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Language and Communication Processes

KIMBERLY A. NOELS, HOWARD GILES, and BETH LE POIRE

It is difficult to think of 'social' behavior taking place without communication; indeed, virtually all of the topics addressed by social psychologists implicate the communication of messages between individuals. It is even arguable that the social being exists only as a result of language and communication processes, such that the self, relationships, and other social phenomena are not simply mediated by, but are constituted through, these processes. Despite their evident importance, until rather recently, social psychologists have seldom explicitly addressed communication processes in social interaction (Farr, 1980). Kroger and Wood (1992) traced the prominence of language in texts of American social psychology and noted that it was rarely considered as a topic of scholarly inquiry, and researchers who were interested in this area were infrequently cited (see also Van Dijk, 1990). Indeed, in his review in 1967 of communication processes and language as a field of social psychology, Moscovici lamented the lack of systematic investigations of the role of language in individual and group interactions. It would appear, however, that over the last few decades interest in these processes has awakened with vigorous energy (cf. Clément and Laplante, 1983). This 'turn to language' in social psychology (Billig, 2001; Wood and Kroger, 2000) promises to enrich social psychological understanding of this essential aspect of social interaction.

As exciting as this development is, it would be inappropriate to think that a single research agenda dominates the field. Perhaps because of its novelty and the diversity of disciplines that inform it (including sociology, linguistics, cognitive psychology, communication science, and others), this subdiscipline of social psychology is replete with ideas about how to define the topic, the level of analysis at which it should be studied, and the appropriate methods for doing so. This chapter provides an overview of some of the major theoretical perspectives, and offers examples of research programs in areas of interest to social psychologists, surveying primarily intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup processes. Due to space constraints, we do not claim to be inclusive; indeed, the field is large enough support its own handbook. Rather, our hope is to provide the reader with a general understanding of the various ways in which social psychologists have conceptualized language and communication and the kinds of issues they have studied.

What is communication?

Broadly defined, communication is a dynamic process of transmitting and receiving meaningful information (cf. Clément and Noels, 1994; Krauss and Chiu, 1998). Much early work on communication followed the Shannon and Weaver model (1949), in which communication is represented as a vehicle for the direct linear transmission of information, disrupted only by the presence of 'noise' (Berlo, 1960). Terms associated with this 'conduit' or 'hyperdermic' model continue to be used today, whereby communication is assumed to involve a message source (or sender, encoder), a message (or

code, information, meaning), a channel (or medium), and a receiver (or target, decoder, listener). This basic model has been elaborated in various ways. For example, interactants are assumed to encode and decode information simultaneously and to provide feedback to the other regarding the effectiveness of the communication attempt (e.g., Schramm, 1973). The success of these efforts is constrained by contextual factors such as personality characteristics and idiosyncratic goals, situational features, prior relational history, social and cultural norms, and so on (Parks, 1994).

Even with these adaptations, several scholars reject this mechanistic model, arguing that communication is not well characterized in terms of a message transporting meaning from a source to a receiver. Adopting a more interactive perspective, such scholars variously describe meaning as being constituted, created, or constructed through the ongoing and interdependent interaction of the people involved (e.g., Delia et al., 1982). As each interactant interprets the behavior of the other, they form a shared understanding on multiple levels, including an understanding of identities, relationships, and social order. This constructivist view emphasizes the dynamic nature of meaning as a phenomenon that changes over the course of an interaction or relationship.

Verbal and nonverbal communication

Communication is often described as involving two interrelated aspects, verbal and nonverbal. As the verbal aspect, language is defined as a rule-based sign and symbol system, a conventionalized code shared by members of a community, through which individuals exchange or create meaning. It is often described as being comprised of various subsystems, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic subsystems (Krauss and Chiu, 1998). Nonverbal communication refers to that part of communication that is 'not words' (DePaulo and Friedman, 1998: 3), including gestures, touch, interpersonal distance, eye gaze, and facial expression, as well as nonlinguistic vocal cues, such as tone, inflection, and accent. Despite calls to consider verbal and nonverbal communication in tandem (e.g., Bavelas and Chovil, 2000), these two facets of communication have generally been examined independently in empirical investigations and have historically been discussed in separate literatures (Kroger and Wood, 1992). Nonetheless, nonverbal communication has been conceived as theoretically parallel to language in that cue systems can operate together to form consensually shared meaning among interactants.

One framework for studying this notion explicitly is the social meanings model (Burgoon, 1980). While (such as eye contact, smiling, touch, etc.), it is argued here that what is more important for social psychological consideration is the actual function which the nonverbal behaviors play during social interaction. Thus, while it may be useful to examine and understand the structure of nonverbal communication to be able to deconstruct it and understand important contributing factors, what is more important is understanding the functions that nonverbal cues play in concert with one another in impression formation and management, communicating or interpreting an emotional expression, sending or receiving relational messages, exerting social influence, or attempting to deceive (to name a few). Thus, in line with a social meanings model, our chapter focuses on messages that are typically sent and interpreted with intent, are used with regularity among members of a given social community, and have consensually recognized meanings (Burgoon, 1980).

Burgoon and colleagues (Burgoon et al., 1996) make the distinction between structure and function of nonverbal communication clear in their treatment of unspoken dialogue. While wider than the purview here, they pull together work from anthropology, ethology and biology, physiology, sociology, linguistics, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and social psychology, providing a comprehensive review of studies relevant to understanding both the structure and the functions of nonverbal communication. While many authors vary in their taxonomic view of the types of nonverbal cues which are important to consider in terms of the structure of nonverbal communication (e.g., Ruesch and Kees, 1956), the most common classification scheme is articulated by Leathers (1976) and Malandro and Barker (1983). This classification scheme includes kinesics (use of body), vocalics (use of voice), physical appearance (natural and manipulated endowments), haptics (touch), proxemics (space), chronemics (time), and artifacts (possessions).

While the study of various nonverbal cues has made important contributions to the field of nonverbal communication as a whole, understanding, the social psychological and communicative functions of nonverbal cue complexes is more important in terms of understanding interpersonal interactions. The social meanings model would argue that examining one cue at a time (or even a few cues at a time) cannot provide us with much understanding of the richness of meaning which is communicated. Rather, what must be examined is the combination of cues *across* structural classification schemes which work together to provide consensually shared meaning. In other words, studies of eye contact alone may provide one interpretation, but when examining eye contact in combination with forward body lean, touch, smiling, and vocal warmth, a clear message of cognitive and social involvement

provides us with the arguments necessary to examine various functions of nonverbal behavior.

As an initial attempt at examining how nonverbal communication works in concert with verbal behavior (see also Ekman and Friesen, 1969), Burgoon and her colleagues (1996) provide a complete review of the nonverbal functions of impression formation and management, producing and processing messages, structuring interactions and regulating conversations, communicating emotions, defining and managing relationships, influencing others, and deceiving others. While exploring all of these functions is obviously larger than the purview of this chapter, we will integrate the treatments of impression management, adaptation (an inherently relational process), and communication of the relational messages of control and affiliation in our understanding of how language and nonverbal communication work together to send messages.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Current social psychological scholarship in nonverbal and verbal communication is founded on work done in multiple disciplines, including sociology, communication studies, and anthropology. Other cross-disciplinary influences are unique to each facet. For instance, DePaulo and Friedman (1998) claim that the social psychological study of *nonverbal* communication includes historical roots in biology, particularly Darwin's evolutionary theory. Not only did Darwin's work contribute to the trend of studying human behavior through scientific methods generally, but his treatise *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* specifically oriented the understanding of nonverbal behavior as a biologically based potential for communication. Giles and Robinson (1990) suggest that the social psychological study of *verbal* communication has been influenced, in part, by the work in linguistics, particularly in the later half of the twentieth century, including the very different paradigms of Chomsky (1957) and Labov (1966).

