DELICACIES: SOME REFLECTIONS

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The papers in the second half of this volume all testify to the way in which the study of identity has moved from categorial (yes/no) distinctions towards the delicacies of social and cultural positions in discourse. They also show that in order for such finer distinctions to take shape in analysis, attention needs to be given to details of the deployment of specific discourse and semiotic resources. None of the analyses falls into the wide-open trap of equating 'language' with identity; they all focus on connections between actual discourse and semiosis, and subject/speaker positions, inhabited and ascribed micro-identities, and features of the social and cultural imagination that determine available identity repertoires. They represent, thus, a stage in a paradigm shift that has been underway for a couple of decades now, in which scholars abandon homogenizing and static categorial notions of identity (as in 'national' or 'ethnic' identity) and develop performative, inter-subjective and pragmatic/metapragmatic models of identity. In sociolinguistics, the paradigm shift is one that takes us from a sociolinguistics of static and immobile languages associated with 'communities' to a sociolinguistics of mobile resources and speech associated with flexible networks of language participants.

   This process is not complete and steps in it, consequently, bear the traces of the older paradigm. Thus, Tsitsipis and Georgeakopoulou & Finnis start their analysis from within a 'community', rather traditionally defined. In Tsitsipis' case, the community is defined as a 'national minority' of Arvanitika speakers – a definition that incorporates both a state categorisation device of 'minorities' and an older ethnolinguistic-identity diacritic, and both are of questionable validity in empirical terms. In the case of Georgakopoulou & Finnis, the national paradigm also emerges, diasporically this time, in defining the community as 'Greek Cypriots in London', and the same restrictions apply here. In both papers, there is a tension between the flexible and constantly shifting microscopic identity patterns (or 'positioning' patterns) that are analytically demonstrated, and the a priori and conservative categorisation of the research target groups that forms the point of departure of the research. The tension occurs whenever the 'community' is described as 'changing': Undoubtedly such changes occur, and some of these changes (e.g. the alternated or 'confused' use of 'Greek' and 'Cypriot' by Georgakopoulou & Finnis' respondents) may call into question the foundations of the community. The reference point for such changes, we can see from such examples, need not be a traditional conception of national, ethnic or ethnolinguistic communities, because all of these categories are products of particular ('modernist') paradigms of scholarship, *and* features of the 'modern' nation-state apparatuses for distinguishing people.

   We see such apparatuses at work in Giaxoglou's data, where an early ('modernist') philologist deploys particular orthographic tactics in the representations of

text from 'authentic' people, another category central to understanding modernity, as Bauman & Briggs (2003) demonstrated. Deviation from the orthographic norm iconicizes deviation from the social norm – in that era, that of the dominant state bourgeoisie whose 'standard' became, to use Bourdieu's terms, the main separator between what was 'national' and what was 'sub-national' (regional, provincial, dialectal, 'native', colonial, 'common', etc.) in close concert with modern scholarship, for

> "To speak of *the* language, without further specification, as linguists do, is tacitly to accept the *official* definition of the *official* language of a political unit. This language is the one which, within the territorial limits of that unit, imposes itself on the whole population as the only legitimate language, especially in situations that are characterized in French as more *officielle*" (Bourdieu 1991: 166)

And the interesting thing, of course, is to see how in everyday regimented practices, such giant social forces are articulated in the writing or elision of the final /n/ in 'authentic' words. The small here almost flawlessly reflects the big.

The point is, however, that we haven't yet shaken off the totality of the modernist legacy in scholarship. Our own representational practices still reflect the older paradigm against which we pit our new, dissident analyses. And such analyses are, indeed, dissident. All the papers in this collection voice a concern for the smaller stuff, the stuff that can only be unearthed ethnographically by observing practices. Such practices are multifiliar, they show threads running in all sorts of directions, held together by the moment of enactment (or, to use a term more embedded in ethnography, performance). Tsitsipis' examples show the multifiliar nature of discourses of remembrance, and he rightly uses a Bakhtinian framework to engage with them: We see multi-voiced narration here, with embedded voices impersonated and incorporated in a synchronic moment of identity (or positioning) work. The fact is that, given the ethnographic orientation of the papers, *voice* rather than 'language' or even 'discourse' seems to hold the papers together. In each of the papers – Vally Lytra's and Georgakopoulou & Finnis' are cases in point – we see how participants in a social event produce the voices of others while producing their own. Consider the way in which school children, in Lytra's paper, impersonate the voice of the teacher (or, more abstractly, of the educational authority) by using a certain loudness of voice and a particular orientation to 'standards' in their teasing rituals: There is mutual positioning going on, of course, embedded in several layers of immediate and remote context, but literally incorporating voices from above in a discourse from below. Such deeply heteroglossic examples are a treasure for research, and scrupulous attention to them will point the way out of the modernist framework, towards a more accurate and less hegemony-influenced (less 'orthopractic', to adopt Giaxoglou's terminology) approach.

A particularly promising line of analysis is brought out in the second part of Georgakopoulou & Finnis' paper, where we see how discourse and identity work – voicing – is organized around particular speech genres. Here again, we move away from a totalizing approach in which 'discourses of identity' become broken down into their constituent parts – genres, registers and styles, the concrete linguistic and semiotic resources that participants have in their repertoires. The result is one in which we see something that moves identity, once and for all, away from identity criteria to identity practices of enactment. The 'language' is in itself no longer seen as the carrier of

ethnolinguistic (or ethno-national, in this case) identities. Rather, identity work is developed inside and in reference to specific genres, registers and styles. Thus, one talks as a different person when one talks about cars, about food, about children, about politics. The genres (of which the crucial social and cultural functions are finally beginning to be understood) allow people to move swiftly and recognizably between voices, and so (shifting into a more traditional vocabulary) between identities.

I called these analyses dissident, and that term naturally invokes a hegemony: That of modernist conceptions of identity. I already pointed to the reflexive dimension of this hegemony in the papers in this collection. But there is more. It is good, and wise, to realise that widespread conceptions of identity, strongly backed by state apparatuses such as education and administrative systems, still subscribe to (literally) static notions of identity. The dominant ideologies of identity are very much those of modernism, and such ideologies are very much part of the phenomenology of social divisions in our societies. Overlooking them, or pretending that they have vanished because our research has shown them to be false, is not helpful. The contradiction that I spotted in some of the papers with respect to the a priori delineation of particular groups can be pardoned with that thought in mind: That at some level of their existence, groups do present themselves in modernist terms, only to find themselves (like the youngsters in Georgakopoulou & Finnis' paper) locked in enduring and predictable struggles over their validity. Studies of identity will find a fertile terrain at the intersection of both forces.

References

Bauman, R., and Ch. Briggs (2003) *Voices of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity.