DISCOURSE FORMS AND PROCESSES IN
INDIGENOUS LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICA:
An Areal-Typological Perspective

Christine Beier, Lev Michael, and Joel Sherzer
Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712-1086;
email: cmbeier@mail.utexas.edu; lmichael@mail.utexas.edu; jsherzer@mail.utexas.edu

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Abstract In indigenous lowland South America there are several discourse forms and processes that are shared by groups of people of distinct genetic linguistic affiliations; this leads us to posit this large region, which we label greater Amazonia, as a discourse area, a concept that parallels the notion of linguistic area. The discourse forms and processes we examine are ceremonial dialogue, dialogical performance, templatic ratifying, echo speech, ceremonial greeting, ritual wailing, evidentiality, speech reporting practices, parallelism, special languages, and shamanistic language use. We hypothesize that in lowland South America, discourse is the matrix for linguistic diffusion, i.e., that linguistic areas emerge within discourse areas. What we propose then is a discourse-centered approach to language change and history, parallel to a discourse-centered approach to language structure and use. Our survey includes a plea for a careful archiving of recorded and written materials dealing with lowland South American discourse.

INTRODUCTION

This review presents an overview of discourse forms and processes in indigenous lowland South America from an areal-typological perspective. The areal-typological approach to language complements the body of scholarship on genetic relationships among languages and provides another view of history particularly appropriate to indigenous South America. The areal-typological perspective assumes contact between groups within geographic areas and across genetic language boundaries and assumes that intergroup social contact can lead to language change. The growing body of scholarship on South American discourse provides a basis for extending the areal-typological approach to the realm of discourse. This leads us to propose that a significant part of indigenous lowland South America is a discourse area, a region in which particular discourse forms and processes become shared owing to their diffusion between societies.
In the overview presented here, we outline the areas of research that support this view and suggest a number of avenues for future research from within this perspective. Research on discourse processes in indigenous lowland South America is entering an exciting new phase, owing to the growth of interest in discourse on the part of Latin American scholars and the development of new research tools that promise to make discourse-oriented research considerably easier. At present, several web-based archives are being developed that have the potential to profoundly change the nature of discourse-oriented research concerning indigenous Latin American languages and societies. One of the first archives now online, the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA; http://www.ailla.org), will enable researchers and members of indigenous communities to archive and access both audio and textual data of naturally occurring discourse. Data of this sort have previously been very difficult to make available and to share. The centralization of these data, combined with the ease of searching and accessing them through a resource such as AILLA, promises to increase the comparative research carried out on indigenous Latin American discourse and areal-typological research in particular. Similar projects focusing on indigenous languages of Mexico and Venezuela are being planned, and the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics is developing an archive for the DOBES project (http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES), a documentation project for endangered languages, which will include materials from indigenous Latin American languages.

This review of current knowledge of discourse forms and processes from an areal-typological perspective allows us to evaluate the current state of research on this topic, which in turn informs our recommendations for the most fruitful areas for future investigation.

THE CONCEPT OF DISCOURSE

In this review, we use the term discourse to refer to actual instances of language use and the patterning of these instances of language use into systems of communicative practice, including such types of organization as speech genres, participation frameworks, and the poetics of verbal performance.

As such, our use of the term discourse is distinct from Foucault’s notion of the term and distinct from the use of the term by many linguists to refer to grammatical organization above the level of the sentence. The Foucauldian use of the term is considerably broader than our own, encompassing not only communicative practice, but also systems of social and political practice more generally, as well as the ideological systems that animate these wide fields of practice. The conventional linguistic use of the term refers to aspects of discourse that can be abstracted from considerations of social interaction and organization. Our use of the term discourse is consistent with the meaning this term has come to have in linguistic anthropology.
AREAL-TYPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS IN INDIGENOUS LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICA

The areal-typological approach to language is one of two major ways in which relations between and among languages are investigated, the other of which is the genetic approach. The genetic approach is animated by the hypothesis that languages display systematic similarities because they are the result of a historical process of differentiation of a single ancestral language into multiple descendant languages. The assumption of the paramount importance of such genetic differentiation in historical processes of linguistic change has been so prevalent that, by and large, the term historical linguistics has been synonymous with the genetic hypothesis.

Many scholars, however, recognize that processes involving contact between speakers in different speech communities and of different languages must be taken into account to gain a full understanding of processes of language change and how languages are related to one another. In this latter approach, it is assumed that linguistic features of one language may be adopted by speakers of another language under circumstances of intense interaction. It is with this diffusionist perspective that the areal-typological approach to language is most commonly tied. An areal-typological approach combines a concern with typology — the classification of linguistic features in terms of descriptive categories or features dictated by a particular theoretical framework — and a concern with how such features are distributed among speech communities or languages in a particular geographical area (see Figure 1).

The recognition that genetic relationships are not the only relationships that can obtain between languages enables linguists to better understand the role of non-genetic diachronic processes in language change. Likewise, an areal-typological perspective can provide anthropologists with data that speak to the history and nature of intergroup interactions; this is especially valuable in lowland South America where other historical data, such as archaeological and written records, are scant if available at all. Areal-typological approaches thus provide an antidote to seeing indigenous groups as both isolated and ahistoric.

Areal-typological approaches to discourse allow anthropologists to see a region’s large-scale patterns, which provide a valuable complementary view to the detailed, focused ethnographies of particular indigenous groups. Also, because discourse forms appear to diffuse much more quickly and easily than grammatical features (see below), they provide complementary evidence to grammatical data for understanding historical interactions between indigenous groups. At the same time, the high social salience of discourse may provide evidence about the nature of intercultural interactions that grammatical evidence does not.

Figure 1  Approximate locations of languages mentioned in the text.

