘transition’ discourse in Eastern Europe); instead, she offers a careful, nuanced analysis of some of the continuities between communist forms of political rhetoric and institutions and some of the more recent versions.
One of the contributions that social studies of language can offer studies of globalization, as I mentioned above, is to consider precisely how keywords become sites of contestation. Hugh Mehan (1996) has pointed out that in a variety of kinds of conflicts proponents attempt to capture or dominate modes of representation; they attempt, that is, to make them hegemonic. When they are successful “a hierarchy is formed in which one mode of representing the world … gains primacy over others, transforming modes of representation from an array on a horizontal plane to a ranking on a vertical plane” (253). Miskimmin (this volume) unpacks the keyword risk as it is used in pre-school programs for Aboriginal children in Toronto. She shows how implicit and explicit re-definitions of risk by Aboriginal participants challenge medical, individual and psychological understandings of risk, and replace them with political, economic and cultural understandings. Aboriginal Headstart programs have the dual, and perhaps contradictory, aims of preparing Native students for participation in mainstream schools and educating them in Aboriginal heritage. Oddly, as Miskimmin notes, these preschool programs are run by Health Canada; indeed the very fact that an educational program is situated under a health and medical rubric is evidence of historical and continuing colonial interventions into Aboriginal practices as a kind of “racial uplift,” with certain linguistic, medical and hygienic practices being closely linked to integration (see also Pujolar, this volume). One of the hallmarks of neoliberal political and economic restructuring has been the assumption that it is the primary responsibility of individual actors acting rationally – not the government – to manage the risks involved in modern life and social transitions (Inoue 2007). Health Canada draws on the long established connection between risk and medicine, especially as it has been elaborated in epidemiology research, to specify which participants are most in need of the program. For Health Canada, labeling individuals as at risk mandates a certain kind of intervention, while measuring how high risk people are enables objective measurement of problems defined as individual problems (e.g. learning difficulties, emotional and behavioral problems, mental or physical disabilities, health problems, physical, sexual or psychological abuse, neglect, teenage pregnancy, exposure to peri-natal stress, juvenile delinquency, death of a parent, parental substance abuse). At best these problems are highly decontextualized from community concerns. Aboriginal participants define risk differently, in ways that are explicitly critical and suspicious of the value of mainstream medicine and education. The different definitions of “at risk” contribute, Miskimmin argues, to the failure of the program to actively enlist community members’ participation in the
school, as they show the different ways of life actively being contested in federal policy and aboriginal practices.

3.2 Emerging into history

It is important to underline that many remain cautious about attaching global only to recent economic and political developments, in the way the frame “globalization” sometimes does. “Globalization” can erect stereotypes about the cultures and nations of the past as consistent and self-contained (Tsing 2002). International and transnational movements of people, goods and ideas have a long history (Wolf 1982), and some of the more recent developments can be linked, in complex but direct ways, to earlier colonial and imperial ventures (as Miskimmin’s and Philip’s work, this volume, also show). A number of chapters in this volume challenge any simplistic characterization of the contemporary moment alone as “global” by considering the ways that notions of modernity and global circulations of technology and knowledge have shaped language and gender at earlier moments in the 20th century, often with continuing implications for today. More importantly, however, they suggest the need for developing richly historical and genealogical approaches to the study of objects often assumed, occasionally even reified, in sociolinguistic studies, as they attend to the rich tools for textual analysis that sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology offer. These studies go beyond a focus on the social construction of gender or language or identity. They take on the critique that historical anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot has offered of constructivism: “[c]onstructivism’s dilemma is that while it can point to hundreds of stories that illustrate its general claim that narratives are produced, it cannot give a full account of the production of any narrative” (1995: 13).8 Constructivism is not, Trouillot argues, fully attentive to sociohistorical processes, and “tracking power requires a richer view of historical production than most theorists acknowledge” (1995: 25). These papers are precisely interesting in considering how certain categories emerge into history (see also Bauman and Briggs 2003; Kuipers 1998).