Farr (1980) and Kroger and Scheibe (1990) maintain that the social psychological study of language was an integral part of Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, and Markova (1983) traces its earlier philosophical roots back to German expressivism. The study of language and communication virtually disappeared from view in psychology during the rise of behaviourism (Kroger and Scheibe, 1990), although Wundt's ideas can be traced through scholars associated with other social sciences, particularly sociological social psychology, including Mead, Goffman, Durkheim, and so on (cf. Farr, 1980, 1996). Some notable exceptions within psychology attitude change and persuasion (e.g., Festinger, 1950, 1957; Jones and Gerard, 1967). The 1960s and 1970s were a period in which research in the subdiscipline began to flourish, and institutional support grew. Like social psychology generally, many of these scholars were influenced by the cognitive revolution, and much current work in this area continues with the theme of how the production and reception of language behaviors are mediated by cognitive processes, including attitudes, goals, situational construals, attributions, self-concepts/identities, and so on (Fortman et al., 2001). A complementary movement across the social sciences highlighted the importance of discourse. Wood and Kroger (2000; see also Gill, 1995) argue that this shift began primarily with Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology and language in the 1950s, but became most evident with the rise of the postmodernist, constructionist movements (cf. Gergen, 1985) of the 1980s and 1990s.

Institutional developments helped to secure language and communication as a legitimate subdiscipline of social psychology, and as a complementary approach to the study of language in sociology, anthropology, and sociolinguistics. Robinson's (1972) text, *Language and Social Psychology*, was the first to integrate research interests of the period. Since 1979, the International Conference on Language and Social Psychology has met regularly, and in 1982 the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* (*JLSP*) produced its first volume. The 1990s was marked by the first edition of the *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* (Giles and Robinson, 1990). By the end of the decade, activity in the field had grown to such an extent that a completely new *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* (Robinson and Giles, 2001) was necessary. Institutionalization of the subdiscipline was furthered by the establishment, in 1997, of the International Association for the Study of Language and Social Psychology. This area remains somewhat of an interdisciplinary speciality, situated at the intercept of linguistics, sociology, and psychology. Indeed, multiple influences are evident in our review of *JLSP* authors from 1990 to 2000, which indicated that 46 percent of its contributors were affiliated with psychology departments, 32 percent with communication departments, 6 percent with language and Linguistics departments, and the remainder with various other disciplinary affiliations.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

bolstered by multiple influences, such that no one conceptual paradigm dominates work in the area. Four influential approaches are considered here, including pragmatics and facework, perspective-taking and dialogic theories, interpersonal adaptation theories, and discursive psychology.

Pragmatics and facework

A first body of work builds on the study of pragmatics, which can be defined as 'the study of the principles and practice underlying all interactive linguistic performance – this including *all* aspects of language usage, understanding and appropriateness' (Crystal, 1987: 120). The basic unit of analysis is the speech act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1967, 1969), or the intended functions performed through an utterance, such as a command or a promise. A premise of this perspective is that the functional meaning of an utterance does not necessarily correspond with its literal meaning, and thus a central concern for scholars is how interactants ultimately construe meaning (Levinson, 1983; Thomas, 1995). Much of the work in this area builds on the work of Grice (1975), who proposed that interactants typically come to an interaction with the expectation that it will be structured to promote the exchange of information. To facilitate this exchange, conversationalists are generally oriented to follow the cooperative principle: 'Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction in which you are engaged' (p. 45). Four maxims are related to this principle. First, the speaker must be honest (quality), provide a sufficient amount of information and no more (quantity), speak to the topic at hand (relation), and be direct (manner). Violations or clashes between any of these maxims by the speaker constitute a conversational implicature, signaling to the listener that additional work is necessary to decipher the meaning of the utterance in that particular context. As described by Krauss and Chiu (1998; Krauss and Fussell, 1996), then, from this perspective, the process of communication involves inferences about the intended meaning of an utterance (see also Slugoski and Hilton, 2001).

In everyday conversations, violations of Grice's maxims occur regularly, and it is suggested that some of these violations, particularly violations of the relevance maxim (Holtgraves, 1998, 1999), happen in the interest of politeness (for reviews, see Holtgraves, 2001; MacMartin et al., 2001; Tracy, 1990). In their seminal work, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argued that politeness strategies are implicated whenever deviations from the efficiency of the maxims is necessary, but face concerns must also be met. Face refers to the 'positive social value contact' (Goffman, 1967: 5). Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that social interaction is a constant negotiation of potential face threats: for instance, requests and impositions threaten negative face (that is, autonomy concerns), and disagreements and criticism threaten positive face (that is, closeness concerns). Politeness strategies then mitigate these potential face threats.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies range along a continuum of indirectness: that is, the extent to which face concerns are encoded in the communication (cf. Holtgraves, 2001), from bald-faced statement (that is, observing Grice's maxims completely), to on-record acts (for example, politely worded statements that refer to the issue at hand), to off-record act (for example, an ambiguous statement), to no act whatsoever. There is generally empirical support for the idea that politeness varies with the extent of threat to face (Bauman, 1988, Blum-Kulka, 1987, Clark and Schunk, 1980; Fraser and Nolan, 1981; Hill et al., 1986; Holtgraves and Yang, 1990), although the exact order of the different types of strategies is debatable. Some research suggests that very indirect requests and hints, for instance, are perceived as less polite (e.g., Dillard et al., 1997; Holtgraves, 2001).

The work of Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Goffman (1955, 1967), Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and others has provided a useful heuristic for understanding the use of language in conversational moves (including conversations in experimental psychology laboratories [cf. Schwarz, 1998]). The formulation, however, has also raised several critiques. Some scholars worry that four maxims may be insufficient to account for speakers' behaviour, and suggest additional maxims to supplement those proposed by Grice (cf. Higgins et al., 1981; Lakoff, 1973; 1979; Leech, 1983). A second concern pertains to the generalizability of the framework across cultures (Katriel, 1986, Matsumoto, 1988; Morisaki and Gudykunst, 1994; Rosaldo, 1982, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1988; see also Ambady et al., 1996; Holtgraves and Yang, 1992; Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Wheeler et al., 1989). A third set of concerns relates to the restrictiveness of the paradigm. For instance, the assumption that speakers are generally supportive of others' face may lead researchers to overlook important communicative episodes. Some work suggests that people may not simply be 'bald-faced' but may do 'aggressive facework', directly threatening others' face through insults and challenges (Craig et al., 1986; Penman, 1990; Tracy, 1990; Tracy and Tracy, 1998). In a related vein, the assumption that indirect speech reflects politeness strategies fails to acknowledge other functions of indirect speech, as the examples of humor and metaphor illustrate.

result, they worry that theorists who interpret a text from their own theoretical perspective (in this case, facework) run the risk of overlooking alternative interpretations or overapplying their preferred theoretical framework and thereby inappropriately recycling common-sense categories. They suggest that the relevance of utterances to the participants must be demonstrated, rather than the relevance of the utterance to the researcher's favorite theory.

Perspective-taking and dialogic theories

Another approach that builds on the work of pragmatic scholars also incorporates aspects of social and cognitive psychology to understand the reciprocal interplay between interpersonal communication and social cognition (e.g., Fussell and Kreuz, 1998; Resnick et al., 1991). As described by Krauss and Chiu (1998), in contrast to the work described in the previous section, which emphasizes the intention of the speaker as the basis for meaning, this work stresses the perspective of the listener and the joint effort both parties must put into meaningful communication. It is suggested that social cognition fundamentally implicates communicative processes because it is through the coordinated interactions of members of a dyad or group that meaning is created (Thompson and Fine, 1999). Hence, it is important to understand how interactants communicate to achieve a shared perspective and the implications of this communicative work for their own cognitions. Following Mead, Vygotsky, and others, one aspect of this approach concerns participants' ability to take the role of the other (Krauss and Fussell, 1996). 'Perspective-taking' (Krauss and Chiu, 1998) or 'cognitive tuning' (see Hardin and Higgins, 1995) is evident at all levels of communication, from word articulation (e.g., Fowler and Levy, 1994), to lexical choices (Fussell and Krauss, 1989), to descriptions (Higgins, 1992). Humans are so skilled at perspective-taking that they are capable of tuning to multiple audiences simultaneously. A message may be understood by some audience members in one way but by other audience members in another way, as when a spy relates a message intended for another spy, but not for the enemy who might overhear the exchange (Fleming and Darley, 1991).

