

talization, reporting that linguistic archives of endangered and moribund languages are being used in local efforts to preserve the languages and cultural heritage of linguistic minorities. Some early wax recordings were included, some as old as 100 years. Last year, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* produced a theme issue on this topic (Vol 30, No 1, Mar 1999), which included an article co-authored by Hinton and Jocelyn Ahlers. I found this particular issue very effective for teaching undergraduate courses in both language change and schooling in cultural context. Students comment that the articles are very accessible, and the situations documented are very useful in discussions connecting theory, research and practice.

Language and Metaphor

By John McCreery (*The Word Works, Ltd*)

[Editor's note: This piece was originally a response to a thread on Anthro-L. We include it here in hopes of hearing what linguistic anthropologists currently have to say about the issues it raises.]

Tim Mason cites Lewis Carroll; Jesse Cook sturdily defends the need for some shared meaning as a prerequisite of communication. Both, I suggest, point to the poles of one of those binary oppositions that confuse as much as they clarify. I write from a conviction, fostered by the way I make my living, but derived intellectually from the likes of Wittgenstein, Austin and Max Black, also Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, James Fernandez, and (in a lately discovered quite wonderful book) Howard Becker; conventional meaning and metaphor are both intrinsic to the ways in which we human beings use words. What is more interesting to consider sociologically are the situations that move us more in one direction than in the other.

Mathematics provides us with the image of pure conventionality—an extreme at which, do note, meaning disappears altogether or, alternatively, becomes completely arbitrary. Poetry provides us with the image of metaphor fecund with meaning, of words so perfectly chosen for precisely what they point to that when they are juxtaposed a virtual explosion of meaning occurs. Advertising copy (like politicians' speeches) mimics poetry, but remains constrained by the need to speak to mass audiences and to convey primarily the concepts that the advertiser hopes to communicate. Thus it can never stray too far from convention and is thus, do note, often accused by critics of being fundamentally meaningless.

Scholarly discourse tends to be esoteric-conventional but limited to smaller audiences trained by scholarly disciplines to see the potential meanings of terms in severely limited ways. Scholarly insight, however, is never a matter of mere convention. Insights are applauded when embodied in what Max Black calls strong metaphors. To further our discussion, I quote a bit from Black's "More About Metaphor," which

appeared in Andrew Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought* (1979, p 26-7).

Black has just distinguished between "extinct," "dormant" and "active" metaphors. The first are discovered by philologists examining the etymologies of what are now purely conventional words; the second are clichés, not quite dead expressions that may yet be revived by using them in unusual ways; active metaphors are those which strike us forcefully and transform our perceptions of the situations in which they occur.

"Given an active metaphorical statement, it would be useful to discriminate two aspects, which I shall call emphasis and resonance. A metaphorical utterance is emphatic, in my intended sense, to the degree that its producer will allow no variation upon or substitution for the words used [poetry in the image described above]—and especially not for what in Metaphor I called the 'focus', the salient word or expression, whose occurrence in the literal frame invests the utterance with metaphorical force. Plausible opposites to 'emphatic' might include: 'expendable', 'optional', 'decorative', and 'ornamental'. . . . Emphatic metaphors are intended to be dwelt upon for the sake of their unstated implications: Their producers need the receiver's cooperation in perceiving what lies behind the words used.

"How far such interpretative response can reach will depend upon the complexity and power of the metaphor-theme in question: Some metaphors, even famous ones, barely lend themselves to implicative elaboration, while others, perhaps less interesting, prove relatively rich in background implications. For want of a better label, I shall call metaphorical utterances that support a high degree of implicative elaboration resonant.

"Resonance and emphasis are matters of degree. They are not independent: Highly emphatic metaphors tend to be highly resonant (though there are exceptions), while the unemphatic occurrence of a markedly resonant metaphor is apt to produce a dissonance, sustained by irony, or some similarly distancing operation.

"Finally, I propose to call a metaphor that is both markedly emphatic and resonant a strong metaphor. My purpose in the remainder of this paper is to analyze the *raison d'être* and the mode of operation of strong metaphors, treating those that are relatively 'weak' on account of relatively low emphasis or resonance as etiolated specimens."

A final note: One of Black's great purposes was to remind us (as Gordon Fisher has reminded the Anthro-L list) of the role of strong metaphor in the history of science and mathematics: To insist, in other words, that those who see science as a matter of conventional manipulations of just-the-facts-ma'am data are demonstrating their ignorance of what scientists do. His thinking may, I suggest, point beyond the conventional oppositions in which our discussion to date has been embedded.

(John McCreery invites responses at mccreery@aol.com.)

Useful Addresses:

Susan Gal, SLA President; Dept of Anth, U Chicago, 1126 E 59th St, Chicago, IL 60637-1539; s-gal@uchicago.

Alessandro Duranti, Journal of Linguistic Anthropology editor; Dept of Anthropology, UCLA, CA 90095-1553; aduranti@ucla.edu.

Laura Miller, SLA Program Organizer; Dept of Sociology & Anthropology, Loyola U, 6525 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago, IL 60626; tel 773/508-3469, fax 508-7099, lmille2@luc.edu.

Cyndi Dunn, SLA column co-editor; 716 Ticonderoga Dr, Denton TX 76205; 940/891-3746, cdunn@gte.net.

Richard J Senghas, SLA column co-editor & LINGANTH list administrator; Dept of Anthropology/Linguistics, Sonoma State U, 1801 E Cotati Ave, Rohnert Park, CA 94928-3609; tel 707/664-2312, fax 664-3920, richard.senghas@sonoma.edu, ownerlinganth@ats.rochester.edu (for all LINGANTH list business).

Society for Medical Anthropology

HOLLY PETERS-GOLDEN AND ANN MILES,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SMA Website Has Moved

Craig Janes (Colorado-Denver) has taken over the SMA website. You may now find it at www.cudenver.edu/public/sma.

Basker and Virchow Prizes

The deadline for nominations for the Rudolf Virchow Award, given annually by the Critical Anthropology of Health Caucus, is May 25, 2000. Submissions for the Eileen Basker Memorial Prize, established by the SMA to promote excellence in research on gender and health, are due by Jul 1, 2000. See the Awards Alert column for complete information.

Call for Manuscripts

Andrew Strathern and Pamela J Stewart (both U Pittsburgh) have been appointed co-editors for a new series of medical anthropology publications from Carolina Academic Press. The Series focus is on ethnographic studies from any part of the world, to be used for both teaching and research, written by both new and established researchers. Those interested should contact the editors at Dept of Anthropology, U of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; tel 412/648-7519, fax 412/648-7535, pamjan+@pitt.edu. Glenn Perkins, Acquisitions Editor, Carolina Academic Press can also be contacted—see the press's web page at www.cap-press.com/archaeology/med_anthro.html.

New Book Review Editor at MAQ

Beth Conklin (Vanderbilt U) has been selected as the next Book Review Editor for MAQ to serve a 3-year term beginning Jul 1, 2000. She and Barbara Rylko-Bauer, the present editor, will work together to effect a smooth transfer of this office.