Weidman’s chapter examines how new ways of speaking and singing, as well as new ideologies about voices, were enabled by new economic and political formations and new technological innovations in South India. She considers how the female voice became central to the idea of South Indian music as a high cultural art form that was seen as representative of uncolo-
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naturalized Indianness in the early 20th century. She charts how the construction of a “classical” music tradition for South India—generally described and naturalized as a “revival” of such traditions—was part of the ideological work of middle-class nationalists intent upon forming a sense of Indianness over and against the West, and upon elevating an India seen as degraded by centuries of foreign rule. It is frequently the case that in colonial contexts women are used to represent tradition, resistance, or the inability to modernize. The status of women was and is seen as a sign of the modernity of a particular state, and practices deemed oppressive to women (harem, veiling, female genital circumcision, arranged marriages) were and are used to justify imperial interventions. In nationalist ideology which was shaped by, but also contesting, colonial rhetoric the idealization of (certain) women and (certain) women’s practices was often thus closely associated with the preservation of tradition and respectability. The devadasi system, a system in which women were dedicated to music and service in Hindu temples, was seen as a site where both women and music were degraded and perhaps prostituted; traditional music was to be made respectable again by associating it with respectable (read: middle-class) women. She challenges any simple-minded understanding of public performance as power, instead showing the ways that women’s performances can be seen as a strategic response to powerlessness; though they sang in public, they generally did not speak. Her essay raises thoughtful theoretical and methodological questions about how scholars can write such a history of voice, and points out the need to draw the interdisciplinary resources of linguistic anthropology, ethnomusicology, and technology studies into studies which do not treat voices as a natural means of self-expression, but rather ask how voices, and ideologies about them, arise.

Inoue’s work (this volume, and 2002, 2003, 2006) also looks at the emergence of a new social category, the Japanese schoolgirl, at the turn of the 20th century and the linguistic ideologies associated with her.9 As in southern India, the treatment of women and girls was seen as central to establishing a modern nation-state. In Japan, modernization was seen as a preemptive strike against the Western attempts at colonization that were underway in many other Asian countries in the early 20th century. Girls were incorporated into the mandatory state education system in order to be educated as “good wives and wise mothers” who would help raise modern citizens and thus help build a modern Japan. Male intellectuals wrote extensively about the speech of Japanese schoolgirls, describing speech forms that have since become identified as “women’s language” in Japan. Discuss-
sions of verb-ending forms became a form of metapragmatic containment of schoolgirls. By focusing on the nonreferential aspects of speech, they suppressed the referential voice of girls, and produced the dismissive effect of girls who were frivolous, irrational, incoherent, garrulous, lazy and vulgar. Inoue’s chapter notes that the contemporary discourse of Japanese women’s language erases this historical emergence to construct women’s language as an essential and timeless part of culture and tradition. Inoue’s essay, like Weidman’s, explores the conditions of possibility for being heard and cited, by analyzing intellectuals’ descriptions of school girls, but also by considering the way these accounts are embedded within a variety of projects of modernity, including language modernization, the construction of state ideas about womanhood, and the place that Japan was seen to hold over and against the West. Like Yang and Weidman, Inoue shows how gender is a terrain on which other debates are worked through. Inoue argues that in the surge of commentaries about the strange sounds coming from Japanese schoolgirls’ mouths at the beginning of the 20th century, the schoolgirl was an empty signifier, functioning as a sign to the degree that she represented something other than herself. The focus on the behaviors, including and especially the linguistic behaviors, of these Japanese schoolgirls appeared when there was significant concern about whether Japan would be held up against Western standards and found wanting, as well as when concerns were rampant about whether Japanese civilization and morality could withstand Western influence.

