

The "I" Of Discourse

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The analysis of the first person singular pronoun ("I"), as outlined by Benveniste in his now classic articles "The Nature of Pronouns" (1971a [1956]) and "Subjectivity in Language" (1971b [1958]), has supplied a framework for conceptualizing the relationship between self, language, and ultimately culture. This analysis has been taken up in theorizing about the self that is of a semiotic-philosophical character, especially in the work of Ricoeur (1974) and Singer (1984), but also in the semiotic-linguistic framework developed by Silverstein (1976). I wish to argue in this paper that the analysis proposed by Benveniste is only partially adequate, and that, in fact, an empirical investigation of the use of the personal pronoun "I" in actual discourse reveals a much richer picture of the semiotic functioning of that pronoun. Ultimately, this enriched picture leads to a modified conceptualization of the relationship between self and culture.

Specifically, I propose that in narrative discourse "I" occurs predominately within quotation marks, and there it acts as an anaphoric device, analogous to the third person anaphoric pronouns (in English, *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they*). This "I" conforms only apparently to the Benveniste analysis, its character as a "referential index," to use the semiotic terminology, arising only metaphorically through the semantically described situation, and being considerably removed from true token-level indexicality. There is also, in some instances at least, a kind of "de-quotative 'I,'" where the metaphorical "I" of quotation, through a kind of theatrical substitution, becomes again a referential index, but this time pointing to the speaker not with respect to the speaker's everyday identity or self, but rather with respect to an identity the speaker assumes through the text. I will argue that this substitution of de-quotative "I" for referential indexical "I" is at the heart of the cultural construction of self.

Indexical-Referential "I"

Benveniste's analysis of the personal (first and second person) pronouns focuses on their referential character. Benveniste recognized that, from the point of view of reference, personal pronouns appear to be wholly distinct from the common noun

phrases, and even from the third person pronouns, with which they might naturally be compared. Common nouns as abstract types have a more or less definite referential value. In English, the word *table*, taken in the abstract, has associated with it a stereotypical class of objects, a notion of what a "table" is. As Benveniste (1971a: 218) writes: "each instance of use of a noun is referred to a fixed and 'objective' notion, capable of remaining potential or of being actualized in a particular object and always identical with the mental image it awakens."

In the case of personal pronouns, however, there is no such abstract class. Personal pronouns are " 'empty' signs that are non-referential with respect to 'reality' " (1971a: 219). "Each *I* has its own reference and corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up as such" (1971a: 218).

This referentially "empty" character of "I" arises from the fact that the first person pronoun is *indexical*. Reference is achieved at the token level through an actual contiguity between the instance of language use in which *I* occurs and the utterer of that instance. Consequently, each time *I* is used it has a singular and definite reference, but as an abstract type, apart from this instance, it has no associated class of objects. Of course, normally one thinks of utterers as human. However, the use of *I* in quotations, especially in myth narrative, leads to the realization that virtually anything can be construed as a speaker, and, as a result, can be taken as the singular definite referent of *I*. The class of referents is left unspecified at the level of type.

The shifting referential character of *I* led Benveniste to formulate a token-reflexive definition of the form: "I is the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance of I" (1971a: 218). The definition thus differs in an important way from the kinds of glosses that can be given of common nouns, e.g., "featherless biped" for *man*, where the gloss can be achieved abstractly, at the level of type, without any direct reference to concrete instances (cf. the concept of "stereotype").

From a broader perspective on pronouns, "you" is similar to "I" in being indexically referential, but both first and second persons differ sharply from third person, which is in Benveniste's terms a "non-person." In its method of achieving reference, third person is more like common nouns than like the true personal pronouns, in that it is non-indexical and can be glossed purely at the level of type, e.g., *he* is an entity conceptualized as of male gender. Even in a decontextualized sentence, it retains some referential value, however more definite that value may become in a given context of use. So the principal split in languages is between the indexical referential pronouns and the semantically referential pronouns and nouns.

This view of "I" is, I believe, only partially adequate. It provides an intuitively satisfying characterization of *I* as part of the language code, if one simply reflects upon the nature of language and how it is used. But an actual empirical study of texts reveals phenomena, such as the use of *I* within quotation, that require an amplified conception of how this pronoun is actually functioning.

At the same time, Benveniste's analysis has been taken up by theoreticians and philosophers concerned with the "self." As Singer (1984: 61) suggests, Ricoeur believes that Benveniste's analysis of pronouns provides a "new basis for a 'hermeneutics of the I am' as well as for a reconciliation between structuralism, psychoanalysis, and philosophy." Essentially, "I" is one of the hinge points between language, as an abstract Saussurean structure of oppositions, and discourse, as a specific instance of language use. Consequently, it represents a kind of socialization of the self, as it is brought into a culture-specific structure. The personal pronouns make possible an expression of "subjectivity."

The analysis is taken much further by Singer (1984: 74-104), who in his chapter on "Personal and Social Identity in Dialogue," building upon Peirce and Benveniste, discusses the specifically dialogical character of the self constituted through language. The opposition is not between self and other, but, since "all thought is addressed to a second person" (1984:85), between an already interacting "I"-you dyad and a third thing. In these passages, Singer seems to echo the dialogism of Bakhtin.

