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978-0-521-38868-9 - Language and the Politics of Emotion
Edited by Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod
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1. Introduction: emotion, discourse, and the politics of everyday life

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Emotions are one of those taken-for-granted objects of both specialized knowledge and everyday discourse now becoming part of the domain of anthropological inquiry. Although still primarily the preserve of philosophy and psychology within the academic disciplines, emotions are also ordinary concerns of a popular American cultural discourse whose relationship to such professional discourses is complex and only partially charted. Tied to tropes of interiority and granted ultimate facticity by being located in the natural body, emotions stubbornly retain their place, even in all but the most recent anthropological discussions, as the aspect of human experience least subject to control, least constructed or learned (hence most universal), least public, and therefore least amenable to sociocultural analysis. The essays in this collection seek to demonstrate, on the contrary, that the sociocultural analysis of emotion is both feasible and important and to suggest new ways of going about it.

In this introductory chapter, we begin by setting out four strategies that have been or could be used to develop the anthropology of emotion: essentializing, relativizing, historicizing, and contextualizing emotion discourse. We then consider the field of meanings and diverse deployments of the key term "discourse," without which, we argue, "emotion" cannot properly be understood. Paying special attention to the theoretical terms "discourse" is meant to replace, we argue that the most productive analytical approach to the cross-cultural study of emotion is to examine discourses on emotion and emotional discourses as social practices within diverse ethnographic contexts. Finally, we review the common themes and specific arguments of the essays in this collection, drawing out their contributions to a new approach to emotion, an approach distinguished by its focus on the constitution of emotion, and even the domain of emotion itself, in discourse or situated speech practices, by its construal of emotion as about social life rather than internal

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states, and its exploration of the close involvement of emotion talk with issues of sociability and power – in short, with the politics of everyday life.

This book enters a dynamic and growing field of debate on questions about the relationship between the emotions, society, and cultural meaning.[1] Most anthropological works in this field prior to 1980 simply accepted psychological orthodoxy on emotions: Emotions are psychobiological processes that respond to cross-cultural environmental differences but retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural. The diverse approaches within the anthropology of emotions may have reflected the heterodoxies of psychology, insofar as there developed various Freudian approaches (e.g., Hiatt 1984), analyses based on learning theory (e.g., Robarchek 1979), and ethological and attachment perspectives (e.g., Lindholm 1982). But only recently has the *doxa* itself – that emotions are things internal, irrational, and natural – been exposed and questioned.

Much work done in the fields of psychiatric and psychological anthropology can be characterized as essentialist in its approach to emotion (even when other aspects of the person are viewed as more fundamentally social in origin or character). From early culture and personality work between World Wars I and II through much contemporary work in psychological anthropology, the amount and kinds of emotion that people experience are assumed to be predictable outcomes of universal psychobiological processes. A particular experience is assumed to stimulate identical emotions in all nonpathological humans, as when mothers are assumed to become attached to their newborns naturally and independently of social context (Scheper-Hughes 1985). In some of this work, for example, it is taken for granted that individuals have a limited and/or necessary amount of affection or love to distribute across persons to whom they become attached; hence the not infrequent concern with the effect on a child of having multiple caretakers, and the question of whether such children have less intense feelings for the mother and/or for other adults. In a related vein, Lindholm (1982) has argued that Swat Pukhtun (Pakistan) social organization promotes fragmented and agonistic social relations, thwarting the need for love in most contexts, but particularly in adult males. The result is that the institution of friendship must bear, virtually alone, the heavy burden of fulfilling that need; because love cannot be expressed in other arenas, friendships become intense and voracious.

Elsewhere (e.g., Hiatt 1984, Scheff 1977), emotions are viewed as

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"things" with which social systems must "deal" in a functional sense. Ritual frequently has been seen as a device that allows for the expression of preexisting emotions that would create problems if not expressed. Adolescent initiation ceremonies, for example, are presented as means for containing the affective turbulence of young boys. In a somewhat different vein, emotions are sometimes treated as psychic "energies" implicitly marshaled in the service of constructing a social order. Spiro (1965) presents a version of this view when he argues that the emotional conflicts of Burmese men, which include, in his view, their homosexual feelings, are channeled into and defused by entrance into the monkhood.