If Weidman and Inoue’s essays focus on the politics of audibility and visibility in the context of struggles over modernity – on what convergence of forces renders some object or voice public – in my chapter in this volume I focus on the politics of seizing other’s voices, and the ways that this results in particular historical narratives being written. In particular, I draw on recent work on entextualization and recontextualization to examine the ways that annual reports of public health published during the American occupation of the Philippines use erasure and ventriloquism to minimize Filipino public health initiatives, especially those of Filipino male physicians. Most studies of entextualization and discursive control have, as Gloria Rahejia Goodwin notes, focused on specific societies, but colonial documents “exhibit the connection between entextualizing processes and power relationships in a larger arena of cultural politics” (1999: 121). She notes that “To wrench certain stretches of speech … from the contexts in which they were uttered and to insert them into colonial documents radically stabilized and transformed their meanings, and excluded, marginal-
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ized, or otherwise tamed speech that was not congruent with colonial views ... or colonial political interests” (1999: 121). In the Indian case that Goodwin studies, ventriloquism, or the appropriation of the speech of the colonized, constructs a discourse about the consensual nature of caste ideology, and creates the illusion that the control of the Indian population was carried out with the consent of the colonized. In American documents, ventriloquism has a similar effect, but it also serves to amplify American arguments for the necessity – and benevolence – of their presence. The necessity for incorporating Filipino voices in colonial texts, of ventriloquizing them, can be linked precisely to the American project of benevolent assimilation. It requires the presence of a colonial other, presented not as peers or as primitives but as protégés. In public health initiatives, the unequal relations established were often between American and Filipino men. Thus, although I have also found that the actions of women were central to debates about modernity, nation, imperialism and citizenship (McElhinny 2005, 2006), colonial politics were about establishing hierarchies of masculinity too. Although some Filipino initiatives were erased from the colonial record, often Filipino initiatives were incorporated into American public health texts, and thus re-authored, and authorized as in some way American. Textual analysis here serves to challenge the pretexts of the American imperial presence as one benefiting the health of the Filipino people, as it theorizes the relationship between ventriloquism and erasure, the role of discourse in establishing colonial hierarchies of masculinity, and how to challenge hegemonic versions of history.

In addition to undertaking genealogical analyses, another way to expand our empirical focus is to adopt a historically sensitive approach to the emergence of new publics. A public, according to Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard (1995: 132), is “a form of language-based political legitimation.” The concept is closely tied to the public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas, among others, identifies as those nongovernmental communicative interactions that legitimate, or at least influence, the way power and resources are allocated within a nation-state or other polity; the term also refers to the places in which such interactions occur and to the technologies that mediate them. Gaudio’s chapter undertakes a historical analysis of the emergence of northern Nigerian publics in the context of two globalizing systems, European imperialism and Islam, and of the oral and written genres (Arabic literary genres, Friday sermons, wak‘ok’i or song-poems, and Hausa newspapers, radio, television and, increasingly, videos) key to the establishment of these publics. Gaudio tracks the confluence of conditions that have led to
the rise of a commercial Hausa-language video industry, and the contradic-
tions it faces: the male entrepreneurial elites who shape the industry want to
construct a northern Nigerian public on the basis of normative Islam but in
order to attract mass audiences and maximize profits they may need to re-
sort to means which sometimes contradict these very norms. Gaudio tracks
the conflicting ideologies of gender, sexuality and language manifest in the
industry through a close reading of the text and multiple audience recep-
tions of Ibro ‘Dan Daudu, a Hausa-language video-film in which popular
actors perform humorous impersonations of ‘yan daudu, i.e. men who are
said to talk and act “like women”, who are widely reputed to be involved in
prostitution, and whose activities have been targeted as contributing to pub-
lic immorality. He contrasts portrayals of ‘yan daudu’s linguistic and other
behaviors in the film with his own ethnographic portrayals, as he considers
the ways that a variety of different men in venues ranging from internet
discussions, magazine reviews, and conversations amongst friends under-
stand the film’s portrayals. He shows how films which critically address
controversial and immoral topics can work to construct an Islamic Northern
Nigerian public that is distinct from – and morally superior to – the rest of
Nigeria and the West, but almost inevitably they come to be seen as capital-
izing upon immoral desires in order to make money.

In theoretical and methodological terms all of the chapters in this sec-
tion explore the implications for studies of language and gender of what
Gal (1998: 333) argues is one of the salutary effects of recent work in lin-
guistic anthropology: the expansion of empirical foci from face-to-face talk
to studies of mass media and the ways they connect disparate communities
and textual debates. The mass media in Weidman, Inoue, McElhinny and
Gaudio are newspapers, gramophone recordings, the writings of male intel-
lectuals, scientific journals, annual reports of public health, videos, internet
conversations, and magazines. Such studies do not mean that studies of
face-to-face interaction have been displaced, but rather perhaps that they
have been decentered.