But the "I" of discourse is not only an actual in-the-world subject, indexically referred to by means of the first person form. The discourse "I" can also be any being or entity, imaginary or not, capable of being reported as a speaker. The central question here concerns the relationship between this reported "I" and the indexical referential "I" that points to a subject. I wish to argue that the true hinge point between self and "culture," the point at which the self becomes a socialized subjectivity, is not to be found in the relationship between indexically referred to "I" and the abstract Saussurean system. It is to be found in the relationship between the quoted "I" of discourse and the indexical referential "I" of the language code.

Anaphoric "I"

Benveniste (1971b: 225) noted that "it is a remarkable fact...that the 'personal pronouns' are never missing from among the signs of a language, no matter what

between main clauses in extended discourse is taken into account, the extent of the coreferencing problem becomes obvious.

A simple example (from a Shokleng myth), with two participants in the main clause, will help to clarify the problem:

- (3) kuyankāŋ tē wū ē nūŋhēn tē mō tā
 name def. nom he-coref. brother def. dative he
- yungū tō kōŋhāŋ tē ŋŋ wun kū ŋŋ ko ŋēke nā
 falcon ergative man def. they get conj. they eat habitual cont.
- li ēŋ cō ke kē mā ēŋ kukō tē tu yē tapā
 thus I erg. do conj. you I bone def. carry purposive go up
- ke tā ē nūŋhēn tō klaŋmāŋ tē mō
 say he he-coref. brother erg. name def. dative

"kuyankāŋ said to his brother, 'when the falcon that has been carrying off men and eating them does this to me, you will go up to fetch my bones,' so he said to his brother klaŋmāŋ."

The coreference relations are perfectly explicit and unmistakable here, thanks to use of anaphoric first and second persons. The "I" of the embedded clause can only refer to the subject of the main clause, kuyankāŋ. The "you" can only refer to the dative object of the main clause.

If one were forced to rely upon indirect quotation only, the resulting sentence would be confusingly ambiguous, as the English translation with subscripts in (4) indicates:

- (4) "kuyankāŋ said to his brother, klaŋmāŋ, that when the falcon that had been carrying off men and eating them did this to him_i, he_j will go up to fetch his_{i,j} bones."

This indirect quotation could easily be mistaken for:

- (5) "kuyankāŋ said to his brother, 'when the falcon that has been carrying off men and eating them does this to you, I will go up to fetch your bones,' so he said to his brother klaŋmāŋ."

In actuality, Shokleng has more resources than English for managing multiple coreference relations, since it has both third person coreferential (*e*) and non-coreferential (*i*) forms. In example (1) above, the coreferential form was employed. In (6), below, the non-coreferential form is employed, the anaphoric difference in English being reflected in the subscripts:

- (6) tī tēŋ yē tā ke mū
 he go+stat. that he say active
 "He_i said that he_j was going."

The patterning of the coreferential and noncoreferential anaphoric pronouns is linked to the case role of the noun phrase in main and subordinate clauses, and is discussed further in Urban (1985a: 180-183).

Even the relatively more powerful anaphoric capabilities of Shokleng are easily overwhelmed by the needs of coreference in actual discourse situations. While the principal verbs of speaking usually take only two noun phrases in the main clause, which then require coreference in the subordinate clause, the various possibilities with respect to case lead to hopeless confusions. Use of the anaphoric personal pronouns, however, allows for perfect clarity regarding coreference. This is because of the invariant relationship between the personal pronouns and case role in the main clause.

The two rules governing coreference are:

Rule 1: Within the clause containing the direct quote, first person is always coreferential with the subject (transitive agent or intransitive subject) of the main clause;

Rule 2: Within the clause containing the direct quote, second person is always coreferential with the (dative) object of the main clause.

While these rules are formulated specifically for the English and Shokleng cases, they may be proposed, based upon a number of additional languages studied, as universals. Specifically, I propose that every language, in addition to having personal pronouns that function indexical-referentially, will also have some means of indicating direct quotations, and in these direct quotative constructions the above rules of anaphora will apply.

If the requirements of coreference suggest a cross-linguistic functional motivation for the direct quotative form, there are also functional motivations for the indirect form. These motivations are implicit in the observation made above that in indirect quotation the indexical referential value of the personal pronouns is preserved. Indeed, indirect quotation is nothing other than a means of signalling that the personal pronouns within the quote are to be taken as having their usual values, i.e., as pointing to the actual speaker and addressee(s) of the utterance.

Because direct quotation suspends these values, in favor of the anaphoric values, it has no way of referring to the actual speaker and hearer of the utterance within the quote, unless the speaker and hearer happen also to be the subject and object of the main clause, in which case the anaphora point back to them. There is no direct construction in Shokleng or English analogous to (2), for example, that would yield the meaning of the indirect sentence in (7):

- (7) ɛ̃n cɛ̃g yè t̃a ke m̃u
 he go+stat. that he say active
 "He_i said that I_j was going."

Indirect quotation continues to make possible reference to the participants in the actually occurring speech event even within the quoted clause.