A second aspect centers on the idea that understanding is not accomplished individually but through dialogue that is jointly negotiated by the participants. (Krauss and Chiu, 1998: 47). In order to achieve their communicative goals efficiently, interactants must coordinate their actions, and, to do this, they must establish some shared representation of each other, the situation, and the topic at hand, which is termed 'common ground' (Clark and Brennan, 1991), or a state of 'intersubjectivity' (e.g., Wertsch, 2000). While some contemporary

may help to establish enough common ground to initiate an interaction, interactants must also work to maintain this common ground. In describing this process, Clark's (1985, 1996) collaborative model maintains that, in the interest of accomplishing a goal, interactants work together to ensure that they have comparable understandings of each utterance (or at least believe they have) before they move on to the next utterance. Each contribution to a conversation, then, has two stages. First, an utterance is presented for consideration by the listener, and second, the listener indicates that she believes she understands what was meant by the utterance or not, by using back-channel responses, providing a relevant next turn, or through her continued attention.

Speakers' efforts to formulate messages that are comprehensible to their listener has consequences for the speakers' cognitions (Chiu et al., 1998). For instance, Higgins and Rholes (1978) showed that communicators' own attitude, impressions, and recollections of a stimulus person emerged more positively if they had framed a message positively for an audience that was expected to like the person, and more negatively if the message was framed negatively for an audience expected to dislike the person. This 'saying-is-believing' effect was found only if the communicators indeed prepared and delivered a message, but not if they did not actually deliver the message. Higgins (1999) suggests the creation of a shared reality through communication validates our transitory and ephemeral individual experiences, such that 'once our experiences are recognized and shared by others … they are no longer subjective but instead achieve the phenomenological status of objective reality' (p. 42). Such a perspective has far-reaching implications for a psychological understanding of culture as a dialogically constructed network of shared understandings (cf. Lau et al., 2001; see also Kim, 1988).

Interpersonal adaptation theories

Another set of theories seeks to explain communication as a process of mutual influence and adaptation, involving a series of moves and countermoves, which lead to either increased or decreased similarity in communication parameters, whether verbal, paralinguistic, or nonverbal (for overview, see Guerrero, et al., 2001). Behaviors of interest include both 'approach' and 'avoidance' behaviors, that is, behaviors varying in the degree of immediacy/closeness, warmth, and involvement and desire for communication that is signaled. For both approach and avoidance behaviors, dyadic patterns can be described as reciprocal or as compensatory. Reciprocity occurs when a partner responds in a similar direction and intensity as the other, and compensation occurs when a partner reacts in an opposing direction and/or intensity

One of the first models to describe communication from this perspective was Argyle and Dean's (1965) affiliative conflict theory, which asserts that interlocutors work to maintain an equilibrium in the level of intimacy and autonomy in a relationship. Whenever a communication partner is perceived as over- (or under-)stepping the bounds of intimacy, individuals are expected to adjust their behavior in a compensatory manner so that the equilibrium is re-established. The major disadvantage of this model is that it focused exclusively on compensatory behavior. This limitation has been rectified by some other theories that incorporate both reciprocity and compensation in their formulation, including discrepancy arousal theory (see Cappella, 1999), cognitive valence theory (Andersen, 1985, 1992, 1999), and expectancy violation theory (EVT) (e.g., Floyd et al., 1999).

To illustrate, EVT posits that partners in an interaction develop expectations of what is an appropriate level of intimacy for their relationship. Burgoon and her colleagues (Burgoon and Burgoon, 2001; Burgoon and Jones, 1976; Le Poire and Burgoon, 1996) argue that when communication behaviors deviate from these expectations, arousal occurs and attention is oriented to the communication process in order to determine the act's desirability. An assessment is made of the communicator's potential reward value to the assessor and of whether the act was a positive or negative violation of expectancies. If the violator is perceived to have high reward value and the act is evaluated positively, the violation will be deemed positive, but if either are perceived negatively, the violation will be deemed negative. Interactants then will be motivated to react to the violation either by compensating with their own behavior to re-establish the previous level or by reciprocating the level of intimacy to redefine the expectancies. For positively valenced communicators, positive-valence acts would be expected to elicit reciprocity and negative-valenced acts would elicit compensation. For negatively valenced communicators, negative acts should prompt compensation, but positive acts could lead to either reciprocity or compensation. Hence, EVT posits that violations of expectancies do not necessarily lead to negative relational outcomes, but might even improve outcomes under some circumstances.

In an attempt to synthesize the themes of the various models and the empirical findings in a single framework, Burgoon et al. (1995; see also Miczo et al., 1999) formulated interaction adaptation theory. Noting that much of the empirical research indicates that there is an overriding tendency for humans to match or reciprocate the communication they receive regardless of expectancies and other cognitive factors, these authors contend that this tendency can be accounted for by

have a required level of interaction behavior, primarily based on their biological needs and drives (for example, survival, comfort, etc.). They also have an expected level of interaction behavior, established through social norms and experience. Finally, they have a desired level, which is determined by their personal goals, attitudes, and so on. These three aspects interact to form an individual's interactional position. Although the task of assessing and weighting each of the required, expected, and desired factors seems difficult, this theory may nonetheless prove useful because it parsimoniously integrates previous theoretical explanations of interpersonal accommodation from biological, cognitive, and social perspectives (cf. Guerrero, 1994).

One final theory that warrants mention in this arena is communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles et al., 1991). Although it was developed within a different research paradigm, notably social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), CAT similarly focuses on adaption during ongoing interactions. CAT suggests that individuals strategically use linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal features to create a desired social distance from their interactants and to signal identity concerns, particularly in intergroup contexts (for overviews, see Giles and Noels, 2002). When individuals change their communication behavior to become more similar to that of their interlocutor, it is termed convergence (akin to reciprocity). Increased dissimilarity in behaviors is termed divergence (akin to compensation). A third strategy, maintenance, occurs when an interactant refuses to change her style, an act that is often perceived similarly to divergence (Bourhis, 1979).

Although all of the interpersonal adaptation theories outlined here try to account for how and why interactants change their communicative behavior to moderate social distance, there remain some differences between the first theories and CAT. First, CAT includes little discussion of the role of arousal and affect in communicative episodes. Second, unlike the other theories that emphasize the tendency to reciprocate, CAT focuses on the possibility that interactants may be inclined to refuse to adapt to their partner in order to maintain social distance and create a distinctive identity. Third, building on its interest in social identity, CAT is readily applied to intergroup encounters and is able to explain language behavior among members from different groups. Fourth, CAT emphasizes *perceived* rather than actual behaviors, in that interactants may not adapt to the actual behavior of their partner, but may accommodate to stereotypical assumptions of behavior expected of the interlocutor, particularly if they are from another social group. Perhaps because of this perceptual focus, although all theories suggest that mismatches in reciprocity and compensation are

CAT has more extensively addressed the issues of overaccommodation, nonaccommodation and, so on (for example, in the context of patronizing intergenerational speech). These distinctions between theories may be complementary, in that CAT focuses on explaining how and why behavior changes are brought about whereas the other theories concentrate on how changes in behavior lead to certain outcomes (Shepard et al., 2001).

Discursive and rhetorical social psychology

Many who argue that there has been a 'turn to language' in social psychology describe this shift more specifically as a turn to discourse or rhetoric (e.g., Parker, 1990), calling for the investigation of talk as a social practice, set in particular contexts (Cameron, 1999; Potter, 1997). Although there are several approaches to discourse analysis (Potter et al., 1990; Wood and Kroger, 2000), the present discussion focuses on the discursive psychology perspective of Potter and his colleagues (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Along with several other discourse-analytic perspectives, this approach can be described as a 'critical' methodological and metatheoretical alternative to the paradigm that characterizes much of the research in social psychology, including research on language and communication processes.

In line with constructionist perspectives (Gergen, 1985), discursive psychology rejects the supposed contrast between a factual realm and a psychological realm, and argues that the 'reality' of psychological constructs is constituted symbolically through people's accounts and descriptions (Billig, 1996; Gill, 1996; Potter, 1996). Discursive psychology is a decidedly empirical approach that has been used to explore how language is used to constitute a phenomenon or events relevant to a variety of psychological issues, including attributions (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter et al., 1993), attitudes (e.g., Potter, 1998a), gender (e.g., Hollway, 1989), memory (e.g., Edwards et al., 1992), the self (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and social categories and prejudice (e.g., Condor, 1988).

Although discourse analysis is described as a craft that is difficult to capture in a step-by-step recipe (see Wood and Kroger, 2001; see also Wetherell et al., 2001), Potter (1998b) suggests that its analytic technique can be differentiated from that of experimental social psychology in three ways. First, there is an emphasis on actual interactions or 'natural language' (Potter and Wetherell, 1995), involving transcriptions of interview materials in laboratory settings, conversations in natural settings, written text, film and video and so on

a variety of discourse features, including the rhetorical organization of discourse, lexical choices, how accountability is constructed in the discourse, and, very importantly, the inconsistencies and contradictions within texts, and the variability between different texts. Finally, unlike more orthodox approaches that rely on statistical validation techniques, validation of a discursive analysis depends on how participants understand their actions (as displayed in the transcript), attention to deviant cases (Heritage, 1995), and the study's coherence with other studies, as well as the readers' evaluations of the study, based on the extensive presentation of the transcripted passages.

A closely related approach is rhetorical social psychology (e.g., Billig, 1996), which differs from discursive psychology in two important ways (Weatherall, 1992). In some respects, it is more narrowly focused than discursive social psychology, in that it highlights the argumentative nature of discourse. Social interaction is argued to be 'dialogic', in that an utterance is generally a response to other utterances, and usually the utterance is argumentative in the sense that it is designed to persuade the other to adopt a particular position on a given topic. The rhetorical approach thus moves away from a perspective of social interaction as cooperative and peaceable to a 'celebration of negativity' (Billig, 2001).

A second manner in which this approach is unlike discursive psychology is that rhetorical psychology makes claims about the nature of human cognition. In particular, Billig (1996) argues that 'common sense is not a harmonious system of interlocking beliefs, but is composed of contraries' (p. 235). These contrary themes serve as resources that can be drawn upon to achieve particular goals in different circumstances. Billig maintains that such a 'multivocal' (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) process is also evident within the single individual's thinking. Just as with a public debate, an individual can hold different, though equally justifiable, points of view and thus acknowledge multiple truths (Billig, 1994). This argumentation, Billig maintains, is critical for developing new ways of thinking.

These novel, related approaches for examining social psychological themes have elicited several critiques, both by those who practice discourse analysis (e.g., Parker and Burman, 1993) and those who do not. Gill (1996) highlights some issues that researchers more comfortable with more traditional methods might raise against discursive psychology, such as the lack of interest in producing broad empirical generalizations or representativeness in sampling from a population of individuals (see Abrams and Hogg, 1990). Others express concerns over the descriptive nature of the technique. Bowers (1988) contends that by constraining their investigations to the manifest discourse, discourse analysts

discursive repertoire over another, or what the broader circumstances are when events are first put into words. Without reference to cognitive, sociological, or other explanatory constructs, Bowers argues, this perspective presents an overly voluntaristic notion of agency. Abrams and Hogg (1990) further suggest that the restricted focus on the text also fails to answer the questions of whether and how a discourse actually has the effects it was intended to have. Finally, Schmid and Fiedler (1999) suggest that discursive psychology's attempt to capture the richness of language use, particularly in the area of attributions, can be adequately and more parsimoniously explained by alternative models that focus on the lexical level of language (for a reply, see Edwards and Potter, 1999). Despite these concerns, and the discussion concerning the merits of the approach relative to others (Potter, 1999; Potter et al., 1999; Robinson, 2001), discursive social psychology usefully highlights many limitations of quantitative approaches to social psychology and provides an analytic strategy that can deal with some of these limitations.

Areas of research focus

In his 1983 review, Smith characterized research in the social psychology of language along several dimensions, one of which was the locus of the psychological phenomenon at the individual, interpersonal, or group level. As Smith noted, the demarcations between the levels of analysis are not clear-cut, and topics can often be discussed at all these levels of analysis (see, for example, Gallois's [1993] discussion of language and emotion). Nonetheless, this heuristic can serve to exemplify research topics conducted at each level. Several equally important subjects, such as language and emotion (e.g., Gallois, 1993; Pittam and Scherer, 1993), language and social development (e.g., Budwig et al., 2000), linguistic relativity (e.g., Hardin and Banaji, 1993), verbal aggression and hate speech (e.g., Leets and Giles, 1997), cultural variations in language use (e.g., Hecht et al., 2001), and various applied topics, are not addressed here. More information on these topics is available in other more extensive sources (e.g., Krauss and Chiu, 1998; Krauss and Fussell, 1996) as well as the aforementioned handbooks.

Individual level processes

Language and attitudes

The study of language attitudes is one of the oldest and perhaps most multidisciplinary areas of social

Bradac et al., 2001; Cargile and Bradac, 2001). Particularly when meeting a person for the first time, speech characteristics may be especially salient and influential; in fact, they may be one of the most important attributes to influence person perception (e.g., Sondermeyer, 1995).

The paradigm for studying language attitudes was established approximately 30 years ago and the assumptions put forward then have guided much of the research since (Cargile and Bradac, 2001). Although language attitudes have been studied with observational, ethnographic, survey, and interview methods, the most popular method of examining attitudes has been through experimental paradigms generally based on the *matched-guise technique* (Lambert et al., 1960). In this technique, respondents listen to taped recordings of speakers using different speech characteristics and evaluate the speaker on selected dimensions. By using the same speaker and the same message, vocal characteristics and content are controlled across conditions, and only the relevant speech characteristics are manipulated.

Various speech style variations have been shown to have implications for impression formation. At the individual level, these include speech rate (e.g., Ray and Zahn, 1999), language intensity (Bowers, 1984; Rogan and Hammer, 1995), and lexical diversity (Bradac et al., 1988). Combinations of speech characteristics used in different speech registers have also been examined, including those forms indicative of polite speech, patronizing speech, and so on (Bradac et al., 2001). For instance, patronizing speech has the characteristics of 'slower speech rates, higher pitch, exaggerated intonation, increased loudness, simplified grammar, and simplified vocabulary' (Giles et al., 1993: 130). At the group level, evaluations may also be made on characteristics that distinguish language groups, such as accent, dialect, or language. Speakers using the standard speech style, which tends to correspond with the language of the highest status group, are more favorably evaluated than nonstandard speakers, particularly on traits such as competence and intelligence (Ryan et al., 1982, 1984). In contrast, speakers using nonstandard speech styles are often perceived at least as positively as, if not more positively than, speakers using standard styles on characteristics associated with solidarity, such as kindness and attractiveness (Cargile and Bradac, 2001; Ryan et al., 1984). To the extent that intergroup relations are less stable and the domination of a single speech style is contested, variations in these general tendencies are evident in a manner that reflects the intergroup situation. At both the individual and the group level, then, a wide variety of studies have found a relationship between language use and perceptions of the communicator.

These 'language attitude studies' extend beyond

about the speaker and behavioral responses to them. According to the impression formed, listeners can be expected to respond in a manner that is consistent with their attitude. In educational settings, teachers who perceived their students as using nonstandard speech forms predicted poorer outcomes for them in occupational, academic, and social endeavors (e.g., Choy and Dodd, 1976). In a somewhat complementary manner, perceptions of a foreign accent in a university instructor predicts lower student evaluations of that instructor (Rubin and Smith, 1990). In employment interview settings, speakers of standard styles are more likely to be hired for higher-status jobs, but speakers of nonstandard styles are more likely to be hired for lower-status occupations (e.g., De La Zerda and Hopper, 1979; see also Kalin and Rayko, 1980; Seggie et al., 1982). In medical settings, Fielding and Evered (1980) showed that if patients spoke with a standard accent they were more likely to be diagnosed with a psychosomatic illness than patients who spoke with a nonstandard accent, who were more likely to be diagnosed with a physical problem. In legal settings, Seggie (1983) found that more guilt was attributed to a defendant charged with theft when he spoke with a British accent, but the same person was more likely to be found guilty of assault when he spoke with an Australian accent.