3.3 Multilingualism, globalization and nationalism

Interestingly, one of the points of discussion at the original conference at
which many of these papers were presented was some people’s surprise that
more papers did not deal with gender and multilingualism, since this is one
of the sites where studies of language, gender and global economy have
been most robustly developed (though Besnier (2007) has recently argued that even in these studies analysis often seems to stop at national boundaries). Indeed, the question which is most frequently debated in the emerging literature on language and globalization (Coupland 2003; Heller 2003a, 2003b; Leap and Boellstorff 2004) may be how best to understand the effects of cultural and linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah 1999; House 2003; Pennycook 2003; Philipson 1992). Recent works in what Nair calls post-colonial pragmatics have taken up similar questions but have been more attentive to the ways that gender and other aspects of identity intersect with imperialism. Nair (2002) sketches out the contemporary dilemmas that the values of English can raise for the writing and speech of a postcolonial feminist. Chandra (2003) considers debates in mid-nineteenth century India about whether Indian women should be educated in English, and the roles these debates played in both fixing the value of English as “international” and native languages, such as Marathi, as “local”, but also the roles they played in elaborating new forms of patriarchy. Native languages were portrayed by some as more unchaste and impure, and the kinds of gendered positions they made available to women who spoke them were taken as evidence of the inferiority of Indian culture; an education in English was seen as a way to elevate the national character. Women who learned English, however, were often criticized by other women for developing (overly) intimate relationships with husbands, at the cost of relationships with other women in their households. Critics of English-language education argued for the respectability of Marathi, and women’s (especially upper caste women’s) continued use of it was seen as necessary for the continued survival of the “mother” tongue. The vernacular was thus feminised over and against a masculinised English, in the name of preserving it. Policing language was thus a way to police sexuality, and also a way to police caste and nation.

In bilingual or multilingual societies, in areas where national boundaries have been drawn and redrawn, in postcolonial contexts, and in diglossic linguistic situations, it is often the use of, or access to certain languages which differentiates the speech of men and women, or more elite and less elite men and women. In colonial or post-colonial situations, access to economic and political power may depend on being able to speak the language of the imperial, or former imperial power (see, also, essays in Pavlenko et al 2001). Examples include using Spanish or Portuguese in central and South America, or English among the Celtic peoples in England among many native groups in North America, and in former British colonies in the
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Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Harvey’s (1994) and Hill’s (1987, 1992) work offers examples of how this plays itself out in Spanish-Native bilingualism in Peru and Mexico, in two different cases in which women speak less Spanish than men, though for complexly different reasons. Walters’ (1996) article on the linguistic choices of non-Muslim women from Western countries married to Muslim Tunisian males points out that only members of formerly colonizing nations can remain monolingual, or even bilingual in English and French, without learning Arabic, and be considered educated. This process is uniquely inflected by gender: “to the extent that an Anglophone wife masters Tunisian Arabic, she de-exoticizes herself to a great extent, and probably loses some of whatever symbolic value she might have as a ‘trophy’ wife, whether for her husband or in the society at large” (543). Haeri’s (1997) study of variation, gender, classical and modern forms of Arabic challenges Orientalist stereotypes which suggest that women used less classical Arabic because they led sheltered lives and were segregated in a private domain. She found that education is directly correlated with the use of Classical Arabic among men (more educated men use it more, less educated men use it less), but the same is not true for women. Many Koranic schools did and do not open their doors to women. She argues that more highly educated women use features of the local urban Arabic standard, which is associated with modernity, progress and change of the status quo. Women’s, and younger men’s, greater use of urban standards may be understood as a favorable response to modernization. Gal (1978) showed the ways that young women in an Austrian community were less committed than men to the traditionally male-dominated system of subsistence and agriculture associated with Hungarian-speaking peasants, and had more to gain by associating themselves with wage labor, as worker’s wives. These women, she argued, were driving a shift from Hungarian to German in this community. This work underlines the ways in which we have already been talking about the ways language and gender are shaped by global processes for some time.