The Metaphorical Basis of Anaphoric "I"

At the same time as anaphoric "I" must be sharply differentiated from indexical referential "I" because of the differing mechanisms by means of which they function, it is also obvious that there is some connection between these functions. The connection is a metaphorical one, and, indeed, the metaphor is so powerful that its status as such is ignored. We look through the metaphor, so to speak, to the situation that is represented.

In a sentence such as "He said, I am going" the *I* refers anaphorically back to *he*, and the speaker of this sentence is *not* indexed. Nevertheless, the words inside the quote purport to be like the words in some original but now non-present utterance. If and insofar as they actually resemble some original utterance, the words inside the quote are iconic with that utterance. Nevertheless, they are never identical with the original words in semiotic function, because the quoted statement

is not a statement being made by the actual speaker of the sentence. The quoted portion of the sentence, "I am going," is linked metaphorically to the sentence "he was going." In effect, the speaker is suggesting that *he* is to be understood as like an *I*.

The notion that the anaphoric "I" is a metaphorical "he" is somewhat more difficult to grasp than the ordinary notion of metaphor. This is because ordinary metaphor typically deals with two terms that are both purely semantic, lacking an indexical component entirely. Consequently, the two terms of the metaphor are seen as distinct but simultaneously as being related in some way, as in the expression "a sea of troubles," where the words *a sea* are taken as related to *many*, or some other expression of extent, metaphorically. When it comes to *I* being taken as related to *he*, however, the basis of the similarity is not a semantic, but a pragmatic, one. It is a question of how we are to regard "he." The anaphoric "I" tells us to regard "he" from "he's" point of view, as if "he" were a kind of "I." The anaphoric "I" entails a kind of play acting on the part of the speaker of the utterance, who regards himself as momentarily taking on the role of the third person referent. Simultaneously, the hearer of the utterance is invited to regard the speaker as engaging in a kind of role playing.

The metaphorical basis of the anaphora is to be found in this role playing. Hearers understand the coreferential value of anaphoric "I" precisely because they know that the main clause refers semantically to an act of speaking, and they know that the speaker of the main clause is to be regarded as playing the role of speaker in the subordinate clause. It is only the first person that provides this metaphorical pivot. Second person anaphora is not based upon the hearer of the main clause playing the role of hearer in the subordinate clause. Rather the actual hearer is required to imagine the actual speaker — who is playing the role of another speaker — as addressing some non-present individual, as, for example, in "He_i said, 'I_j already gave it to you,'" where the actual audience need not evince any response to the discourse within the quoted clause, contrary to the speaker, who must actually utter the words of the subordinate clause speaker, and who may even take on other of the speaker's behavioral attributes. It is thus the imagination that provides the foundation for a stable system of cross-clause coreference, the ability of speakers to regard themselves metaphorically as others, and of hearers to similarly participate in this imaginary system.

I want to argue that the role playing involved in anaphoric "I" is crucial to culture, conceived for present purposes as a socially-transmitted system of discourse. On the one hand, discourse may be directly transmitted through a

process of imitation. Speakers need merely repeat the words of others, without any awareness or indication that their words are borrowed. The words are nevertheless in some sense cultural. On the other hand, to use a Freudian model, simply imitated discourse will always be at the behest of instinct. The imitation can be abandoned whenever it is out of accord with desire. Consequently, it is not cultural in the further sense of being regulative of the individual.

In the case of anaphoric "I," however, there is an awareness that the discourse of another has been assumed. This awareness, achieved through the metaphorization of "he," and hence fundamentally metapragmatic, places an additional constraint on the speaker. The imitated discourse of the other is no longer simply subject to whim. It is also subject to the control that the imitated other exercises over the speaker, since modifying or overturning the words of another is understood with the awareness that they *are* the words of another. The anaphoric "I," now also understood as a metaphorical or theatrical "I," brings into one's discourse the real control that the imitated others have over one. It creates, so to speak, the "weight of tradition." This is the essence of what might be called the regulative aspect of culture, the sway that culture exercises over individual whim.

It is possible to see in this metapragmatic awareness the subjective experience that psychoanalysts discuss in connection with the term "superego." The "I" that one assumes metaphorically is also a "not-I." It is not another addressing the actual "I," but rather an expectation or ideal that the actual "I" must live up to, thanks to the recognition that one has assumed the role of another. For this reason, it is probably better understood not with reference to the Freudian model, but rather with reference to the self psychology model developed by Heinz Kohut (1985; cf. Wolf 1986). This metaphorical "I" can become a kind of "ideal" of the self.

De-quotative "I"

The anaphoric "I," with its metaphorically indexical properties, may be distinguished from what can be called the *de-quotative "I."* I use this term to describe the "I" of a quotation wherein the matrix clause has disappeared. A further extension of the de-quotative "I" is the *theatrical "I,"* wherein there is virtually no trace of quote-framing, the individual speaking through the character that he or she represents. This is the "I" of theater and similar representational performances, wherein speakers use the first person pronoun to point to themselves, but not as

the individuals they are outside the performance context. The "I" they use points instead to themselves as the concrete representation of a character in discourse. Even further along this continuum is the "I" of trance, possession, and similar states, which I will refer to as the *projective "I."*

From a purely linguistic point of view, the de-quotative "I" is identical with the ordinary indexical referential "I" discussed by Benveniste. There are no obvious grammatical properties that distinguish it, as in the case of anaphoric "I." In the elementary form of de-quotation, it is the surrounding narrative discourse that indicates how the "I" is to be understood. Typically, there are preceding main clause frames that set up the subsequent interpretation of the de-quotative "I," which is thus, in this sense, closely related to anaphoric "I" and distinguished from the ordinary indexical referential type.

