Southeast Asia

Signs of deference, signs of demeanour: Interlocutor reference and self-other relations across Southeast Asian speech communities
Edited by DWI NOVERINI DJENAR and JACK SIDNELL
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Making a great contribution to the linguistic anthropology of Southeast Asia, *Signs of Deference, Signs of Demeanour*, edited by Dwi Noverini Djenar and Jack Sidnell, theorises the interlocutor reference practices of speech communities in diverse societies, while also illustrating sociolinguistic hierarchy and insights into social relations. Drawing on the similarities and differences of addressee-reference in the languages of Southeast Asia, this edited book covers three major language families: Austronesian (Indonesian, Javanese and Malay), Austroasiatic (Kri and Vietnamese), and Tai-Kadai (Lao). The volume emerged from the Workshop on Language and Social Hierarchy held at the University of Sydney in June 2019, and its nine chapters delve into various aspects of interlocutor reference, including interactional relevance, sociopolitical influences, and social intimacies.

As a lexical resource relating to politeness and appropriateness, interlocutor reference encompasses personal names, pronouns, kin terms, and titles in social interactions. As such, the indexicality of social relationships between speakers and addressees in conversations is complex, dynamic, and highly dependent on both pragmatics and temporality. However, little is known about how self–other relations are negotiated and constructed through the use of interlocutor references in lesser-known languages. The insightful introduction by Djenar and Sidnell presents an overview of the evolving notion of 'interlocutor reference' across different fields, as well as Southeast Asian sociolinguistic typology. The editors introduce a framework for examining interlocutor reference that can help us better understand the complexity of signs of 'deference' and 'demeanour' in the human language system.

Part 1 is a foundational investigation of the systems of kin terms from a descriptive approach. Nick Enfield (chap. 2) sketches the asymmetries in the system of person reference in Kri—a Vietic language spoken in upland Laos. Enfield illustrates how two axes of asymmetry are invoked in the core system with person reference: hierarchy, grounded in the chronological birth order of siblings; and an insider-outsider axis, grounded in consanguinity and inclusivity. Joseph Errington (chap. 3) analyses the changes in the use of kin terms and personal pronouns between standard and nonstandard varieties among Javanese Indonesians in south-central Java. Errington argues that these terms of person are shaped by sociopolitical factors. This change of linguistic hierarchies shows the shifts in traditional Javanese society to becoming part of a modern nation—an ethnically heterogeneous Indonesia.

Part 2 explores two cases of reference practices in social interaction from a micro perspective. Michael Ewing (chap. 4) examines the role of vocatives in Cirebon Javanese. The findings from conversational data demonstrate that vocatives can be

used with or without overt reference. Ewing argues that vocatives function as an explicit acknowledgement of the relationship, acting as intersubjective connectors between interlocutors within a participation framework. Sarah Lee (chap. 5) investigates the use of English pronouns *I* and *you* in Kuala Lumpur Malay and its hierarchical structure from a language contact perspective. Lee argues that the use of English pronouns in Malay indexes an addressee of higher status, influenced by urbanism and modernity with associated Western values. The practice of using English pronouns with a positive cosmopolitan attitude shapes social hierarchy and identity in urban Malay communities.

Part 3 comprises three chapters that examine how the association of talk with social intimacy. Sidnell (chap. 6) elucidates how intimate hierarchy is constructed through the use of sibling terms in a Vietnamese family. By analysing a four-party conversation, Sidnell highlights how participants in such an interaction establish asymmetrical relationships through alternative social arrangements and evaluations in both real and imagined situations. Charles Zuckerman (chap. 7) conceptualises the notion of *siaw1* (male friends) and describes how equality of friendship among Lao men in Luang Prabang is tested through minor conflicts, such as playfully smacking one's head and making jokes about someone. Zuckerman argues these conflicts and kinterms are utilised to prove the quality of their hierarchical relations. This may cause solidarity and masculine aggression, but at the risk of losing friendship. Djenar (chap. 8) explores not only how deference is mediated through the selection of various forms of self- and addressee-reference, but also how social relations are enacted in Indonesian political interviews. Djenar illustrates how deference is indexed through the use of self-references and designed questions, which can shape public perception of the candidates in an election, particularly among voters.

With its comprehensive discussion of interlocutor reference, Luke Fleming (chap. 9) concludes the book with rich examples of honorific registers from East and Southeast Asia. Overall, the thematical essays in the volume cover a wide range of sociolinguistic situations and patterns in both rural and urban areas of the region. Moving beyond Eurocentrism, this volume stands firmly in the tradition of ethnographic research from an *emic* perspective by documenting the linguistic system of self–other relations. Possible future research could investigate sociolinguistic patterns of interlocutor reference in other regional linguistic families, such as Hmong-Mien and Lolo-Burmese languages, as well as Southeast Asian Englishes. This insightful book is a valuable resource for graduate students in Southeast Asian Studies, as well as scholars interested in linguistic anthropology, pragmatics, and multilingualism.

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