This well-established area of research continues to grow in several ways. For instance, although speaker evaluations are associated with discriminatory behavior, only recently has attention been directed at understanding when and how the hearer will process a message in a manner that leads to such behavior. Following models of attitude change and persuasion (e.g., Banaji and Greenwald, 1995; Fazio, 1986; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), Cargile and Bradac (2001) have proposed a model to understand the conditions under which attitudes and associated behaviours are elicited more or less automatically. Other developments include looking beyond decontextualized messages in laboratory settings to understand how situational constraints relate to evaluations of different speech styles (Bradac et al., 2001; Edwards, 1999), and considering how specific linguistic attributes of speech styles relate to specific evaluative reactions, particularly in natural settings (Edwards, 1999).

Causal and dispositional attributions

Social perceptions can also be affected by subtleties of vocabulary choices. One taxonomy of vocabulary items that has garnered considerable research attention is Semin and Fiedler's (1988) linguistic-category model (LCM). In this framework, verbs and adjectives are ordered along a continuum of concreteness–abstractness, such that the most concrete form is the descriptive action verb (for

interpretative action verbs ('Christina caressed Steve'), state verbs ('Christina loves Steve'), and finally adjectives ('Christina is affectionate'). The relative abstractness of the terms is associated with a number of 'inference-inviting properties' about the nature of an interpersonal event and the persons involved. This includes the temporal duration of an event, the ease with which an event is remembered, the extent to which an event can be confirmed and verified, the informativeness about the person, and the extent to which a quality will endure. The more concrete terms are more indicative of the situation as the causal factor in the event, and the more abstract of the person.

As demonstrated in studies of language use in wrestling reports (Schmid, 1999), the mass media (Maass et al., 1994), and legal settings (Schmid and Fiedler, 1998), expected outcomes tend to be coded at a higher level of abstraction than unexpected outcomes. In line with this observation, research suggests that these linguistic choices are reflected in common biases such as the actor-observer effect (Nisbett et al., 1973) and the egocentric bias (Thompson and Kelley, 1981), such that partner attributions are made at more abstract levels and self-attributions at more concrete levels (e.g., Fiedler et al., 1995).

A second facet of this paradigm focuses on how causality is marked in interpersonal verbs (cf. Brown and Fish, 1983; Hoffman and Tchir, 1990; Lee and Kasoff, 1992). Semin and his colleagues observe that for some verbs, the logical subject of the sentence is perceived as the instigator of the action denoted by the verb, whereas in other sentences, the object is perceived as the instigator (Fiedler and Semin, 1988; Hamilton, 1988; Schmid, 1999). Semin and his colleagues argue that this phenomenon is linked to the verb type. Whereas action verb sentences generally are associated with inferences that implicate the subject of the sentence (for example, 'Dave supports Nancy') as the instigator of an event, state verb sentences tend to involve the object ('Dave admires Nancy'; Semin and Marsman, 1994). Semin and Marsman (2000) indicate that sentence subject recall is stronger for action than state verbs.

The implications of these subtle differences are aptly demonstrated by the 'question–answer' paradigm (Semin et al., 1995; Semin and de Poot, 1997b), which indicates that the level of abstraction of a sentence triggers different inferences in message recipients. Semin and de Poot (1997a) note that when expectancies regarding who is the likely instigator of an event are manipulated, participants frame questions in a manner that reflects these expectancies. Moreover, although respondents are generally unaware of how the framing of questions can influence their answer, third parties who read

de Poot, 1997b). Clearly, subtleties associated with verb choice could have important implications in judicial situations, job interviews, and so on. Moreover, it is suggested that the implications and expectancies that arise during an interaction may feed back onto the interviewee in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Semin and de Poot, 1997a, 1997b; cf. Snyder et al., 1977; Swann et al., 1982).

Building on the LCM to understand how stereotypes are perpetuated through discourse, Maass and her colleagues (Maass, 1999) describe the linguistic intergroup bias (LIB) as the tendency to describe positive in-group behavior and negative out-group behavior in more abstract terms, and negative, in-group behavior and positive out-group behavior in more concrete terms. Two mechanisms are suggested to underlie the LIB (Maass et al., 1996), based on motivational and cognitive principles, respectively. The original formulation suggested that the LIB serves to maintain a positive social identity (Maass et al., 1989), although subsequent research suggested that this bias is evident only in situations where there is a clear and present threat to in-group identity and self-esteem. The second mechanism is perhaps more general (Maass, 1999), occurring whether with either individuals or groups: expectancy-consistent behaviors, whether negative or positive, are described at a higher level of abstraction than expectancy-inconsistent (Maass et al., 1995). Terming this concept the 'linguistic expectancy bias' (LEB), Wigboldus et al. (2000) demonstrate that not only are expectancy-consistent behaviors transmitted at a higher level of abstraction, but also the level of abstraction is associated with stronger dispositional inferences. To date, the pervasiveness of the LIB/LEB bias is demonstrated by the many studies of different types of groups, including gender (Fiedler et al., 1993), regional or ethnic background (Arcuri et al., 1993), political positions (e.g., Maass et al., Milesi, 1995), and wrestling stars (Schmid, 1999).

Interpersonal relations and processes

Relational communication can be defined as 'any communication by partners about a relationship' (VanderVoort and Duck, 2000: 2). Watzlawick et al. (1967) observed early on that every message carries not only information evident in the literal message, but also information about the relationship between the two interactants, including each person's identity, their perceptions of their partner's identity, and their beliefs about the relationship. Relational communication can be considered the noncontent aspect of a message that refers to how interactants feel about themselves in the relationship, how they feel about their partner in the relationship, and how they feel about the relationship in general (e.g., Burgoon et al., 1996). Message [illegible] reflects or expresses characteristics of a relationship, but is also the manner in which a relationship is constituted.

In an extensive analysis of the topoi (generic themes) of relational communication, Burgoon and Hale (1988) concluded that there are as many as twelve nonorthogonal relational message dimensions, including dominance–submission, emotional arousal–nonarousal, composure–noncomposure, task–social orientation, and intimacy–nonintimacy. The last comprises subordinate interrelated themes, including affection–hostility, involvement–noninvolvement, and trust–distrust. Subsequent work validating the measurement of these themes (e.g., Burgoon et al., 1995) showed that these dimensions could be combined into fewer nonorthogonal composites and highlighted the fact that interactants are capable of inducing and deducing multiple interpretations. While relational messages may lie in as many of twelve differing dimensions, this section will focus on the two primary relational functions of control and affiliation, taking into account violations of expectations and influence-adaptation processes.

Control

Control, or dominance, as a relational message has perhaps received the most attention in the literature (see Giles and Wiemann, 1987). Although distinctions between terms can be made (cf. Wiemann and Giles, 1988), 'control', 'power', or 'influence' generally refers to the 'constellation of constraints people place on one another by what they say and how they structure conversation' (Wiemann and Giles, 1988: 204). In their comprehensive framework, Reid and Ng (1999; see also Ng and Bradac, 1993; Ng and Reid, 2001) purport that language serves control functions in at least three manners, including reflecting and creating control, depoliticizing control, and routinizing of control.