De-quotation is, according to this hypothesis, a special and derivative form of language use, spun off of the more widespread and frequent direct quotation, as a means of talking about the speech of others. While it can, and probably does, occur in some measure in all cultural traditions whose languages have the direct quotation form, its further elaboration is a contingent and culture-specific phenomenon. The indexical signs (voice quality, etc.), first employed together with the quoting main clauses, can later come to stand on their own as signals to the hearer that the "I" employed is to be taken as a replacement for some other noun phrase that has occurred earlier in the narration.

In culture-specific elaborations of this form, it is often possible to do away with the main clause quotations altogether. When there is still a single narrator, as in the puppet theater tradition (Gross 1983), for example, great emphasis must be placed on the indexical cues that allow different de-quotative or de-anaphoric "I's" to be kept distinct so that overall discourse cohesion and coherence is maintained. The indexical cues are thus functioning metapragmatically as if they were the quoting clauses of narrative discourse. They, so to speak, presuppose the semiotic capacity to understand the quotative speech of narration, which they come to replace by convention.

The actual theatrical tradition that has evolved in the West may be seen as an even further refinement of the de-quotative "I" pattern, in which the anaphorically different "I's" are given physical embodiment in the form of different individuals. The individuals become part of the indexical cues, and it is in this sense that we can understand actors striving for characteristic indices of the theatrical "I," much the way the puppeteer strives for indexical distinctiveness among the various "I's." While each actor in theater may play the role of only a single anaphoric "I," this "I" must be kept distinct from the indexical referential "I" of the individual playing

the role. Like the quoting clauses in narratives, these indices are what allow actor and audience alike to gain awareness of the two "I's."

According to the present interpretation, theatrical traditions should be much less widely distributed than the direct/indirect quotation contrast, which forms the foundation for the theatrical form. In fact, there is no direct counterpart in Shokleng to this tradition. Graham (1983) describes a theater-like performance among the related Shavante Indians of Central Brazil. On one occasion, the Shavante actually used different individuals to perform a myth. Graham's account is particularly interesting, because it makes clear that the bulk of the speaking is done by a narrator, who establishes the anaphoric relations among the different actors. A study of Graham's transcriptions shows that, for whatever reasons, the first person is nearly absent from the de-quotative speaking, second person being much more frequent. In any case, the overall performance is somewhere in between a single-narrator myth-telling and our Western theatrical tradition.

There is no evidence that the Shokleng have ever had any sort of theatrical production. The elementary narrative de-quotation, however, is fairly common. Indeed, close study of a number of tapes shows that there is a veritable continuum between quotation and de-quotation, as the quote-framing clause is articulated with greater or lesser intensity. In some instances, it is strongly articulated as:

- (8) ... ke tā tī mō mō
 say he-nom. he-obj. dative active
 " '...,' he said to him."

In some, it is weakly articulated, there being in many instances only a barely audible *ke*. In still others there is no trace of the *ke* whatsoever.

Consideration of the semiotic functions of de-quotation makes it clear that theatrical "I" is linked to the anaphoric "I" of narration. The theatrical event, like the narrative event, becomes a mechanism for separating out the two different kinds of "I." It allows actor and audience alike a kind of metapragmatic lever through which awareness of the social "I," the "I" of self ideals and role playing, can be achieved. But theatrical "I" goes even further down the road of involvement in another self than does the typical anaphoric "I," which may function in nearly pure anaphoric fashion, or which may entail considerable role playing on the part of the speaker. In theater, the actor can become so immersed in another "I" that that other "I" becomes once again virtually indexical referential.

For this process of total immersion in another "I," there is a corollary in Shokleng. Indeed, it was that peculiar phenomenon that first enabled me to

comprehend the different kinds of "I." In the telling of the origin myth of the tribe (the *wāteklēn*), the narrator frequently lapses into the first person pronoun even in presumably non-quoted portions of the narration, as in (9):

- (9) ɛñ hā cō tōl ki yun wēn mō kan
 I focus erg. inside in emerge be first active egressive
 "It was I who emerged first."

Since this is a non-quoted portion of the text, one would expect the third person to have been used. It is as if, however, the narrator becomes identified with the original ancestor, the one who was presumably first to narrate this story. Through the theatrical or projective "I," the present-day narrator assumes the persona of his historical antecedent.

There is evidence that this shift to the first person, which is by no means consistent, as will be demonstrated below, is accompanied by subjective changes. In the one telling where shifting to the first person occurred most frequently, the narrator seemed especially bound up in the narration, paying little attention to those around him. He seemed to enter at points into what might be described as a trance, having what Americans sometimes call a "far-away look," as if he were at that moment focused intently on some wholly internal reality. In tellings where the first person shifting was less prominent, the narrator seemed more focused on the audience, and on the kind of responses he was being given. Here third person reference tended to dominate.