Several papers in this volume continue this long-standing focus on studies of gender and multilingualism, as they begin to suggest some new questions that arise when one attends more fully to recent aspects of globalization. In a series of papers Monica Heller (see e.g. Heller 2003a, 2003b) has documented the changing meaning of language and ethnicity in francophone Canada in the new global economy. In an economic context where the meaning of the nation-state is changing and where the economy is shifting from resource extraction (agriculture, forestry, mining, fishing) and
industrial labor to service sector work, ethnolinguistic minorities who have organized around nationalist discourses and institutions find that the political and economic bases upon which they have constructed their identity are also being rapidly undermined, even as their linguistic skills become particularly valued in a global economy. The meaning of language also changes. Heller notes that language is coming to be understood less as an inalienable characteristic of group members and more as a measurable skill; language skills may be given more importance than ethnic ties in establishing who belongs in the francophone community. Language moves from being a marker of identity to a marketable commodity, distinct from identity. Tensions can thus arise between political and economic bases for imagining community. In her chapter in this volume, Heller considers how political organization around ethnonational identity can lead to an erasure of differences within a community organized around gender and class, but she is also interested in how various forms of social categorization, including gender, intersect in processes of social change, so as to position people differently with respect to the strategies and resources open to them. She offers a historical overview of the ways gender has figured in ethnonational struggles among francophones in Canada, and finishes with a consideration of the implications that growing industries (call centres, translation) which require feminized, if not necessarily feminine, labor, have for defining linguistic standards and linguistic authenticity, both for those who take up jobs in these sectors and those who do not.

Pujolar’s chapter considers the ways that language courses for immigrants, themselves increasing globally in number and size as migration flows increase, represent a site where access to resources is regulated by dominant groups. In particular, he considers the politics associated with learning Catalan, a language which is not generally understood as a “global” language, and which nonetheless presents immigrant women with a new structure of opportunities. He considers how the habit of using Spanish in classrooms for immigrants in Catalonia serves, in some ways, to preserve the linguistic power of Catalan speakers, as it undermines the legitimacy of the Catalan language in local public spheres, as well as the linguistic and cultural capital of immigrants. A discourse of “integration” emerges in these classrooms, part of what he calls “advanced” liberal (or neoliberal) rule which is characterized by a certain detachment of practices of expertise from public control, and a privatization of expertise that is governed increasingly by market rationalities. He argues that neoliberal rule creates a fundamental paradox for immigrant women in which their subjection to the
appropriate procedures of surveillance is increasingly seen as a sign of integration. However, immigrants have few means, because of a lack of economic or political power, to develop their own sources of authority.

Nguyen’s chapter presents yet another case study of the kinds of research enabled by recent political and economic changes. Recent reforms in communist Vietnam and China have made possible the circulation of scholars and scholarship in ways that are part of global flows, as they contribute to the study of globalization. She considers how the killing of many young men during the American war in Vietnam intimately affected the lives and linguistic practices of women faced with a shortage of suitable marriage partners. In particular, she takes up the question of why Vietnamese-speaking women who have married ethnic minority men and live in their husbands’ villages choose to use ethnic minority languages rather than Vietnamese when speaking in public settings, even when others tend to use the often more statusful Vietnamese. She argues that they are reluctant to reveal themselves in the shameful, or at least pitiable, position of being Viet women who could not find Viet husbands, and who thus had to marry men who are generally more poor and seen as more marginal to the nation-state. Her essay offers an intimate picture of the linguistic and emotional wounds associated with the upheaval of warfare. Nguyen’s essay also points out the ways that Russian linguistic models have shaped the way research has evolved in Vietnam, again a topic little considered by sociolinguists (though see Harlig and Pleh 1995 for series of essays on this topic in an Eastern European setting). She points out the ways that Soviet-style survey research on people’s multilingual speech practices serves to support Vietnamese state ideologies about the separate but equal spheres in which Vietnamese and other languages are used. Her essay raises the provocative question of what a sociolinguistics which not only studies global phenomena, but attends to and draws on canons and methods of research developed in multiple national and analytic traditions, might eventually look like.

3.4 Commodities and cosmopolitanism

The question of whether global phenomena are homogenizing ones is a particularly controversial question – and one that sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies are particularly well-positioned to take up (see also Meyerhoff and Niedzielski 2003). Corporations ask themselves how to sell products in a global marketplace, how to sell in multiple locations, how and
whether to address the world, and how to accommodate linguistic and cultural differences while remaining internally coherent (Klein 2000: 115).