Because different speech styles are often associated with various personal or group characteristics, some of which are indicative of social status, language use can reflect power differentials that exist between individuals interpersonally, often as a function of role relationships (such as parent and child, or doctor and patient), or between members of social groups. These stylistic differences in speech can be classified as powerful or powerless. The former is described as persuasive speech that unambiguously defines the situation, targets particular individuals, and pinpoints the desired actions (Ng and Bradac, 1993). In contrast, powerless speech is described as tentative, typified in English by the use of hedges (for example, 'kind of'), intensifiers ('totally'), tag questions ('That's interesting, isn't it?'), rising intonation, and hesitations. Consistent with Ng's (1990) suggestion that powerful speech is designed to produce 'an intended [illegible]

(p. 272), Holtgraves and Lasky (1999) found that individuals who heard a message in a powerful speech style were more in favor of the message proposal than those who heard the same message in a powerless style. Following the seminal work of Lakoff (1973), who suggested that powerless speech is a female speech register, considerable research has examined the use of powerful and powerless speech forms of both men and women across different situations (e.g., O'Barr, 1982; Rundquist, 1992).

The depoliticizing of control refers to the camouflaging of power so that it appears to be something other than an attempt at social influence. Through careful choice of words, syntactic structure, and so on, one is able to obfuscate the source of the message, attenuate its commanding tone, or mislead the target as to the intent to influence. Control and power are often embedded into relationships in a manner that makes the asymmetry appear natural, or routinized. A classic example of the 'routinization of power' is the use of masculine generics to refer to sex-indefinite human referents. Although it has been argued that the pronoun 'he' and its derivatives are generic, research consistently shows that the use of this pronoun, even in contexts where it is meant to refer to both men and women, is associated with masculine imagery and conceals feminine connotations (see Henley, 1989, for overview). Another example of the routinization of power in multilingual settings is the use of the dominant group's language as a lingua franca (Reid and Ng, 1999), or the 'default' tongue for interethnic interactions (cf. Bourhis, 1994).

Affiliation

Often seen as equally important to expressions of control or power in a relationship are messages of affiliation, solidarity (Brown, 1965), or immediacy (Weiner et al., 1968). Affiliation has been the focus of innumerable studies of nonverbal expressions of closeness. To determine the nonverbal cues and cue complexes typically used by individuals to communicate high versus low levels of conversational involvement, Coker and Burgoon (1987) conducted an encoding experiment where greater involvement was expressed through nonverbal behaviors expressing greater immediacy, expressiveness, altercentrism, smoother interaction management, and more relaxation (less anxiety). In a first attempt to address what meanings are assigned to immediacy behaviors singly and in combination, Burgoon et al. (1984) had observers watch videotaped vignettes presenting all plausible combinations of five immediacy cues – eye contact, proximity, body lean, smiling, and touch. Observers then rated the relational meanings of the behaviors on four relational dimensions. Results showed that a close position and gaze aversion were associated with greater intimacy than did a distal position and gaze aversion. Less intimacy was associated with the absence of smiling. Additionally, forward lean and touch conveyed greater intimacy and greater involvement than did backward lean and absence of touch. These findings confirmed that many distal nonverbal cues carry multiple meanings and that behaviors comprising the immediacy complex perform a redundancy function in conveying many of the same meanings (see also Newton and Burgoon, 1990).

Interpersonal closeness is also associated with a number of linguistic variables such as greater self-disclosure, support, shared interests, and explicit expression of the value of the relationship (Parks and Floyd, 1996). As friendly relationships develop, talk becomes more intimate in that the depth and breadth of information disclosed about the self is increased (e.g., Derlega et al., 1993). In addition to self-disclosure, affiliation can be established through a variety of communication strategies. These include the use of informal personal pronouns (Brown, 1986), relational idioms that have specific meaning to relationship partners (Bell et al., 1987; Sahlstein and Duck, 2001), and relationship symbols (for example, symbolic places such as a favorite restaurant) or physical objects (rings, or a stuffed animal) (Baxter, 1987).

Recounting stories about the origin of the relationship, conflictual periods, and other significant events also establishes the intersubjectivity of relational partners, potentially strengthening bonds between them (e.g., Bochner et al., 2000). Murray and Holmes (1994) also suggest that individuals construct narratives about their romantic partners in a manner that defuses negativity about the partner and instills confidence in the relationship. Various rituals also establish relationships. For instance, talk around the family dinner table retraces previous similar conversations and provides for the construction of new dynamics as well. These dinnertime chats serve as an arena for developing familial relationships, including not only affiliative aspects but also power relations, relational identity, and so on. This last example serves to underscore Sahlstein and Duck's (2001) point that relationships are not simply objects that people have but, rather, are 'a process created through the spontaneous and recurrent action and communications of the partners'. Such an approach emphasizes that communication has a constitutive and performative element rather than simply reflecting the type and level of the relationship.

One limitation of the functional approach discussed here is that the same behavior may serve different functions, including such apparently noncomplementary functions as control and affiliation. For instance, some argue that the 'powerless' speech register purportedly used by women is not

be signs of submission are more appropriately described as being indicative of attention and involvement in the conversation (that is, more akin to serving an affiliation function). Likewise, interruptions can serve either a dominance function or an affiliative function (Roger et al., 1988), such that feedback can indicate that a listener has understood the speaker's meaning or not (without necessarily agreeing with the utterance), or speakers may simply be so involved in the conversation or know their partner so well that they can collaboratively build the conversation. This points up the need to study interpersonal interaction in terms of all the accompanying cue complexes, as argued by the social meanings model mentioned above.

Intergroup processes

At least three related themes characterize the study of language and communication between members of different social groups (Hogg, 1996). First, in line with the tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and related communication paradigms, particularly CAT (e.g., Giles and Noels, 2002; see also Liebkind, 1999), the categorization of the self into a particular group is a key predictor of language use; categorization serves as the fundamental link between group characteristics and individual behavior (Clément, 1996). A second theme concerns the relations between groups, particularly the sociostructural factors perceived to differentiate groups, such as power, status, and resources. In natural settings, it is rare that groups have equal levels of power. A third theme pertains to the potentially conflictual nature of intergroup contact. Members of groups are assumed to be deeply vested in the status of their ingroup, particularly because the worth of the group has implications for self-worth. While a variety of intergroup contexts have been investigated, including interability (e.g., Fox and Giles, 1996), HIV-positive and HIV-negative groups (e.g., Pittam and Gallois, 1996), gay–straight communications (Hajek and Giles, 2002), and police–citizen communication (Molloy and Giles, 2002), research on ethnolinguistic, intergenerational, and gender relations is considered here. In the following review, we shall see that some of these assumptions that have guided much of this research are being reconsidered.

Ethnolinguistic relations and communication

Because it is often one of the most salient characteristics of an ethnic group, language is often a symbol of ethnic group membership (Fishman, 1977). Social psychological research on multilingual communication has focused on language attitudes (see Gardner, 2001), and variations in ethnic identity. Understanding of multilingual communication is generally guided by the assumption that social psychological variables, specifically perceptions and beliefs, mediate the relations between the sociological variables, including the societal context of the language groups in contact and aspects of the immediate social situation, on the one hand, and language behavior and related outcomes, such as ethnic identity patterns and group-level language shifts, on the other hand (e.g., Clément and Bourhis, 1996; Gudykunst and Schmidt, 1987; Hamers and Blanc, 2000; Sachdev and Bourhis, 2001).