1999), and in the intermediate area between the two (Constenla Umaña 1991). A review and synthesis of areal-typological studies in the Americas is provided in Campbell 1997, which includes a listing of proposed linguistic areas. Areal-typological research to date has concentrated on the grammatical features of language. In this chapter, we take the notion of the linguistic area and extend it to the realm of discourse. Specifically, we propose the existence of a discourse area centered on the Amazon Basin, encompassing several adjacent regions in which discourse forms and processes are shared.

AREAL TYPOLOGY AND DISCOURSE IN INDIGENOUS LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICA

In this review we have chosen an areal-typological approach to discourse as a means to indicate large-scale patterns of similarity and difference in discourse practices among indigenous societies in lowland South America and as a way of synthesizing the research of many different scholars on discourse practices. For several reasons, this approach requires us to be at times tentative, and at other times suggestive; throughout the review, we are motivated by our goal to encourage a new perspective on discourse, to stimulate the further spinning out of the theoretical threads we draw together here, and most importantly, to encourage new research to pursue the empirical questions we raise.
Unlike typological studies addressing formal grammatical features, no commonly recognized theoretical or descriptive framework exists for the comparison of discourse forms and processes. We proceed then, by using particular discourse forms, such as ceremonial dialogue, that have caught the attention of scholars working in indigenous South America as the starting point for comparing and contrasting discourse forms across the continent. When possible, we suggest groupings of discourse forms and processes that bear resemblance to one another and axes of variation that can be used to organize the diversity of discourse forms we see.

Areally, we are presented with a different challenge: the uneven geographical distribution of discourse-oriented research in indigenous South America. Certain areas of the continent (e.g., the upper Xingu region) and certain indigenous groups (e.g., Achuar) have been the focus of thorough investigation by linguists and anthropologists; however, about many indigenous groups and large areas, we know little or nothing. Synthetic studies that map areal distributions of discourse forms and processes are relatively rare (Fock 1963; Urban 1986, 1988).

We write this review in large measure to encourage empirical and theoretical work to remedy these lacunae in our understanding of indigenous South American discourse.

The Greater Amazonian Discourse Area

In this review of discourse-related scholarship, we focus our attention on an area centered on the Amazon Basin and embracing several adjacent areas. This focus is linked to a proposal: that this area constitutes a discourse area. By this we mean that this region constitutes an area in which diverse cultural groups have come historically to share discursive practices through processes of intercultural contact and interaction.

This proposal is founded on two sets of facts. First, we observe in this area the widespread presence of a set of discourse forms and processes that cut across genetic linguistic families; and second, that many of these forms and processes intersect, overlap, and co-occur with one another in particular genres or in particular discourse settings, which suggests a high level of sociocultural salience and interconnectedness for these discourse forms and processes within lowland South America. Widespread forms in this discourse area include dialogical discourse forms of various kinds, including ceremonial dialogues, dialogical performances of verbal art, and marked dialogicality in everyday interactions, and they also include a focus on the epistemic status of utterances, manifested as a grammaticalized evidentiality system or through discursive evidential practices. In addition to these discourse processes and traits, which we discuss at length below, evidence from studies of narrative reveals distributions of themes and motifs that support the idea that this area is one in which discourse forms and processes share affinities that they do not share with discourse processes outside this area (Margery 1997).

The sources we review in this paper suggest a discourse area centering on the Amazon basin, including, in the north, the Orinoco basin, the Guianas, and
the Isthmus region; to the east, the Araguaia basin; and to the south, the upper Paraguay and Paraná basins. For ease of reference, we refer to this region as the greater Amazonian discourse area. By the use of this term we signal that the discourse area under question specifically excludes the Andean region and the southern lowlands of South America, including the Chaco and Patagonian regions.

We are not making claims here for a Greater Amazonian linguistic area, which would require that formal linguistic features be common to this area. The empirical status of the Amazon Basin and surrounding areas as a unified linguistic area is controversial, with some scholars supporting linguistic areas that coincide significantly with the discourse area proposed here (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998, Derbyshire & Pullum 1986, Derbyshire & Payne 1990), whereas others propose smaller areas, or areas that decompose this larger region into smaller ones (Constenla Umaña 1991, Klein 1992, Migliazza 1985). Thus the discourse area we propose may cross the boundary of at least two possible linguistic areas. Below, we discuss our hypothesis regarding the relationship of discourse areas to linguistic areas.

Though the northern and western boundaries of this discourse area are reasonably well defined (the Chibchan languages of Costa Rica in the north and the Andean edge of the Amazon, Orinoco, and Paraguay basins in the west), the southern and eastern boundaries are less certain, owing to our relative ignorance about the discourse processes found in indigenous groups of these areas. Furthermore, it is possible—even likely—that the pre-Columbian extent of the Greater Amazonian discourse area was larger than it is today. It is probable, for example, that the indigenous groups living east of the Araguaia basin, all the way to the Brazilian coast (e.g., Tupinambá), employed discourse features that we identify with the Greater Amazonian discourse area (e.g., ritual wailing, see below). However, the indigenous peoples of this eastern region, like those of the southern periphery of Greater Amazonia, were the earliest and most brutally affected by disease, slavery, and deliberate genocide. Similar comments can be made about the Caribbean region, about which our knowledge of pre-Columbian indigenous discourse forms is so limited that we can only speculate as to whether or not the discourse practices of indigenous groups of this region were related to those of the Amazon Basin.

Our present knowledge of discourse subareas within the Greater Amazonian discourse area includes evidence that the upper Xingu area of central Brazil and the Vaupes region of the northwestern Brazilian/Columbia border form discourse subareas (see below).

AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP ON INDIGENOUS LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICAN DISCOURSE

The body of research most relevant to this review is the work of scholars in the ethnography of speaking and discourse-centered approach to culture traditions. Some works in these traditions seek to describe, typologize, and analyze the major speech genres in the indigenous societies being studied (Juncosa 2000 for Shuar;
Sherzer 1983 for Kuna), whereas other studies focus on a single speech genre or a set of closely related genres (e.g., Basso 1995 for Kalapalo; Franchetto 1997 for Kuikuro; Gnerre 1986 for Shuar; Graham 1995 for Xavante; Maia 1997 for Karajá; Urban 1991 for Shokleng), or on the analysis of a set of performances or texts (Hendricks 1993 for Shuar).

