Language and Subjectivity

Understanding the role of language within the formation of a sense of self has been revolutionized by developments in social theory, particularly poststructuralism. There is now a new emphasis on the way in which subjects are vulnerable in the face of powerful discourses such as nation, gender, race and sexuality. This book is a clear and engaging introduction to these developments and their relevance to students of language. Using lively and often personal examples throughout, Tim McNamara explores the role of language within processes of subjectivity using the insights of Conversation Analysis (CA), creating an original conceptual and methodological bridge between the macro- and micro-dimensions of social discourse and everyday conversational interaction.

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KEY TOPICS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Series Editors

Claire Kramsch (University of California, Berkeley) and Zhu Hua (Birkbeck College, London)

Books in this series provide critical accounts of the most important topics in applied linguistics, conceptualized as an interdisciplinary field of research and practice dealing with practical problems of language and communication. Some topics have been the subject of applied linguistics for many years and will be re-examined in the light of new developments in the field; others are issues of growing importance that have not so far been given a sustained treatment. The topics of the series are nuanced and specialized, providing an opportunity for further reading around a particular concept. The concept examined may be theoretical or practice-oriented. Written by leading experts, the books in the series can be used on courses and in seminars, or as succinct guides to a particular topic for individual students and researchers.
Language and Subjectivity

TIM McNAMARA

The University of Melbourne
For Lillian
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When I returned to Melbourne, I joined a group of graduate students in other disciplines, all much younger than me, who were interested in reading in social theory. We read Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks and then decided that we wanted to read Derrida. None of us were philosophers, but we persisted, starting by reading the text of Of Grammatology aloud in the group, pausing at the end of each paragraph to check our understanding, which was often limited – and so we talked in order to try and make sense of what we had read. We managed four or five pages in a 90-minute session and did
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The map of Guinea-Bissau and neighbouring countries (Figure 9.1) is reproduced with permission.

The map of the linguistic boundaries in Guinea Bissau and surrounding countries (Figure 9.2) is reproduced by permission of Mutuzikin.com.