At the societal level, ethnolinguistic groups can be described in terms of their relative ethnolinguistic vitality, or their ability to 'behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting' (Giles et al., 1977: 308; see also Harwood et al., 1994). Three sets of variables define vitality, including demographic strength as indexed through rates of immigration, endogamy, and so on; status as assessed through the regional, national, and international prestige of the language; and institutional support in arenas such as economics, politics, and education. More recently, the linguistic landscape, or the use of the language in various public media, from graffiti to billboards to road signs, has also been assumed to be a societal variable that indicates the vitality of a group (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). Moreover, subjective assessments of these variables and beliefs on the part of the individual are assumed to mediate the relation between the societal-level variables and language behavior (Allard and Landry, 1986; Bourhis et al., 1981). A variety of other social psychological factors relevant to the intergroup situation, as outlined by ethnolinguistic identity theory (e.g., Giles and Johnson, 1981, 1987), also predict language behavior. Use of the majority group language by the minority group is more likely to take place if boundaries between the groups are perceived as soft and penetrable, if the relative status of the two groups is perceived as legitimate and stable, and if identification with other social groups is possible. Bourhis (2000) suggests that dominant groups impose language policies that can range, on a continuum of official and financial support, from pluralist, through civic and assimilationist (little or no support or pressure to conform), to ethnist (repression of minority language groups). Indeed, Barker et al. (2001) has argued that the English-only movement in the United States is predicated upon perceptions of the increased vitality of other major languages (particularly Spanish) and the concomitant sociopolitical threats that are envisaged. These policies contribute to the intergroup communicative climate and ultimately affect language use, particularly in public situations.

language behavior. At the situational level, the norms for the specific situation and the quality and quantity of contacts between members of the different language groups in the social network are relevant. The individual's network of interpersonal contacts provides a lens through which the relations between language groups at the societal level are interpreted (Allard and Landry, 1994). These interactions, moreover, take place in specific situational contexts, which are normatively structured in terms of the topic of communication, the setting in which it occurs, and the role features of the interlocutors (Côté and Clément, 1994; Trudgill, 1974). Landry and Allard (1992), for instance, distinguish between the family, school, and socioinstitutional milieux, and maintain that particular language styles are reserved for specific situations (see also Clément and Noels, 1992).

The combination of sociostructural and situational features, and the social psychological perceptions and beliefs associated with them, are suggested to be precursors for language behavior. This behavior can be studied on a number of levels, from the moment-to-moment use of one or another language by bilingual speakers, to the acquisition of a second language, to full-scale societal language shift. With regard to code-switching, or the alternate use of languages or dialects within the same utterance or conversation (Liebkind, 1999), members of lower-vitality groups are more likely to use (that is, converge with) the other group's language than are members of higher vitality. In a study of English and French language use in a provincial government setting in Canada, Bourhis (1994) found that this pattern tends to occur even when Francophones are more numerous demographically or hold a higher status position (such as that of a boss) than Anglophones.

With regard to the learning of languages, virtually all social psychological models of language learning include a motivational substrate relating to the desire for integration with the second language community (for an overview, see Clément and Gardner, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Several of these models also suggest that different motivational processes may operate depending upon the relative vitality of the group (e.g., Clément, 1980; Leets and Giles, 1995), such that lower-vitality group members will become more proficient in a higher-vitality language than vice versa (Barkhuizen and De Klerk, 2000).

Intergenerational relations and communication

Intergenerational communication is often portrayed in lay language as involving a 'generation gap', comprising a discrepancy between groups with regard to values and communication styles, along with a general disregard for the other age

of an intergroup analysis of such communication (Fox and Giles, 1993; Giles, 1999; Harwood et al., 1995). Consistent with the intergroup perspective, although positive stereotypes exist (e.g., Hummert, 1990), young adults report that they perceive adults over the age of 65 years as grouchy (Dillard et al., 1990); unhealthy, unattractive, unhappy, and miserly (Kite and Johnson, 1998); less efficient and socially skillful (Nussbaum et al., 1989); overly self-disclosive and controlling (Coupland et al., 1991); and feeble, egocentric, incompetent, abrasive, frail, and vulnerable (Williams and Giles, 1996).

Corresponding with these negative stereotypes, other studies indicate that certain young people often talk with older people in an 'overaccommodative' manner (e.g., Edwards and Noller, 1993) that is overly polite and warm, and grammatically simple relative to talk with same-age peers (Ryan et al., 1995). This negative communication style is not necessarily unidirectional. Indeed, Giles and Williams (1994) found that younger adults viewed older adults as using an authoritarian or dismissive communication style, in which they were inattentive, 'closed-minded', and 'out-of-touch'. Elsewhere, communication with older adults who are not family members has been rated relative to same-age peers as more nonaccommodating (that is, critical and self-centered), and younger adults reported an obligation to be deferential to their older partner, and viewed these age-salient interactions as less satisfying. These effects have also, perhaps surprisingly, been not only found, but even accentuated in East Asian settings (for overview, see Giles et al., 2001). There are fewer studies of older adults' perceptions of interactions with younger people, but some research suggests that older people report more language problems than young and middle-aged adults (e.g., Ryan et al., 1992).

Ryan and her associates maintain that these types of communication styles have implications for older adults' self-perceptions and ultimately for their psychological and physical health. As outlined in the communication predicament of aging model (Ryan et al., 1986; Ryan and Norris, 2001), age cues may trigger young people's negative stereotypes of older people. This may then dispose them to communicate with older people in a patronizing manner, including short, simple sentences, slow rate, exaggerated intonation, and so on, that reflects their negative perceptions. These communication patterns may have consequences for older adults' health in the long run. For example, a young person may regard an older person as feeble and incompetent, and hence speak to her in a condescending tone, perhaps eliciting a response from the older adult that is consistent with the younger person's expectations. Being the recipient of such overaccommodations has been associated with lower self-esteem and life satisfaction among

older adult to question her own competence. With self-doubt in place, the older person's psychological adjustment may diminish, in terms of lower sense of self-worth and well-being, greater depression, and sense of social isolation (see Cai et al., 1998). In sum, intergroup models of between-age communication are gaining theoretical currency and in ways that implicate subjective health (Barker et al., 2001; Williams and Nussbaum, 2001).

Gender relations and communication

Several perspectives inform research on gender and language, including intergroup perspectives (e.g., Boggs and Giles, 1999; Williams and Giles, 1978). This area has seen considerable conceptual development, so much so that Cameron (1998) observes that 'not only is the relevant literature too voluminous for any one survey to encompass, there is no longer consensus on how to evaluate its claims: some of the most familiar generalizations have been subject to radical doubt in recent years, and critical scrutiny of the way knowledge is constructed and used has been increasing' (p. 946).

Very early research described women's speech as deviant relative to men's (e.g., Lakoff, 1975), such that women used less powerful speech styles, which reflected and contributed to their lower social status. More recent approaches that are consonant with an intergroup perspective maintain that women's speech is not deviant, but simply different from men's speech. Maltz and Borker (1982; see also Tannen, 1994) proposed that because boys and girls are socialized in relatively sex-segregated groups, they learn different kinds of communication strategies which are carried through to adulthood. Girls learn interaction styles that emphasize cooperation and equality, and acquire the ability to attend sensitively to relationships and situations. Boys learn interaction styles that emphasize competition and hierarchical relations, and learn to assert their individual identity. Much like interactions between cultural groups with different language norms, men and women interact with very different assumptions and goals in a conversation. Indeed, since some of the same forms can carry different meanings and serve different functions for men and women, miscommunication is almost inevitable (e.g., Mulac et al., 2001).

Several scholars suggest that some general findings are consistently found regarding sex differences in language (for various reviews, see Canary and Dindia, 1998; Pearson et al., 1995). For instance, Aries (1996) claims that women are less task oriented and more social-emotionally oriented in-groups. This interest in social-emotional, relational aspects is demonstrated by greater attention to the face needs of their partners and a greater tendency

In their review of over 30 empirical studies of gender-linked language differences, Mulac et al. (1998) found that six features were used more often by men than women, including references to quantity and directives. Ten features were used more often by women than men, including intensive adverbs and references to emotion. Moreover, certain features were interpreted differently by men and women. For instance, Mulac et al. (2001) found that males rated back-channel interruptions and questions as more controlling and indicative of uncertainty than did females, and female observers rated the same back channels as more other-focused than male observers. These differences were particularly pronounced among sex-typed individuals.

Criticisms of this research paradigm abound. They include concerns about the poor generalizability of the findings beyond white, middle-class samples, the tendency to homogenize and polarize gender groups, and the failure adequately to take into account contextual constraints on language behaviour. From a metatheoretical perspective, Crawford (1995) differentiates studies of gender differences in language as generally reflecting an essentialist concept of gender, as a set of properties that are a fundamental part of the self, separate from the experience of social interaction in particular social and political contexts. Likewise, language is portrayed as a set of features that can be counted and compared across groups. An alternative, preferred formulation from her point of view recognizes language as a dynamic set of strategies for negotiating speakers' goals in specific social situations.