A central concern in this tradition has been with the structures, significance, and social dynamics of the performance of verbal art, including Sherzer 1990, 1987, 1986 for Kuna; Severi 1990 for Kuna; Briggs 1990 for Warao; McDowell 1994 for Kamsá; Hill 1993 for Wakuénai; Constenla Umaña 2000 for Guatuso; de Gerdes 2000 for Kuna; Graham 2000 for Shavante; Hendricks 1993 for Shuar; Beier 2001 for Nanti; Basso 1985, 1987, 1995 for Kalapalo; Franchetto 1997 for Kuikuro; Maia 1997 for Karajá; and Jara 1989 for Turukaere. Like most work in the ethnography of speaking tradition, this research focuses on the analysis of indigenous language texts derived from audio recordings, informed by detailed ethnographic research. This body of research is discussed in greater detail below.

In the 1990s, a concern emerged to extend these ethnographic approaches to include interaction between indigenous societies and nonindigenous populations. This has included an interest in understanding how indigenous discourse is implicated in resistance to nation-state hegemony (Hill 1990); how discourse in indigenous societies is involved in the maintenance and contestation of community (McDowell 1990); and how discourse is implicated in asymmetrical relationships in these societies (Kane 1990).

Merging at times with the ethnography of speaking and discourse-centered approaches is the field of ethnopoetics. Research in that field characteristically focuses on aspects of poetic structure in indigenous verbal art forms (Constenla Umaña 1996 for Chibchan languages; Constenla Umaña 2000 for Guatuso; Franchetto 1989 for Kuikuro; Seeger 1986 for Suyá; Uzendoski 1999 for Napo Quechua), but increasingly, ethnopoetic studies are given sophisticated ethnographic contextualizations (Briggs 2000 for Warao; Graham 1986 for Shavante; Jara 1989 for Turukaere; Maia 1997 for Karajá; Sherzer 1990 for Kuna).

It is important to note that there are scholars working outside the ethnography of speaking tradition that have developed parallel concerns with the ethnographic contextualization of discourse forms studied as actual instances of communicative action (Agerkop 1989 for Kaliña, Wayana, and Turuaekare; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996 for Desana; Taylor & Chau 1983 for Achuar). These scholars similarly base their analyses on a combination of carefully transcribed indigenous language texts and ethnographic research.

Though the discourse-centered and ethnographically contextualized work just discussed is the focus of this chapter, there are other scholarly traditions touching on discourse that are relevant to our concerns, including studies of narrative and myth and of pragmatics.

Any discussion of discourse-related research in lowland South America must also acknowledge the importance of studies of myth. The collection of myths in textual form by missionaries, travelers, and ethnographers was already a venerable
practice by the time that Claude Lévi-Strauss’ structural studies of South American myth (Lévi-Strauss 1969) made the study of mythology a central concern for several generations of anthropologists and folklorists working in lowland South America. Well into the 1980s, structuralist studies of myth remained dominant (e.g., Weiss 1983 for Asháníinka; Magañà & Jara 1983 for Kaliña; Bastien & Olson 1984 for Wayapí; Balzano 1984 for Chacobo; Magañà 1989 for Wayana; Roe 1991a for Shipibo; Cipoletti 1987 for Siona and Secoya; Escribano 2000 for Muisca (Chibcha); Vázquez 1991 for Sirionó; Roe 1991b for Waiwai.) The vast majority of this research, although based on discourse circulating in indigenous communities, was ultimately unconcerned with myths as instances of communicative activity in particular social and cultural contexts. In this tradition, even the textual organization of myths was of modest interest, thereby eliding issues of ethnopoetics as well as those of ethnography.

In the 1980s and into the early 1990s, however, studies of myth in lowland South America began to change in several ways that aligned them more closely with ethnographic approaches to discourse. These included increasing interest in transcribed indigenous language texts [e.g., Bellier 1983, 1987 for Orejon (Mai Huna); Queixalos 1985 for Sikuani; Margery 1990 for Bocotá; Robayo 1989 for Carijona] and attempts to understand myths as manifestations of or commentary on cultural themes (Dean 1994 for Urarina; Renard-Casevitz 1991 for Matsigenka; Sturm 1991 for Mbya-Guarani; Guss 1991 for Yekuana; Perrin 1987 for Guajiro).

By the 1990s, the trend away from structuralist decontextualized understandings of myth extended in one direction as attempts to understand how myths served as discursive arenas of contestation within a culture, and extended in another direction as fields of resistance or accommodation to the hegemonic powers of nation states and their elites (Langdon 1991 for Siona; Hendricks 1990 for Shuar; Hill 1990 for Wakuénai; Howe 1994 for Kuna; Hugh-Jones 1988; Jara 1993 for Bribri; Reeve 1988 for Arapaco; Hill & Wright 1988 for Shipibo; Silverblatt 1988 for Kayapó).

Structuralist approaches were not the only early approaches to myth. Another, principally folkloristic, interest in myth and narrative flourished under the rubric of indigenous literature. A principal concern in this tradition involved the areal distribution of folktale motifs. Many scattered texts have been brought together in the edited series from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (Wilbert 1970 for Warao; Wilbert & Simoneau 1978 for Ge; Wilbert & Simoneau 1983 for Bororo; Wilbert et al. 1986 for Guajiro; Wilbert & Simoneau 1990a for Yaruro; Wilbert & Simoneau 1990b for Yanomami; Wilbert & Simoneau 1991 for Cuiva; Wilbert & Simoneau 1992 for Sikuani). The texts in these volumes are overwhelmingly prose recounts of indigenous myths and narratives in English. In contrast, two journals in which a significant number of indigenous literature texts have been published over the past 15 years, the Latin American Indigenous Literatures Journal and especially Amerindia, have typically included indigenous language versions of the published texts.