The strategy of essentializing emotions has several unfortunate consequences. First, if feelings are considered the essence of emotion, then the most reliable way to explore emotions would be through introspective reports. This approach deflects attention from social life and its possible implication in the very language of emotion. It also prevents us from looking at the role of emotional discourses in social interactions. Second, it reinforces the assumption of universality in the forms of distinct emotions (e.g., shame and guilt are each central and separate feelings), in their meaning (e.g., anger in one culture feels/means the same as anger in another), and in emotional processes (e.g., emotions are primarily intrapsychic and subject to masking, repression, and channeling). Finally, hand in hand with essentialism goes a strange invisibility of emotion itself as a problem, since positing emotion universals allows us more easily to take emotion for granted.

For those both committed to some sort of cross-cultural analysis and suspicious of the certainties and unexamined cultural assumptions about that which we most take for granted, three alternative strategies of questioning appear to be fruitful. The first strategy is to do what anthropologists have always to some extent done: to bring into question the certainty and universality of ways we think about and talk about things such as emotions by investigating whether it is so elsewhere.[2] A good deal of (often implicitly) comparative work exists, from the fertile early work by H. Geertz (1959) on the vocabulary of emotion in Java, by C. Geertz (1973) on the person in Bali, and by Briggs (1970) on Utku emotion expression, to Levy's (1973) explication of Tahitian ideas and silences on the subject of emotion.

The most important recent examples of the relativizing strategy are found in the seminal work of Myers (1979, 1986) and Rosaldo (1980).

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Unlike much of the earlier ethnopsychological work on emotion, their interpretive approach to emotions stresses not what culturally variable ideas about emotion can tell us about other "deeper" psychological processes, but rather what implications these ideas have for social behavior and social relations. These analysts helped place emotions squarely in the realm of culture by pointing to the ways local cultural concepts of emotion such as the Ilongot *liget* (anger) and the Pintupi *ngaltu* (compassion) borrow from broader cultural themes and reflect, in their ideological shape, the forms of indigenous social relationships. If these works did not always or consistently deessentialize emotions (see Rosenberg, this volume), they certainly began the important process of suspending concern with the psychological paradigm. For both, furthermore, differences observed in talk about emotion had to be traced to social structure rather than to a pure realm of autonomous ideology.

While some of the work of relativizing has been done by examining specific concepts of emotion used in different cultures, many studies of emotion even show how fragile the category itself is. For example, Howell (1981) argues that for the Chewong (Malaysia), what we call "affect" is seen as a minor phenomenon; talk about emotion is replaced by talk about normative rules that provide, she argues, "an idiom for . . . organizing the individual's relationship to himself, to his fellow[s] . . . , and to nature and supernature" (142). Obeyesekere (1985) shows that in Sri Lanka emotion is likely to be taken as a sign of Buddhist religious prescription achieved or unachieved. For the Ifaluk (Micronesia), emotion is often construed as moral judgment and has a similar pragmatic force (Lutz 1988).

In Riesman's work on the Fulani of West Africa, a subtle transition from the analysis of particular emotion concepts and their role in social relations to the questioning of the very cultural meaning and social structural effects of emotionality itself illustrates the direction we think the anthropology of emotion ought to take. In his earlier work, Riesman (1977) was especially concerned to lay out the dimensions of Fulani notions of *pulaaku* (translated as 'Fulaniness' but something others might have called 'honor') and *semteende*, or 'shame'. In his later work (1983), he began to make a suggestive argument linking social hierarchy to emotionality itself (see also Irvine, this volume), arguing that self-control or relative lack of emotional expressiveness is simultaneously taken as a badge of, justification for, and realization of the social superiority of nobles over their ex-slaves. If the meaning of emotionality differs cross-

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culturally and the applications to social organization of emotional practice are variable, then any certainties about universals are undermined.