The evidence collected thus far is actually insufficient to determine whether the projective "I" of this myth represents a lapse on the part of the narrator, or whether, in fact, it is the norm, the lapse being into third person. This is something I will discuss further below. My opinion at this time is that the projective "I" may indeed be the primary performance form, the shift to third person occurring in less formal tellings.

In any case, the differences between tellings as regards pronominal usage and subjective state can be studied particularly readily in connection with the Shokleng origin myth because, like Western theatrical performances, this myth should be memorized and recited verbatim, syllable by syllable (Urban 1985b, 1986a,b). Indeed, this fact may be correlated with the tendency of the narrator to turn inward, as he searches his memory for the precise wording. Memorization may in turn be one factor favoring the theatrical "I," such as has been institutionalized in the Western theatrical tradition.

A study of different tellings shows that, in fact, whichever is the base form, "I" and "he" represent or encode alternative subjective orientations to the same material. The following examples show the same line of the myth recited in different tellings. Example (10) is from a telling of the origin myth, performed by Nil of the Macuco, that took place in 1975:

- (10) wāgyò tō zāgpope tō patè òn yo katèle
 relative erg. name erg. name I in front of arrive descending
 "Relative zāpope pate arrived in front of *me*."

The italics on the "me" stresses the first person orientation of the narrator, as if he were the original narrator who had undergone the experiences recounted here, which presumably took place in the earliest phases of human history. This particular line is taken from an episode in which the first jaguar is made by the character here referred to by means of "I." The narrator has become the ancestral hero.

In a more didactically oriented telling from 1981 by the same narrator — in which he is trying to teach me the myth — this line is told using a deleted third person:

- (11) wāgyò tō zāgpope tō patè no katèle
 relative erg. name erg. name in front of arrive descending
 "Relative zāpope pate arrived in front of *him*."

In a variant of this same line in a 1982 telling by a different narrator, the full third person forms are employed:

- (12) tì kòñkahà tō zāgpope tō patè tì no
 his relative erg. name erg. name he in front of
 katèle
 arrive descending
 "Relative zāpope pate arrived in front of *him*."

This last telling was by a younger speaker who was much more attuned to his audience and their responses, and less mentally involuted, than the other speaker.

The evidence seems to suggest that this use of first person, as a means of referring to a mythico-historical figure, is not a fully institutionalized pattern, or at

least is subject to functional forces that occasionally cause it to be substituted by third person. When it is used, it is functionally analogous to theatrical "I," in which the speaker has taken on the role of the character he might otherwise describe by means of third person. Semiotically, it involves a complicated sign process in which speaker/narrator becomes in effect the substitutive ostensive referent of a third person form, and consequently capable of referring to that referent by means of the first person form.

From a psychological point of view, there is clearly a kind of maximal projection here of the speaker/narrator into another self, in this case, a character in a narrative. The projection is similar to that talked about by actors. However, the trance-like quality that is involved suggests a possible comparison with actual trance behavior and possession. It may be that in this phenomenon, as well, the first person pronominal usage, arises from a shift from the third person forms in certain kinds of narrative. As in the origin myth-telling case, first person usage may represent the speaker/narrator becoming an anaphoric substitute for a third person form. If the present suggestions should be borne out by empirical research, it will be possible to link together trance and theater, as well as other phenomena, such as the Shokleng origin myth-telling, in a single scheme, in which the discourse "I" of these forms grows out of the basic anaphoric "I" of direct quotation.

Cultural Functions

The different types of "I" discussed thus far are shown in Figure 1. They are ranged along a formal/functional continuum, explication of which can shed light on the general problem of what cultural functions are served by the different types of "I." On the left side of the figure, discourse "I" (indexically) refers to the everyday self — the self with which the speaker is associated on a normal basis. The indexical cues of the speech tokens accompanying this "I" are those cues through which the individual wants to be known. As one moves to the right along the figure, indexical cues come into play which *purport* to point to a self other than the everyday self. The important point here is the signalling of a distinction between the two types of "selves."

In the cases of indexical-referential versus anaphoric "I," the signalling of this distinctiveness is present in the discourse as sign vehicle itself. There is the

twofold opposition between main and subordinate clause, on the one hand, and indirect and direct quotation on the other. Anaphoric "I" is distinguished by virtue of its presence in the subordinate clause of a direct quotation.

As one moves further to the right in this figure, the discourse internal signalling of the distinctiveness of selves gives way to contextual signalling. In the case of de-quotative "I," there are abundant traces in the discourse of the anaphoric character of the "I." The use of indexical cues such as intonation, voice quality, characteristic grammatical constructions, etc. first occurs in conjunction with a main or quoting clause in which the "I" is used anaphorically. At the same time, this kind of de-quotation is already set up, and its possible occurrence signalled, by the marked speech situation — telling of a story — in which it occurs. The context in some measure acts as signal.

In the case of theatrical "I," context takes over as the primary signal by means of which the two selves are distinguished. Here as well there is evidence that a direct continuum from de-quotative "I," correlated with the degree to which a narrator, who sets up the third person referents of the various "I's," is present. In the limiting case of no narrator, it is nevertheless critical that the context prepare the audience to interpret the various "I's" as different characters within a story-line. The context of speech here is highly marked with respect to that of everyday language use.