Text collections of a folkloristic nature have become increasingly common in Latin America. Some of this work includes transcribed and translated indigenous
texts (Hidalgo 1997 for Bribri; Margery 1990 for Bocotá; Juajibioy Chindoy 1989 for Kamsá; McDowell 1989, 2000 for Kamsa and Ingano; Rueda & Tankamash 1983 for Achuar), whereas others are Spanish prose recounts in a novelistic style (Ochoa Siguas 1999 for Bora; Hidalgo 1997 for Bribri; Kuyoteca Jikomui & Restrepo Gonzalez 1997 for Witoto). Some work in this tradition bears increasing resemblance to scholarship in the ethnopoetic tradition as it engages with indigenous language texts and extends its analysis beyond that of motifs (Margery 1991 for Bocotá; Jara 1991 for Bribri).

As this overview attests, discourse-related research in indigenous lowland South America has overwhelmingly focused on artistic and highly performative aspects of discourse including myths, performances of verbal art, songs, and oratory, although some researchers also make reference to everyday discourse practices (Sherzer 1983 for Kuna; Briggs 1993a,b for Warao; Müller 1990 for Assurini; Orlandi et al. 1991). In recent years some researchers have begun to turn their attention to the more quotidian aspects of discourse, long the domain of pragmatics, conversational analysis, and certain styles of discourse analysis focusing on global languages. This work includes interest in discourse referentiality (Clemente de Souza 1997 for Baikiri), pragmatic principles of utterance structure (Clemente de Souza 1991 for Baikiri; Soares 1991 for Tikuna), and the pragmatics of reported speech (Michael 2001a,b for Nanti).

A significant development that crosscuts the areas of discourse-related research and writing discussed so far is the emergence in the 1980s of literary authors, anthropologists, and linguists from lowland South American indigenous groups often writing in their own languages. These authors and scholars produce works in areas as diverse as fiction, poetry, and oral tradition (Jusayú 1989 for Wayuu [Guajiro]; Kungiler 1997 and http://dulenega.nativeweb.org for Kuna), discourse-based linguistics (Juajibioy Chindoy 1989 for Kamsá [Kamentsa]), studies of myth (Rueda & Tankamash 1983 for Shuar; Kuyoteca Jikomui & Restrepo González 1997 for Witoto), and collections of oral history and cultural commentary (Vyjkág & Toral 1997 for Kaingang). Critical works on indigenous literature are already appearing (Ferrer & Rodríguez 1998, Vázquez 1999).

We add a final observation here that in addition to works focused explicitly on discourse, numerous ethnographies provide glimpses of the wealth of discourse processes in indigenous lowland South American societies. These glimpses suggest diverse avenues for research to add to the growing body of descriptive and analytical work in the linguistic anthropology of lowland South America.

**TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DISCOURSE IN GREATER AMAZONIA**

We begin our areal-typological discussion of discourse forms and processes with those that have been the focus of extensive research within particular ethnographic contexts and that have also been previously considered from areal and typological
perspectives. This discussion examines widespread processes of dialogicality, which include forms such as ceremonial dialogue, dialogical performance, templatic ratifying, and echo speech; ceremonial greeting; ritual wailing; evidentiality; and speech reporting practices.

Dialogicality

In speaking of the prevalence of dialogicality in lowland indigenous South America, we are referring specifically to the pervasiveness of dialogical discourse forms that are relatively fixed in structure and are usually associated with particular discourse contexts. We refer to these dialogical discourse forms as templatic dialogicality.

The discourse forms and processes that have received the greatest comparative attention by scholars of indigenous lowland South America are those classified as ceremonial dialogue (Fock 1963, Rivière 1971, Urban 1986). In addition, linguists and anthropologists have observed many other forms of discursive interaction that are significantly dialogical in nature and may bear substantial interactional resemblance to ceremonial dialogues. These highly structured dialogical interactions are perhaps the most widespread and socially significant areal discourse feature of lowland indigenous South America. In this section we propose a preliminary typological framework for their analysis and classification and discuss aspects of the areal distribution of dialogical discourse forms.

It is useful to understand dialogical discourse forms along three classificatory axes: verbal form, interactional framework, and sociocultural salience. These axes are, of course, applicable to all discourse, but in the case of context-dependent structured dialogical interaction, verbal form and interactional framework are constrained in certain ways to yield what we term templatic dialogicality. Specifically, templatic dialogical discourse forms are characterized by an interactional framework in which the discursive roles of the participants are quite delimited (e.g., with one person serving as a principal speaker and the other as responder) and which frequently assigns to those roles certain discursive resources and disallows others (e.g., preferences for highly allusive or parallelistic speech, or special, possibly esoteric, languages).

Templatic dialogicality can have different sociocultural salience in different societies, so that in one society (e.g., Shokleng), templatic dialogical discourse forms are highly ceremonial, whereas among other societies (e.g., Nanti), they are minimally ceremonial, if at all. Similarly, templatic dialogicality is employed for myth-tellings in certain societies (Shokleng, Kalapalo, Kuna); for greetings in others (Achuar); and for reports of important news or the giving of important instructions in others (Nanti).

Likewise, interactional frameworks can vary considerably, from the rigid chanting chief-and-responder framework of the Kuna, to the framework of Achuar ceremonial greetings in which the two interactants exchange roles of principal speaker and responder in the course of the interaction. Finally, verbal form can vary from the syllable-by-syllable alternation between speakers found in certain verbal art
forms among the Shokleng, to alternations between long sequences of chanted utterances (e.g., Nanti).