A second strategy for those interested in emotions as sociocultural phenomena is to historicize them. That means subjecting discourses on emotion, subjectivity, and the self to scrutiny over time, looking at them in particular social locations and historical moments, and seeing whether and how they have changed. Although a host of potential studies remain to be done, a few works have attempted this sort of investigation. Some have been concerned with the history of formal and informal theories of emotions in the West, and others have examined the fate of particular emotions (Cancian 1987; Gardiner, Metcalf, and Beebe-Center 1970; MacFarlane 1987; Stearns and Stearns 1986). Norbert Elias (1978) has argued, mostly from a reading of etiquette manuals, that vast transformations of affective life in Europe took place concomitant with the development of the absolutist state. Among these he includes an expansion of the contexts in which disgust occurs and a diminution of aggressive affect or behavior. That he calls this the "civilizing process" is symptomatic of his uncritical interpretation of these changes as involving a refinement of a somehow preexisting affectivity, a position that many anthropologists would regard with skepticism. Still, his work opens up an argument about the kinds of changes that have taken place in one geographical, historical setting.

Other scholars have examined these changes in terms of the disappearance of or shift in the social locus of various emotions, as well as the manipulation of emotional discourses for state purposes. The problem of sadness has received an impressive number of historical treatments. Jackson (1985), like Harré and Finlay-Jones (1986), takes on the focused task of tracing the extinction of an emotion called "accidie" and the significance of the obsolescence of "melancholy," both so important during medieval times, in the contemporary period. Sontag (1977) argues that the nineteenth-century Romantic movement came to celebrate individuality in part by viewing sadness as a mark of refinement, as a quality that made the person suffering from it "interesting." The rise of individualism brought with it the celebration of difference; one of the routes by which the new individuals could distinguish themselves was through a focus on feelings defined as aspects of unique personalities. Radden (1987) takes these views further by noting that melancholy was primarily a male complaint, one that was at least in part socially valor-

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ized. She argues that the related modern discourse on depression differs in pinpointing women as its bearers and in portraying the syndrome as more unequivocally deviant, deficient, and medical in nature.[3] In a different vein and in a non-Western setting, Good and Good (1988) explore the ways in which the Islamic Republic of Iran now organizes, to an unprecedented degree, both public and private emotional discourses. It has transformed the public discourse of sadness and grief, which before the revolution was central to religious ritual, self-definition, and social understanding, into a sign of political loyalty to the state.

What might be most productive, however, would be to begin by tracing the genealogy of "emotion" itself so that, in an enterprise analogous to Foucault's (1978) critical investigation of the production of "sexuality" in the modern age, we might consider how emotions came to be constituted in their current form, as physiological forces, located within individuals, that bolster our sense of uniqueness and are taken to provide access to some kind of inner truth about the self (Abu-Lughod, this volume; Lutz 1986). One promising line of questioning might be to build on Foucault's insights about the growing importance of confession (to which a discourse of emotion is often bound both inside and outside psychotherapy) as a locus of social control and discourse production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Foucault's description of his own project suggests more directly how emotion discourse might represent a privileged site of the production of the modern self. He writes, in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, that he wishes "to analyze the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being" (Foucault 1985:5–6).[4] He also notes that in each historical period it is "not always the same part of ourselves, or of our behavior, [that] is relevant for ethical judgment," but in contemporary Western society, "the main field of morality, the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality, is our feelings" (1983:238). Feelings can play this role because they are currently constituted as the core of the self, the seat of our individuality.[5]

The third strategy is to focus on social discourse, building less on anthropology's comparative bent or the broad historical framing of the problem than on a commitment to careful analysis of the richness of specific social situations, whether here or there, as Geertz (1987) puts it.