At the far right of this continuum — the projective "I" of trance and similar states — the context of language use must be highly marked and salient with respect to everyday contexts, if the "I" is to be interpretable as referring to a non-ordinary self. This is the norm in trance and possession behavior. If the speech situation is not marked, there is no signal to differentiate the different "I's," and the speaker is susceptible to being labeled, in the Western cultural tradition at least, mentally unstable, stricken with a multiple personality disorder.

From a discourse point of view, it is important that in the limiting case of projective "I" there is no script or story that is accessible to the audience apart from its manifestation in the present speech. This is the key distinction from theatrical "I," where the self is usually part of a well-known story. The projective "I" tells an emergent story, and in this regard is distinguished only with difficulty, and by virtue of a highly marked context, including non-linguistic behaviors, from the ordinary indexical referential "I." It is as if the far right of the continuum of Fig. 1 were connected back up with the left hand side.

With respect specifically to the Shokleng case, there are two types of non-indexical referential usage that are salient. One is the de-quotative type used in the

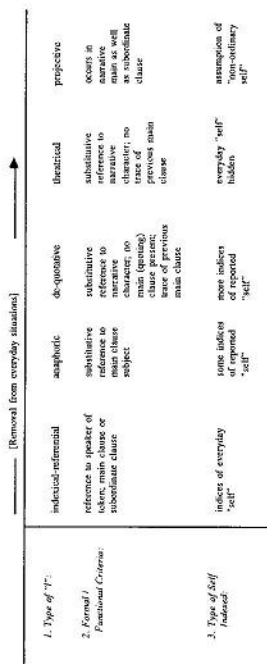


Fig. 1: Types of Discourse "I"

telling of myths (other than the origin myth) and in other narratives. The other is somewhere between theatrical and fully projective "I," involving the speaker in the virtual assumption of the self of an original narrator of the story. It is not fully projective because there is a fixed, memorized text. However, unlike the usual theatrical "I," the "I" of origin myth discourse involves the speaker/narrator as well as the characters quoted in the narration. It is perhaps most akin to those stories in the Western tradition that involve first person narrative reminiscence.

Regarding ordinary de-quotative "I" in Shokleng, the principal cultural function would seem to be *reality enhancement* for the audience. De-quotative "I" usage tends to occur when the speaker/narrator is finely attuned to audience response. This involves an elementary type of role playing through the use of indexical cues (voice quality, intonation, etc.), which can also be present in greater or lesser measure in anaphoric "I" generally. These indexical cues, accompanied by the dropping of the quote framing clause, make it seem as if the speech were occurring in the present situation of telling. The speech situation is brought into the here and now. The audience is made to feel as if it is in the presence of a non-present dialogue. The speech portraying a reality *referentially* comes to (purport to) resemble that reality *iconically*. The more iconic the sign — the less purely referential — the more it assumes an air of reality for the audience. De-quotative "I" verges on theatrical "I."

With the origin myth, the situation is distinct in one important regard. In this case, in contrast with ordinary narrative, the more involved with the audience the speaker/narrator becomes, the greater will be the tendency to switch from first person to third person. However, this shifting occurs not within the quoted clause, i.e., direct quotation becoming indirect quotation, but rather in the main quoting and narrative clauses. When the origin myth is actually being *performed*, the tendency is for the speaker/narrator to use first person in this clause. When the myth is being *told*, the tendency is to use the third person.

"Performance," however, in this case is quite unusual and is definitely untheatrical, in the sense of theater in which an actor *gesturally* plays a part. The characteristics of the origin myth performance (*wǎnkǎn*) have been discussed elsewhere (Urban 1985b, 1986a,b) and can only be summarized here. A performance involves two speaker/narrators who sit facing one another. The performer shouts the first syllable of the myth and this is echoed by the second performer. The first then shouts the second syllable, which is again echoed by the second, and the two go back and forth in this way in rapid-fire exchange through the entire myth. The effect on the audience is achieved as much by the acoustics

and body movements as by the semantic content of the story itself. The actual narrative line is understandable, in greater or lesser degree, by members of the audience, but it is the sound effect that is especially stunning.

Unlike theater, therefore, gestural performance in this case is disconnected from the story line. The actual rhythms of the syllabic exchange are accompanied by a rocking back and forth of the two speakers. The entire effect is hypnotic, especially for the actual participants. Being involved in a performance of *wǎnkǎn* means turning away from any audience and concentrating intently on the immediate interaction, with its emphasis on the precise repetition of a myth syllable by syllable. The mesmerizing effect of the rhythm, coupled with this intense inward focusing and shutting out of the audience, produces a discourse "I" that it is, consequently, closely related to the projective "I" of trance.

The argument has been made elsewhere (Urban 1985b, 1986a,b) that, from a semiotic point of view, the accurate re-performance of the origin myth simultaneously symbolizes and *is* the transmission of culture. However, in this previous work it was not possible to link the phenomenon of transmission to the subjective experience of the speaker/narrator. The present work on discourse "I" makes such a linkage possible.

In fact, the projective "I" of origin myth telling is an "I" that aligns speaker/narrators with past "I's" and, in particular, with the original (mythical) narrator. In the period of the actual performance, therefore, the speaker/narrator assumes the "self" of the original ancestor. He comes as close as is possible, through this projective means, to assuming an identity as "I" of an ancestral figure, and of thus subjectively embodying the continuity of culture.

It can be seen from this analysis why the simple narration of the origin myth — where it is not dyadically performed — involves a switch to the third person in the main clause. The speaker/narrator is more attuned to audience response and is, consequently, less inwardly focused. The subjective experience of the assumption of another "I" is less important than the assumption of an interactive role as narrator, with its attendant emphasis on reality enhancement for the audience. The narrator is the real here and now speaker of the utterance, and the quoted voices of the narrative are the ones that are brought into the present through de-quotative.

Audience focus is thus particularly relevant to the anaphoric and de-quotative portions of the continuum. In the theatrical to projective range, the subjective experience of the speaker/narrator becomes progressively more central. As one moves closer to the trance-like "I," the function of the discourse "I" shifts to facilitating the assumption of a different self by the speaker.

It is not clear that the projective "I" will be associated in all cultures with the assumption of an ancestral-historical self, as among the Shokleng. This is something that requires further comparative research. The straightforward emphasis on cultural transmission is probably a function which, while not unique to Shokleng, is nevertheless far from universal. Still, one can predict at a more general level a connection between the right half of the continuum represented in Fig. 1 and sociability, construed as the internal regulation of one's discourse by others.

Such constraint is already present in the anaphoric "I," as was argued earlier. Here the constraint is a *communicative* one, however, not a subjective one. The speaker/narrator signals the representation of the words of others to an audience, and is bound by audience recognition of the representational quality of his or her assumption of the words of others to whatever standard of faithfulness they hold a speaker. However, there is no question here of an internal experience of the other. In the case of projective "I," emphasis is shifted in the direction of a *subjective* experience of otherness. The speaker/narrator must attempt in greater or lesser measure to appear to be another. The appearance becomes more convincing outwardly in proportion as it is more convincing inwardly. Sociability becomes the subjective experience of another point of view.

Referential and Iconic Otherness

The behavioral, including discourse, patterns of others may be assumed without the behavior or discourse simultaneously representing them referentially as assumed. This kind of assumption or imitation I will call "iconic otherness" of the self. This is the basic stuff of culture — the participation of individuals in socially transmitted patterns of action and representation of the world, which are adopted "unconsciously" and without reflection.

At the same time, the adoption of such a pattern is a sign, in particular, an icon of the adopted pattern. Insofar as the imitation is faithful, the behavior, including speech, of the imitating actor is a sign vehicle capable of being read by others. It points to the conformity of the actor to the cultural patterns. It is thus in some measure meta-cultural, simultaneously as it is cultural. But it is meta-cultural in a peculiar sense, viz., in that the similarity or dissimilarity of the behavior to its imitated counterpart need not be taken as such. There is nothing intrinsic to it that requires that it be taken as meta-cultural.

In the case of direct quotation, the very sign itself encodes referentially its own status as meta-cultural, necessitating that it be interpreted as representing other speech. The "I" of discourse is explicitly referred to as the "I" of another. Insofar as the quoted portion of the utterance is an icon of the utterance it purports to represent, speakers are also engaged in "iconic otherness," but it is an otherness from which they are distanced by the quote-framing clause. That distance is progressively shortened as one moves to the right in Fig. 1, but it is never obliterated, except possibly at the extreme right, where projective "I" merges with indexical referential "I." In other words, the discourse and/or the context in which it is embedded explicitly signals that the "I," and, indeed, the entire imitation, is to be understood as such. This type of otherness, in which the "I" is explicitly signalled as other than the everyday indexical referential "I," I will call "referential otherness."

From this perspective, it is extremely interesting that different points of the continuum in Fig. 1 are associated with differing degrees of spontaneity in speech. While any speech can involve iconic otherness, de-quotation and theatrical "I" especially tend to be associated with more or less fixed texts, such as myths and traditional stories. If the Shokleng case and Western theater are indicative, it would appear that, where theatrical and projective "I" are involved, the texts display extreme rigidity. The speaker/narrator/actor must with considerable precision replicate earlier tokens of a fixed discourse type. Hence, the entire discourse itself is an instance of genuine iconic otherness, simultaneously as it contains instances of referential otherness.

Fig. 2 is an attempt to represent this condition of double or two-tiered otherness of the self. The instances of narrating/performing (A), insofar as they are tokens of a fixed discourse type, involve iconic otherness. In the recitation, the main plus subordinate clauses are icons of the main and subordinate clauses of previous narrations/performances (B). At the same time, this iconic otherness contains within itself instances of referential otherness, in which the subordinate clause of a direct quotation is represented as iconic with some previous (imagined or real) main clause (C). Where de-quotative and theatrical "I" are involved, the actual grammatical trace of the representation of quoting disappears, and the context carries the signal of referential otherness.