Among the various forms of dialogical performance described for indigenous lowland South America are dialogical myth performance for Shokleng (Urban 1991), xarintaa chanting for Nanti (Beier 2001), kamarataka chanting for Curripaco (Journet 2000), and dialogical performance of formal narratives throughout the Chibchan area (Constenla Umaña 1996, Pereira 1983).

Forms of templatic ratifying, in which the responder interjects minimal utterances at expected points during the speech of the principal speaker are described for Kuna, in which the responder overlaps the final vowel of the principal speaker (Sherzer 1983); in the Kalapalo “what-saying” in narratives (Basso 1985, 1987); in the oho-karí or “yes saying” for Waiwai (Fock 1963).

Another form of dialogic interaction reported for Amazonian societies is echo speech, in which an individual who is being addressed repeats the utterances of the principal speaker in whole or in part, without interrupting the speaker’s turn at talk. Among the Nanti of southeastern Peru, for example, recipients of an engaging narrative will frequently repeat large portions of the narrative in an undertone while it is being told, with a delay of roughly one half a second. Extensive echoing is also frequent in Nanti interactions of substantial political and social importance, and some degree of echoing is common in everyday interactions. Sorenson (1972, pp. 83–84) describes a very similar phenomenon among the indigenous groups of the Vaupes region; he indicates that echo speech is “a formal conversational device indicating understanding, assent, and respect.” According to Sorenson, the completeness of echoing is related to the formality of the interactional setting, with more formal settings calling forth more complete echoing of another’s speech. It is interesting that Gnerre has described a mixed echo speech and ratifying pattern within dialogical performances in Achuar and Shuar discourse (1986), bringing together in one interaction elements of all the processes discussed above.

The above typological framework for dialogicality is intended to serve primarily as a descriptive and heuristic one for the early stages of typological research; we fully expect it to be superceded by a finer and more empirically founded typology as research advances. Likewise, fully assessing the areal distribution of these traits is a matter that awaits future research.

In closing our discussion of dialogicality, it is important to note that scholars working in indigenous communities have observed dramatic shifts in indigenous discourse forms as these societies come more and more under the influence of literate and monologic models for speech production (see Gnerre 1986, Sherzer 1994).

Ceremonial Greeting

Highly marked and elaborated greeting processes are widespread in lowland indigenous South America. Characteristics of these greetings include the use of templatic dialogicality, the use of special vocal channels, marked use of the body, and use of prolonged silence. It is not uncommon for ceremonial greetings to be reserved for individuals with special status or for greetings after prolonged absences.
Ceremonial dialogic greetings are usually chanted and involve special, often metaphorical, vocabulary and patterned overlap in voices. Among the Kuna and Shuar, a series of questions on the part of one greeter is punctuated by regular, largely nonreferential ratifications by the second; then follows a series of answers by the second greeter, punctuated with regular ratifications by the first (Sherzer 1983, 1990; Gnerre 1986). Dialogic greetings have also been documented among the Yanomami (Lizot 1994, 2000).

Ceremonial greetings need not be principally verbal but can be constituted through body comportment and kinesics (Erickson 2000 for Chacobo; Basso 2000 for Kalapalo; Kensinger 1995 for Cashinahua; Galvis 1995 for Bari). In some societies, socially marked greetings are in fact indicated through careful avoidance or minimization of speech (Erickson 2000 for Matsés [Matis]); Sherzer 1999 for Kuna; L. Michael & C. Beier, personal observation for Nanti; Huxley & Capa 1964 for Amawaka [Amahuaca]).

The use of special vocal channels in ceremonial greetings is also noted, such as crying or wailing greetings described among the Tupinambá and the Tapirapé of Brazil (Baldus 1970 for Tupinambá; Wagley 1977 for Tapirapé; Kensinger 1995 for Cashinahua; Siskind 1973 for Sharanahua; Galvão 1996 for Kamaiurá). A falsetto voice is used among some Yaminahua groups of Peru (Michael & Beier, personal observation).

In a recent work, Erickson suggests that the presence of ceremonial greetings in a society is reflective of hierarchical forms of social organization and that ceremonial greetings are not employed in more egalitarian societies (Erikson 2000). Urban has observed that ceremonial dialogical greetings appear to be associated with societies in which relations between subgroups are marked with potential conflict (Urban 1991).

Ritual Wailing

Though forms of ritual wailing have been identified throughout indigenous South America, ritual wailing has been described most extensively for Brazil, beginning with the observations by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travelers of the “welcome of tears” performed by the now-extinct Tupinambá groups of coastal Brazil (Baldus 1970, Wagley 1977). Styles of ritual wailing have also been described in detail for the Tapirapé (Wagley 1977), the Shokleng and Bororo (Urban 1988), the Shavante (Graham 1986), the Warao (Briggs 1993c); and the Karajá (Maia 1997).

Using recorded data from the Shokleng, Shavante, and Bororo, Urban (1988) discusses, from a comparative perspective, ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil. Urban first addresses the similarities in form that originally led to the notion of ritual wailing in the anthropological literature; these styles share “sound shape features with crying” and occur “in contexts that include those associated with sadness” (Urban 1988, p. 385). Noting the cultural specificity of each group’s form of ritual wailing, Urban analyzes the common semiotic function of wailing across these cultures and proposes the following commonplace: “(1) the existence of a musical line, marked by a characteristic intonational contour and rhythmic..."
structure; (2) the use of various icons of crying; and (3) the absence of an actual addressee, which renders the ritual wailing an overtly monologic or expressive device . . . ” (Urban 1988, p. 386).

In identifying these core features, Urban’s work provides an excellent point of departure for building an areal typology of ritual wailing across indigenous lowland South America. These features allow us to identify forms of ritual wailing described but not identified as such in existing ethnographies; for example, Siskind describes circumstances in which Sharanahuan women wail or weep (Siskind 1973); and Sherzer describes tuneful weeping and lament performed by Kuna women in the presence of death (Sherzer 1983).