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It is a strategy followed by the authors of the chapters in this volume, all of whom share a concern with emotion and begin with the assumption that it is a sociocultural construct. They go on to explore, through close attention to ethnographic cases, the many ways emotion gets its meaning and force from its location and performance in the public realm of discourse. They also ask how social life is affected by emotion discourse. To assess the nature and value of this strategy first requires attention to the term at its center: the word "discourse."

"Discourse" has become, in recent years, one of the most popular and least defined terms in the vocabulary of Anglo-American academics. It pervades the humanities and now haunts many of the social sciences. Rather than being alarmed by its spread, however, it might be better to ask why so many have adopted it. The best way to pursue that question is to consider what theoretical work they want the term to do.

As everyone readily admits, defining discourse precisely is impossible because of the wide variety of ways it is used. To get a sense of why people use it, and why we have found it useful in thinking about emotion, it might be helpful to consider what terms it replaces. What is discourse not? To what is discourse counterposed? This varies by discipline, but we will be concerned only with anthropology because its peculiar appropriation of the term from the French poststructuralist vocabulary is inflected by the prior and concurrent usage of the term by anthropological linguists.

First, particularly for those whose concerns are linguistic, the term discourse marks an approach to language as spoken and used rather than as a static code analyzable apart from social practice. In Saussure's *langue/parole* distinction, discourse would fall on the side of *parole*. What those who invoke discourse in this context might want to add, however, is that *langue* either does not exist (e.g., Hopper 1987) or at least is always embodied in particular utterances by particular individuals. In privileging speech, those who use the term discourse generally also want to assert the importance of pragmatics versus semantics. The "code," whether it be grammar, structure, model, or, in this case, some purported underlying presocial emotional matrix, is taken as emergent in a social context, even if it is not analyzed as a peculiar Western cultural construct.

Although in some senses associated with speech, discourse is also commonly used instead to suggest a concern with verbal productions more formal, elaborate, or artistic than everyday conversation. Examples of classic forms of discourse in this sense are poems, songs, la-

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ments, prayers, myths, and verbal dueling forms such as sounding (Labov 1972). Discourse is also used by some who identify with post-modernism in its literary incarnation to stress the spoken quality of language (Tedlock 1983, 1987) and to evoke its dialogic aspect, allegedly ignored by those of us who live in literate societies. Yet others use the term discourse as a way of including even the nonverbal, like music, crying, or the "unsaid" of past utterances and present unarticulated imagination (Tyler 1978) in our consideration of the meanings humans make.

Sherzer's (1987) recent article advocating a discourse-centered approach to language and culture demonstrates the wide range of uses and resulting ambiguity of the term. Blending many of these senses of discourse together in his "purposely vague" definition, he writes that discourse is

> a level or component of language use . . . [which] can be oral or written and can be approached in textual or sociocultural and social-interactional terms. And it can be brief like a greeting and thus smaller than a single sentence or lengthy like a novel or narration of personal experience and thus larger than a sentence and constructed out of sentences or sentence-like utterances. . . . Discourse is an elusive area, an imprecise and constantly emerging and emergent interface between language and culture, created by actual instances of language in use. (296)

The unfortunate vagueness of this definition is the product of a failure to grasp that terms are used to signal perspectives and to carve out academic domains, not just to refer to definable entities. The kinds of usages we have described thus far for the increasingly employed term discourse could be characterized as largely sociolinguistic or literary. All that is being keyed is an interest in language in context, texts, and the public and social character of what we study. And for the most part, the term as used in this volume stays well within this range of meanings.

Hovering around the edges of many of the chapters and informing the project of the volume as a whole is another way of using discourse, one with more ambitious theoretical goals and different disciplinary roots. Discourse in this other sense is a word that has been taken up by those who find the critique of social theory associated with French poststructuralists like Michel Foucault persuasive, or at least those who have begun to borrow its vocabulary. With this move, the semantic field and pragmatic deployment of the term have begun to shift.