The discourse thus operates simultaneously at two levels. At the upper level, it signals itself as referential otherness, and thus as not to be mistaken for that otherness. The "I" of discourse is not the everyday indexical referential "I," and the discourse does not actually involve an embodied iconic otherness. At the lower level, however, insofar as it replicates a fixed type, the discourse does in fact

involve an embodied iconic otherness. It is another telling or performance of a fixed type. It thus really is an imitative speech behavior on the part of the narrator/performer.

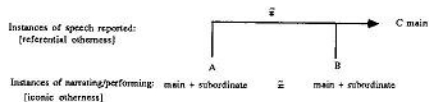


Fig. 2: Two-tiered Otherness

The interpretation of this phenomenon proposed here is that the upper level is designed to achieve a kind of metapragmatic awareness of the lower level, simultaneously as it allows that lower level to be a fully embodied replication. In other words, the discourse becomes a sign vehicle capable of bringing about an awareness of the social character of indexical referential "I." The speaker/narrator is represented as assuming a non-everyday "I," but an "I" simultaneously that is identical to one that other speaker/narrators before him have assumed. With ordinary indexical referential "I," there may be an embodied iconic otherness, with the discourse of the "I" an imitation of the discourse of others. However, that embodied iconicity is not understood as such. The "I" of de-quotation and theater is capable of being represented as an assumed "I," but it is also one that is preeminently social, i.e., it is also assumed by others. De-quotation and theatrical "I's" thus become levers for bringing about an awareness of a genuinely social "I."

If the present interpretation is correct, de-quotation and theatrical "I" should go hand in hand with fixity of the underlying text. Fixity ensures the genuine social or shared character of the "I." Explicit signalling of the "I" as the "I" of another ensures an awareness of the assumed character of the "I," but simultaneously does not interfere with its occurrence as actual embodied iconic otherness.

Conclusions

The indexical referential analysis of "I" originally proposed by Benveniste, and later taken up in theoretical-philosophical accounts of the relationship between self,

language, and culture by Singer and others, is an essentially correct one. However, if the present arguments obtain, the analysis is incomplete. The personal pronouns, when studied within their discourse contexts, are considerably more complex in terms of semiotic functioning than the indexical referential analysis alone suggests. Simultaneously, these added complexities necessitate an amplified conception of the relationship between self, language, and culture.

Specifically, I have proposed that there are functionally distinct kinds of "I," with indexical referential "I" representing merely the end point of a continuum. The fundamental distinction is between an "I" pointing to an everyday self and an "I" pointing to an imaginary or assumed self. In the latter case, the individual speakers to whom the "I" points are in fact anaphoric substitutes for characters in a narrative text. As one moves along the continuum, the individual speakers come more and more to resemble (outwardly and inwardly) the imaginary self for whom they act as discourse substitutes, taking on the indexical cues of that other self.

There are thus in discourse always two (or more) kinds of "I" — one pointing to an everyday self, one pointing to an assumed or "other" self. In the Benveniste model, it is the first person pronoun, by virtue of its participation simultaneously in indexical reference and in the Saussurean distributions of language, that makes possible the linkage between self and culture. In the present model, there are two levels. At one level, the anaphoric self that is a substitute for a discourse character allows an individual to fit into a culture-specific text. At another level, that discourse or textual self functions as a blueprint for the everyday self. In other words, texts or specific instances of discourse, which contain the imaginary "I" as well as the everyday "I," make possible a truly cultural self. Indexical referential "I" alone is essentially unsocialized.

Discourse or context, however, signals that an anaphoric "I" is imaginary, that it points to an other than "I." Speaker and audience alike grasp that the "I" of anaphora, de-quotation, theater, and projection is to be understood as distinct from everyday "I." At the same time, by virtue of fixing the text, as in the *wänkljen* or in Western theater, even the narrative "I" becomes a genuinely cultural one. The same point of view, so to speak, can be taken up by different speaker/actors. This is the essence of the cultural self — a point of view on the world that is shared and socially transmitted.

The role of metapragmatic awareness of the two "I's" deserves further investigation. It may be proposed that this awareness makes possible individual manipulation of the two "I's." With the ability to grasp the two "I's" and to select the specific anaphoric substitutions, the individual is not entirely subject to the reign of culture through received texts. Furthermore, new texts can be created, old

ones modified. Metapragmatic awareness is the motor of cultural change in the discourse constitution of self.

At the same time, metapragmatic awareness of the two "I's" may be linked to the depth psychological phenomena studied by psychoanalysts — to the interplay between *superego* and *id*, in the classic framework, or between *self* and *ideal*, in more recent terminology. While the two "I's" make possible the cultural constitution of self, and while metapragmatic awareness of the distinction liberates the individual in some measure from the tyranny of culture, the semiotic capacity to grasp the two "I's" also opens a dialogue within the individual over everyday "I" and the "I" of discourse. It creates the ground for apprehension of a possible discrepancy, and consequently for representable internal affective processes that might otherwise never exist.

The present paper has attempted to demonstrate the complexity of "I," when viewed from within its discourse context. It is discourse — specific instances of speaking and the types to which they are related — that is the fulcrum between self and culture, between individual and society. If the indexical referential character of the first person pronoun makes possible discrete reference to different speakers by means of the same form, it is nevertheless the relationship between indexical referential and anaphoric "I" that supplies the ground for sociability.

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