Evidential Systems in Discourse

Evidentiality, or the grammatical marking of the epistemological status and basis of utterances, has been proposed as an areal feature of languages of the Amazon basin and adjacent areas (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998). The possibility that evidentiality is an areal feature is significant in two ways for future areal-typological studies of discourse.

First, the discursive use of evidential systems is empirically and theoretically nontrivial (Hill & Irvine 1993), requiring an account of how evidentials are actually employed in talk. Thus, though a language may possess a quotative marker, which is nominally obligatory, the circumstances of its use in actual communicative interaction remains uncertain. In Nanti, for example, an inferential knowledge marker is not used for certain knowledge claims that, strictly speaking, are inferential but are locally considered to be sound knowledge (Michael 2001a,b). Thus, though a grammatical marker exists to convey a particular evidential status, the assessment of which knowledge claims in discourse have that particular evidential status is not a grammatical fact but rather a culturally mediated assessment that no doubt also reflects immediate communicative needs and contextual factors (Gomez-Imbert 1986 for Tatuyo). The widespread existence of grammaticalized systems of evidentiality in indigenous lowland South America therefore calls for ethnographic studies that examine their use in discourse and interaction.

Second, studies suggest that evidential systems can also be realized primarily through discursive, nongrammatical processes. Nanti speakers evince great concern about the epistemological status of knowledge claims in discourse, distinguishing among knowledge claims based on direct experience, those based on inference and partial knowledge, and those based on information obtained through talk with others (Michael 2001a,b). Nanti discourse can be said to have an evidential system in that the epistemological status of any knowledge claim can be determined, but only knowledge claims based on inference or partial knowledge are marked morphologically by the use of a clitic /-ka/. Knowledge claims based on information gained through talk are marked by the use of direct quotation, which is consequently an important feature of everyday Nanti discourse, and knowledge claims that are based on direct experience are unmarked. These facts raise an intriguing possibility: that a prominent concern with epistemological matters is an areal cultural feature, which in some cases becomes grammaticalized as part of the
Speech Reporting Practices

Speech reporting practices in indigenous societies in lowland South America display several features that are not widely documented in other areas of the world and that may constitute areal features of speech reporting practices. One candidate areal feature is the predominant use of reported speech to represent human agency and subjectivity in discourse. In societies where this is the case, communication about the agency or subjectivity of individuals does not rely on direct reference to mental or emotional states and processes, such as beliefs or decisions but instead typically involves reporting the speech of the individuals in question.

In describing the use of reported speech among the Kalapalo, a Carib group of the Upper Xingu area, Basso notes that the motives, attitudes, and emotions of individuals in Kalapalo stories are “realized through their quoted speech, rather than through labels or a narrator’s more direct description of feelings and motives” (Basso 1995, p. 295; Basso 1986). Striking parallels can be found in the speech reporting practices of the Nanti, an Arawak group of southeastern Peru (Michael 2001a,b). In interactions among Nanti individuals, discussions of human agency and subjectivity by direct references to notions such as beliefs, decisions, or attitudes are very rarely made, as are references to speech acts like orders or requests. Instead, Nanti individuals predominantly report the speech of others (or themselves) that manifests a belief, indicates a decision, or constitutes a request.

Relatively few detailed ethnographic studies examine the use of reported speech in lowland South American discourse, and it is therefore notable that these studies have found two societies on opposite peripheries of the Amazon Basin in which reported speech has similar roles. Several formalistic studies of discourse also suggest similar uses of reported speech in other societies (Larson 1978 for Aguaruna; Kerr 1976 for Cuiva; Waltz 1976 for Andoke).

The social and strategic uses of reported speech constitute another dimension for the comparison and typological classification of speech reporting practices. It has been observed that in some societies, reported speech is employed to distance utterances from the speaker (Sherzer 1983 for Kuna), contributing to the authoritative status of utterances, whereas in other societies, reported speech is employed to unambiguously associate utterances with specific speakers (Michael 2001b for Nanti), thereby situating and qualifying knowledge claims.

AREALLY SIGNIFICANT DISCOURSE FORMS AND PROCESSES IN GREATER AMAZONIA

We now turn to a discussion of discourse forms and processes whose unique manifestations throughout lowland South America have been the focus of descriptive research, but which remain to be studied comparatively. These include parallelism, special languages, and shamanistic language use.
Parallelism

Parallelism is typically understood as the patterned repetition of some discursive unit, such as a poetic line or a clause. The pattern relies on alternation of some element of the discursive unit between repeated instances of the discursive unit. Possible alternations include those that are lexical, phonological, morphological, or intonational. In paradigmatic cases, the alternation is minimal, so that there is only a single difference between the repeated discourse units along whatever axis of alternation is relevant.

Although parallelism is likely a poetic device found throughout human discourse, extensive and pervasive parallelism is especially characteristic of ritual speaking and chanting in the greater Amazonian discourse area. It is also likely that areally unique forms of parallelism are employed in this area.

A widespread form of parallelism in lowland South America, syntactic frame repetition with semantic field alternation, consists of the repetition of a poetic line or clause with the alternation of a single lexical item in the same syntactic position between the repeated lines. The alternation consists of different lexical items from a particular semantic field, such as body parts, color terms, shapes, or kinds of action.

Though it is common for parallelism of this sort to operate between successive lines, parallelism may also operate between discourse units that are separated from each other. This form of parallelism sometimes serves to mark large-scale units in a stretch of discourse, like a stanza or an episode.

Other forms of parallelism found in indigenous lowland South American discourse include syntactic frame repetition with zero alternation in which a lexical item, phrase, or clause is deleted; unit repetition with intonation contour alternation; and nonreferential morpheme alternation with identical lexical roots.