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Although only beginning to find its way into anthropological writing, discourse in this much wider Foucaultian sense is being adopted to do the theoretical work of refiguring two terms that it replaces: culture and ideology. For many, the no less definable term "culture" has become problematic for several reasons. First, built into it is a distinction between a realm of ideas, even if public rather than in people's heads, and material realities and social practices, a distinction some users of discourse would like to problematize. Second, the term seems to connote a certain coherence, uniformity, and timelessness in the meaning systems of a given group, and to operate rather like the earlier concept of "race" in identifying fundamentally different, essentialized, and homogeneous social units (as when we speak about "a culture"). Because of these associations, invoking culture tends to divert us from looking for contests for meaning and at rhetoric and power, contradictions, and multiple discourses, or what some now refer to as "heteroglossia" (see Irvine, this volume).[6] It also falsely fixes the boundaries between groups in an absolute and artificial way.[7]

"Ideology" too has come to carry with it meanings that some social theorists want to shed. The Marxist alternative to culture, it has the virtues of seeming less unifying than culture. It can be pluralized even within one society, and is always linked to historically specific social groups assumed from the start to be engaged in struggles of domination and resistance. However, it retains, perhaps even more strongly than the notion of culture, the radical distinction between a realm of ideas and a material or social reality because of its historical association with a distinction between base and superstructure.[8] And even more problematically, it sets up an implicit opposition between itself, denoting a mystifying or at least motivated and interested vision of the world, and some sort of uninterested, unmotivated, and objective truth available either to a class or, perhaps more commonly, to the critical social scientist. Foucault uses discourse to suggest his rejection of these dualisms that are easily and sometimes unconsciously evoked by the notion of ideology.[9]

Although the chapters in this volume do not explore many of the implications of Foucault's work, they do remain faithful to his premise that "discourses . . . [are] . . . practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972:49). For the final work discourse is meant to do, as social theory, is to suggest a concern not so much with meaning as with a kind of large-scale pragmatics. Taking texts and talk and all sorts of other social practices as productive of experience and

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constitutive of the realities in which we live and the truths with which we work, this approach also considers how power might produce discourses as well.[10] In suggesting that we attend to the efficacy of discourse, this newer and wider usage still resembles the more limited sociolinguistic uses outlined earlier. Yet it goes further by looking at more than speech, by recognizing the local, contradictory, and fragmented character of discourses, and by insisting that discourses be understood in relation not just to social life but to power.

Thus, although each of the authors in this volume uses discourse differently, the term, resonating with its many current uses, stands as a token of our common wariness of mentalist models, our refusal to treat language as simply reflecting thought or experience, and our insistence that all those productions in a community that could be considered cultural or ideological be analyzed as social practices, tied to relations of power as well as to sociability.

The chapters in this collection takes discourse, often as the situated social practices of people speaking, singing, orating, or writing to and about each other, as a point of entry for the study of emotion. They address one or both of two issues: the discourse *on* emotions – scientific or everyday, Western or non-Western – and emotional discourses, that is, discourses that seem to have some affective content or effect. Differing in the extent to which they bring the category of emotion itself into question and in the degree to which they speak as if emotions are internal things or not (and whether it even matters), the authors also differ in the aspects and forms of language they explore. Nevertheless, they all approach emotion through language and understand language as inescapably and fundamentally social.

The turn here to discourse is a turn to detailed, empirical studies of conversation, poetics, rhetoric, and argument about and with emotional content. Building on the work of others who have explored facets of emotion in performance and language (Basso 1985; Brenneis 1987; Crapanzano 1989; Feld 1983; Good, Good, and Fischer 1988; Irvine 1982; Ochs and Schieffelin 1989; Sabini and Silver 1987 and 1988; B. Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; E. Schieffelin 1976; Urban 1988; White and Kirkpatrick 1985), we argue for a view of emotion as discursive practice. What advantages does this have for our understanding of emotion? What can those interested in emotion learn from considering its relation to discourse?

In contrast to other approaches, the emphasis on discourse in studying emotion keeps us fixed on the fact that emotions are phenomena

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