An approach that is more consistent with this perspective is Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992, 1999) articulation of 'communities of practice', that is, 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor' (p. 464), and who share a repertoire of resources for using language to negotiate meaning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that researchers who study gender and language should 'think practically and look locally'. That is, the researcher should focus on specific people in specific contexts and recognize that 'women' and 'men' cannot be treated as homogeneous categories. Although the practices of a community that construct members as 'women' or 'men' may correspond to sex-based categories, the content of these categories is constantly subject to transformation as members of the community interact. By interpretative methods, particularly ethnography, this type of research can extend understanding of language and gender to less commonly studied groups (e.g., 'nerd girls' [Bucholtz, 1999]).

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) argue that a community of practice perspective offers an understanding that is different from several other

tenets (for example, CAT) (Giles and Johnson, 1987). Unlike a social-identity perspective, the community-of-practice approach focuses on group formation in terms of common practices, and less emphasis is placed on the idea that groups are created when an identity is defined in contrast with an out-group. Identities are formed in the course of joint activities, and it is assumed that shared social or instrumental goals guide group behavior. Moreover, it is assumed that personal and social identities are interdependent. There is also a specific emphasis on the social process of learning and development that is absent from the social-identity approach (see, however, Boggs and Giles's [1999] model of the cyclical development of gendered miscommunication in male-dominated industries).

Shared criticisms with intergenerational and ethnolinguistic research

Several of the concerns raised by researchers in the area of gender and language have been echoed by scholars interested in ethnolinguistic and intergenerational issues. For instance, Williams and Coupland (1998) ponder whether the assumption that people of particular ages have enough social attributes in common that they can be considered a social group, and hence contrasted with other social groups. They further note the tendency to treat older adults as if they were a homogeneous group, but it may be appropriate to note differences, such as 'young–old', 'old–old', and even 'oldest–old', among other dimensions. In much the same vein as Crawford's (1995) concern about sex-difference research, Williams and Coupland (1998: 141) question whether gerontological researchers may be guilty of reifying and manufacturing age, emphasizing that scholars must 'keep asking whether patterns of age perception and evaluation are *occasioned* [original emphasis] in the discourse of particular research methodologies, rather than indicative of shared perceptual templates which fix and judge age-groups consistently'.

A second concern is the emphasis on problematic aspects of intergenerational relations. The research attention on intergroup conflict is not unexpected given the theoretical assumptions of social-identity theory to the effect that mere categorization into groups can give rise to competition and conflict between groups. But not all interactions with members of other groups are necessarily problematic. Several scholars emphasize that, in contrast with the prevailing research perspective, intergenerational interactions can also be positive. For instance, Hummert (1990) notes that there are several positive stereotypes about older adults. Williams and Giles (1996; see also Harwood, 1998) found that young adults in North America were interactions with older adults as well as dissatifying ones, particularly with grandparents (Giles et al., 2001; Williams and Coupland, 1998).

Williams and Coupland (1998) further point out that theorizing must clearly differentiate between older adults who experience ill health, dependency, and disability and those who do not. Theories such as the communication predicament of aging model (Ryan et al., 1986) may be relevant in specific contexts. For example, it is plausible that younger adults' influence over older adults' self-perceptions is particularly important when the older adult is dependent upon the younger, perhaps as caregiver. Indeed, other research suggests that older adults who experience good health maintain as many close social partners as younger adults have and similar or better levels of life satisfaction (Fung et al., 2001; see also Baltes and Carstensen, 1996).

In a similar manner, relations between ethnolinguistic groups may not be as problematic as an intergroup approach often depicts them to be. For instance, Rampton (1995) examined the phenomenon of crossing between cultures among adolescents in a multilingual setting. He argues that individuals from both majority and minority groups 'try on' different identities and communication styles in the process of everyday interactions. Other scholars of cross-cultural adaptation suggest that people in bicultural situations generally integrate two cultures with some degree of success, and argue that this ability might be indicative of more positive adjustment (e.g., Berry, 1990; Kim et al., 1998). The study of intergroup relations has been virtually synonymous with the study of prejudice and discrimination, and in certain competitive situations such processes may indeed be pertinent (cf. Turner et al., 1987). The question remains, however, whether all intergroup interactions are always as antagonistic as some research paradigms suggest. One possibility for addressing this concern would be to examine how individuals negotiate identities on a day-to-day basis in less exceptional circumstance, with attention given to the dynamics of this situated and interactive process (cf., Collier and Thomas, 1988). Such an approach would be in line with several scholars' call to complement diachronic studies of intergroup communication with synchronic studies incorporating examinations of sequential moves within dyads or groups over time (Côté and Clément, 1994; Sachdev and Bourhis, 2001).

CONCLUSION: METAPHORS AND METHODS OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

A central theme that characterizes this overview

language is diversity, in terms of the topics examined, the methods used, and the metatheoretical formulations of language and communication expressed (Fortman and Giles, 2001). With regard to topic area, it is probably not unreasonable to suggest that virtually every subject studied by social psychologists, be it emotions, attitudes, romantic relationships, or prejudice, has a corresponding literature that concerns the communicative aspects of that phenomenon. This literature includes applied investigations in many areas, such as health, new technologies, and education. This applied work offers important insights into how the understanding of language and communication processes may help alleviate social problems (Giles and Fortman, 2001; see also Giles, 1996, for an overview of applied studies).

A second aspect of diversity concerns the methodological approaches adopted in investigations of language and communication. Most social psychological studies of language and communication generally reflect an empirical approach to scholarship, and hence all manner of methods are represented, including experimental and quasi-experimental procedures, survey and interview techniques, ethnographic and observational studies, and conversational and discursive analyses.

Diversity is also reflected in the many different understandings of how language and communication should be defined. Although there is a common interest in understanding how language is used, there is weaker consensus about how language and communication should be framed as constructs. However, many scholars adopt an approach which focuses on mechanics of language and how they are associated with social behaviour (Fortman and Giles, 2001). From such a perspective, language and communication are treated as an entity that is in some way related to a social psychological construct. Complementing the mechanistic perspective is a growing interest in understanding how social phenomena are constructed through language and communication practices, where the social psychological phenomenon is considered to become 'real' only through language and communication practices (cf. Fortman and Giles, 2001). These two perspectives should not be taken as monolithic wholes; within each of these perspectives, a myriad of metaphors suggest distinct understandings of how language and communication are linked to the social world, whether as 'marker', 'tool', 'game', 'performance', 'action', or 'practice'.

Although arguments have been advanced for the superiority of one perspective over others (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1993, 1999; Fiedler and Schmid, 1999; Schmid and Fiedler, 1999), we feel that a more tenable position is that a comprehensive understanding of language and its place in the social world requires multiple perspectives and constructive dialogue between proponents of these various perspectives. Even if peaceful coexistence and complementarity prove elusive, and the transformation of knowledge appears distant, this condition of multiple, even opposing perspectives may not be an entirely undesirable state of affairs. Through their dialectic, each perspective can at least serve to keep the other honest about its truth claims (cf. Burman, 1997).

In this chapter, we have presented a range of conceptual perspectives and topics to exemplify the work done by social psychologists interested in language and communication processes. Admittedly, this survey is selective, and we have omitted many valued contributions. Despite these omissions, we hope the reader can appreciate the vibrant field that the social psychology of language and communication has become. This subdiscipline now combines stalwart research areas with new developments in areas such as health, aging, and new communication technologies, and orthodox, quantitative methodologies with promising, novel qualitative methodologies. A hallmark of this area is its heightened sensitivity and sophistication regarding epistemological quandaries and conundrums. We forecast that these multifarious perspectives and themes will continue to engage many scholars in high-spirited deliberations on how social thought and behavior are intimately linked with language and communication processes.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Kristie Saumure for her clerical assistance in the preparation of this chapter. The writing of this chapter was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant to Kimberly A. Noels.

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