Another form of structural parallelism is found in Curripaco (Journet 2000) and Nanti verbal art, in which parallelism is not created by syntactic, lexical, or morphological similarities between lines, but rather by prosodic resemblances. Nanti xarintaa chanting, a form of extemporaneous verbal art performed during weekly feasts, consists of chanted lines in which lexical items can vary freely, but for which the matrix prosodic pattern is relatively fixed. Performers alter the prosodic characteristics of lexical items to match the matrix prosodic pattern through processes of truncation, lengthening, syllable duplication, and affixation of nonreferential morphemes (Beier 2001). Parallelism is omnipresent in Chibchan oral literature, including the use of difrasismos, in which two-way lexical alternations serve to signify a third semantically nontransparent entity, reminiscent of certain poetic forms in the Mesoamerican area (Constenla Umaña 1996).

It is important to note that parallelism is not restricted to monological discourse forms in which alternations occur between discourse units repeated by a single speaker; it can also occur in dialogical discourse forms where parallelistic effects are achieved through the distinct discursive contributions of two interactants (Beier 2001 for Nanti; Journet 2000 for Curripaco; Urban 1991 for Shokleng).
Special Languages

Special languages are varieties of language that differ from everyday, ordinary language in their phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, lexicon, discourse form, and/or modality; they are used in particular social and cultural contexts, particularly in play and in ritual. Specialized vocabulary, perhaps the most common feature of special languages, often differs from everyday vocabulary in that it is esoteric—that is, not known to nonspecialists—and may rely heavily on metaphor. Special vocabulary may include archaisms or borrowings whose referential meaning may or may not be known to the specialist. Common social contexts for the use of special languages include political discourse, curing practices, and lifecycle rituals such as puberty rites and funerary rites (Basso 1973 for Kalapalo; Beier 2001 for Nanti; Botero Verswyvel 1987 for Kogi; Cervantes Gamboa 1990 for Bribri; Constenla Umaña 1990 for Bribri; Constenla Umaña 1996 for Chibchan languages; Franchetto 1983, 2000 for Kuikuro; Gregor 1977 for Mehinaku; Migliazza 1972 for Yanomami; Monod Bequelin 1975 for Trumai; Seeger 1987 for Suyá; Sherzer 1983 for Kuna).

Shamanism and Language

In many societies in indigenous lowland South America, specific discourse forms are often associated with curing practices, divination, prophecy, and forms of magic (Bidou & Perrin 1988). The individuals who engage in this communication are often labeled shamans by scholars. Though no systematic comparative or areal-typological study of shamanic discourse exists, a considerable body of work focusing on, or making reference to, shamanic discursive practice does exist (Buchillet 1990).

Shamanic discourse frequently involves the use of special languages and is often unintelligible to nonspecialists; it is also common for shamans to use marked vocal channels, such as chanting, singing, whispering, or blowing (Baer 1994 for Matsigenka; Buchillet 1992 for Desana; Siskind 1973 for Sharanahua; Sherzer 1983, 1988 for Kuna; Seeger 1987 for Suyá; Cipolletti 1988 for Secoya; Bidou 1988 for Tatuyo; Perrin 1988 for Guajiro; Bellier 1988 for Orejon [Mai Huna]). An understanding of the typological dimensions of shamanistic language use in indigenous lowland South America awaits systematic comparative study.

DISCOURSE AREAS AND LINGUISTIC AREAS

Areal-typological approaches to discourse may serve to illuminate the processes by which linguistic areas are formed. Though scholars have always assumed that borrowing processes of some type are responsible for the genesis of linguistic areas, the mechanisms of this borrowing process have remained unclear. Evidence from certain areas of Amazonia strongly suggests that the formation of linguistic areas may be mediated through the formation of discourse areas. The social context
for the sharing of discourse forms and processes is that throughout the area under discussion, from the period of our earliest knowledge up to the present day, there is much travel, bilingualism, intermarriage, and trade. In this view, linguistically distinct cultural groups in a given area come into contact and begin to interact intensely, borrowing discourse forms and processes from one another, such as myths, songs, and even entire ceremonies. Subsequently, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and/or semantic features embedded in these borrowed discourse forms begin to surface in the grammar of the group that has borrowed the discourse forms. In this picture, the sharing of discourse forms, which can be motivated on political and cultural grounds, mediates the borrowing of grammatical forms.

An excellent example of this process seems to be found among the indigenous groups of the upper Xingu region. This region is particularly interesting for purposes of research into language contact because only 10 of the 17 indigenous groups in the area have lived there for more than a century, and many of these have not resided in the region for more than a few centuries (Seki 1999). The origin of the upper Xingu area as a culture area has been dated to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (Heckenberger 1996). As either a discourse or linguistic area, then, the upper Xingu area is quite young, and the diachronic processes leading to the formation of such an area are still very active.

The ethnographic and linguistic research carried out in the Upper Xingu region since the 1950s provides a substantial preliminary base of data with which to investigate this question. These data indicate that there has been substantial borrowing of discourse forms related to ceremonial practices, public performances of verbal art, and chiefly oratory (Basso 1973, 1995 for Kalapalo; Monod Bequelin 1975 for Trumai; Seki 1999 for Kamaiurá; Franchetto 2000 for Kuikuro; Seeger 1987 for Suyá).

Seki has recently proposed that the upper Xingu region is an incipient linguistic area and that Xinguan languages share several features not present in languages to which they are genetically related (Seki 1999). What we find in the Upper Xingu region, then, is the substantial diffusion of a number of discourse forms related to ceremonial practice and verbal art, a process that has been underway in the region for at least 50 years, if not in some cases much longer, accompanied by the diffusion of a small number of linguistic features. Discourse diffusion appears to have thus preceded linguistic diffusion. Similarly, more discourse forms appear to have spread between indigenous groups in the Upper Xingu area than between linguistic groups. This makes plausible the hypothesis that the diffusion of discourse forms are the primary means of diffusion of language-related phenomena, including strictly linguistic forms. In short, linguistic forms are diffused by means of the discourse forms that contain them, which can subsequently become adopted into everyday speech.

The Upper Xingu is an excellent laboratory for studying the diachronic processes of discourse area formation, linguistic area formation, and the link between the two. Given the burgeoning interest among researchers in discourse, in Latin America and elsewhere, we can likely look forward to many revealing findings about these topics.
Another region in which a relationship between linguistic area and discourse area can be hypothesized is the Içana-Vaupes basin of the Brazilian-Columbian border, which has already been proposed as a linguistic area by Aikhenvald (1999). Observations by researchers (Sorenson 1972, Chernela 1993) suggest to us the presence of widely shared discourse forms and processes that strongly merit attention.

**A VIEW TO THE FUTURE**

We close with a summary of our suggestions for future research, in light of the overview and synthesis this review has offered. First and foremost, there is a need for more linguistic anthropological fieldwork. Indigenous lowland South American discourse forms are presently endangered for many sociopolitical reasons. In addition to documenting these unique forms of human expression, the commitment and interest linguistic anthropologists show toward indigenous discourse forms bring a much-needed alternative perspective on the value of indigenous discourse to communities by and large discouraged to continue using indigenous forms of communication.

Second, renewed efforts are needed to make available existing data from lowland South American discourse to other researchers and indigenous language speakers. Over the five decades that anthropologists and linguists have worked with recording technology, vast quantities of irreplaceable data have been gathered and only a fraction of it has been analyzed or published. In most cases, these data are extremely vulnerable to physical deterioration or loss. With the recent development of innovative digital archiving technology such as is offered by the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA, http://www.ailla.org), scholars interested in indigenous lowland South American discourse can now ensure both the preservation and the accessibility of their data corpuses. In addition, online language archives provide researchers with a means to fulfill their obligation to make their data available to the originating communities.

In the course of preparing this chapter, it became increasingly apparent that important and high-quality research focused on indigenous lowland South America has been carried out by scholars across several continents and in many countries, but that this research has frequently been published in ways that limit its circulation and access to it. Thus, a scholarly infrastructure for comparative and typological studies of indigenous discourse is still in its incipient stages. It can be hoped that online archives like AILLA can serve a role in facilitating the exchange and sharing of scholarly studies and discourse data, thereby bringing together the work of the many dedicated scholars now examining indigenous discourse forms and processes in South America.

Third, there is a great need to align existing terminologies and frameworks in order to allow for cross-cultural comparisons in more systematic ways. Without a concerted collaborative effort to generate consistent and robust typologies, valuable insights on indigenous discourse, and on the greater Amazon discourse area more
specifically, will be missed. Without erasing or diminishing the merit of diverse schools of description and analysis, efforts to map between terminologies and frameworks will enable the kinds of comparative and systematic research that we are calling for here.

And lastly, there is a need for new comparative and synthetic research drawing from the wealth of disparate data on indigenous lowland South American discourse forms and processes—research which takes as its point of departure an arealtypological perspective informed by the various arguments put forth in this chapter. It is our hope that this review has offered the reader a new and broader perspective on both the remarkable range of creative forms found in indigenous lowland South America and on the patterns found within them that speak to the intricate web of human relationships formed over time in greater Amazonia.

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## CONTENTS

**Frontispiece**—Clifford Geertz

### OVERVIEW

*An Inconstant Profession: The Anthropological Life in Interesting Times*, Clifford Geertz

### ARCHAEOLOGY

*The Politics of Archaeology in Africa*, Nick Shepherd

*The Intersections of Identity and Politics in Archaeology*, Lynn Meskell

*The Upper Paleolithic Revolution*, Ofer Bar-Yosef

### BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

*The Form and Function of Reconciliation in Primates*, Joan B. Silk

*Current Topics in Primate Socioendocrinology*, Fred B. Bercovitch and Toni E. Ziegler

*Variation in Human Body Size and Shape*, Christopher Ruff


*Energetics and the Evolution of the Genus Homo, Leslie C. Aiello and Jonathan C. K. Wells*

### LINGUISTICS AND COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES

*Signs of Their Times: Deaf Communities and the Culture of Language*, Richard J. Senghas and Leila Monaghan

*Discourse Forms and Processes in Indigenous Lowland South America: An Areal-Typological Perspective*, Christine Beier, Lev Michael, and Joel Sherzer

CONTENTS

REGIONAL STUDIES

Religion in South Asia, Peter van der Veer 173
African Presence in Former Soviet Spaces, Kesha Fikes and Alaina Lemon 497

SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Anthropology of Food and Eating, Sidney W. Mintz and Christine M. Du Bois 99
Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions, Catherine Panter-Brick 147
Weber and Anthropology, Charles F. Keyes 233
Contemporary Trends in Infant Feeding Research, Penny Van Esterik 257
Laboring in the Factories and in the Fields, Sutti Ortiz 395
Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life, Nicholas P. De Genova 419
The Anthropology of Online Communities, Samuel M. Wilson and Leighton C. Peterson 449
Toward an Anthropology of Democracy, Julia Paley 469
Youth and Cultural Practice, Mary Bucholtz 525

THEME I: CHILDHOOD

Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions, Catherine Panter-Brick 147
Contemporary Trends in Infant Feeding Research, Penny Van Esterik 257
Youth and Cultural Practice, Mary Bucholtz 525

THEME II: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The Form and Function of Reconciliation in Primates, Joan B. Silk 21
The Anthropology of Food and Eating, Sidney W. Mintz and Christine M. Du Bois 99
Contemporary Trends in Infant Feeding Research, Penny Van Esterik 257
Laboring in the Factories and in the Fields, Sutti Ortiz 395
Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life, Nicholas P. De Genova 419
The Anthropology of Online Communities, Samuel M. Wilson and Leighton C. Peterson 449
CONTENTS

INDEXES

Subject Index 553
Cumulative Index of Contributing Authors, Volumes 23–31 563
Cumulative Index of Chapter Titles, Volumes 23–31 566

ERRATA

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