Though some companies try to get the world to come to them – to speak their language and absorb their culture – and argue that an inability to get consumers to do this is a sign of corporate weakness, other companies adopt a different approach, focusing on selling diversity, and trying to distance themselves from any easy critique of Western imperialist practices. Machin and van Leeuwen’s (2003) analysis of 44 different versions of \textit{Cosmopolitan} considers the ways that one company takes on this challenge. They argue that many cultural products appear to be “local” in content yet embody global content as well, and that localization may hide deeper, underlying similarities. All the versions of \textit{Cosmopolitan} which they study are structured around a problem-solution discourse schema, in which the problems facing women are identified, and various solutions are proposed. In all versions, an atomistic form of individualism is promoted, in which fellow human beings, even or especially those closest to the readers, are unreliable and selfish, and thus constantly posing problems. The solutions are always individualistic – there is no solidarity with others, no solace from religious or cultural traditions, no collective action, no structural and political solutions. The magazine promotes, Machin and van Leeuwen argue, “the spirit of strategic communication that pervades the neo-capitalist world” (2005: 506). Though it has local accents – for instance, though most versions focus on colleagues, friends and lovers, some Asian versions add husbands, and although in the U.K. taking control of sexual encounters always works, in the Taiwanese version this can have ambivalent outcomes – the focus is on independence, freedom, career success, sexual satisfaction, and individual strategies for overcoming obstacles to these goals.

One of the sharpest changes in corporate worlds in the last 15 years is that many successful corporations now produce brands, rather than products. One of the sharpest critics of these changes has been the Canadian journalist and social activist Naomi Klein. In her 2000 book, \textit{NO LOGO: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies}, she argues that branding is not the same as advertising. Ads inform people about the existence of a product, and try to get them to use it, arguing that their lives will be better if they use it. But now, she argues, companies are not advertising products, they are advertising brands – a lifestyle, an experience – and penetrating into domains previously untouched by commercialism. The vice president of marketing at Starbucks as much as acknowledges that there is no difference in products, or at least that consumers do not perceive one: instead, he argues, the job of
companies is merely to establish emotional ties with an experience, in his case, the Starbucks’ experience of coffee romance, warmth and community (Klein 2000: 21) (compare Gaudio 2003).

Klein is particularly worried about “the marketing of cool” to the youth market, arguing that it harnesses the tendency of youth to raise questions about the world to consumerism and commercialism rather than more radical political commitments. Her conclusions about the effects of globalization thus parallel those of Machin and Leewwen. However, this approach makes an assumption that the significance of the text lies in its signification, that all one needs to know about the meaning of a text is the text itself. Bucholtz’s chapter argues that we need more complex understandings of what people make of branding practices, a project she undertakes in an ethnographic study of how students in an ethnically diverse high school in California talk about brands and shopping. She tracks the confluence of forces that have led to an increasing integration of American youth into consumer culture, but through a set of rich analyses of face-to-face interactions argues that the new global economy may be far-reaching, but it is not all-encompassing, and that young people take up positions toward commodity culture that may variously resignify, reject, or reproduce dominant discourses of consumption. Bucholtz’s paper, alongside others in the volume, highlights the problems with any simplistic opposition of global forces and local interaction, and any glib understanding of the meaning that global commodities will have in local contexts.

One homogeneizing approach to globalization focuses too exclusively on histories of European and American imperialism in ways which run the danger of not acknowledging the diversity of global forces and locations of globalization (compare Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Pennycook 2003; Zhang 2005). Some people are worried that cosmopolitanism, or laying claims to having worldly knowledge, can sometimes exacerbate such trends. As numerous commentators have noted, “the point of view that makes the improvement of a resentful and unappreciative world by imperial powers into a matter of morals can call itself cosmopolitan” (Gilroy 2005: 62). The opposition of imperial ambitions, disguised as universalist ones, over and against “local” ambitions is what Appiah calls “toxic cosmopolitanism” (2005: 220). It is a love for others manifest in an attempt to impose purportedly superior ways, and is in part what leads to a wariness about the use of the term, in some circles. Little better is the version of cosmopolitanism we might call consumer cosmopolitanism – one in which superficial encounters with difference become a form of cultural capital for the traveler...