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"Language Policing" and the Fight Against Social Inequality in an Anti-Capitalist Organization

Abstract: *In this paper I focus on the sociolinguistic aspects of membership in a Food Not Bombs group in Athens, Georgia. I analyze the members' metapragmatic discourse in the instances of "language policing" to describe the language ideology I refer to as situated personalism, a register that was crucial in the performance of membership, and how the members were trying to create an inclusive frame of interaction free of discrimination. I discuss the paradoxical consequences of the members' reflexive language use, due to which a certain way of speaking effectively became a crucial prerequisite for group membership, contrary to the commitment to inclusion the members espoused.*

Keywords: *Food Not Bombs, metapragmatic discourse, language ideology, enregisterment*

Introduction

I was walking towards a café in downtown Athens, Georgia, on a warm September afternoon. That was the location Peter[2] had chosen for the meeting of people interested in restarting the Athens Really Really Free Market. The café was part of a local coffee shop chain and looked like a usual indie place with fliers and posters announcing music events. Several people were working on their computers sitting at the small tables near the windows and sipping on their locally roasted coffee. I found the group of people who were there for the meeting, presumably radical anti-capitalists. Several of them had piercings and tattoos and most of them were wearing clothes usually seen on the members of the punk and indie subcultures. This was where I met three members of Food Not Bombs with whom I continued to cook and serve food and organize Really Really Free Markets.

The meeting resembled official meetings of student organizations – Peter even sent us an email with the minutes. The planning was very detailed and

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2   In order to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors, I have changed their names and some biographical details.

included the choice of location and time, contacting media outlets to spread the word, printing and disseminating fliers and posters, thinking about logistics for the event itself such as tables and boxes for the things people bring, activities that can take place during the event, and so on. Despite the obvious enthusiasm and a lively discussion on anti-capitalism, not all of the things discussed were put into practice and not all of the people came to the first Really Really Free Market, and most of them never came after the first event, Peter included.

Why did most of these people not continue organizing even though they were strongly opposed to social inequality and showed support for such events in the discussion? An easy answer is that they lacked motivation or time to engage in such activities. However, I believe a more nuanced answer would have to include the complex group dynamics, through which people who are opposed to social inequality negotiate their privileged social positions and the political beliefs they hold.

In this paper, I will analyze some aspects of this negotiation within the dynamics of group membership in the Athens Food Not Bombs group. I will focus on the instances in which the members of the group commented on other people's statements as examples of metapragmatic discourse, or statements that typify meaning and consequences of speech acts.[3] In these instances of "language policing", they made explicit their language ideology, i.e. a set of beliefs about language that are related to social positions and power relations.[4] The specific language ideology they expressed is what I will call situated personalism. This ideology was based on the idea that language was producing consequences in the world and that it was necessarily related to the social position of the speaker. My interlocutors were trying to be reflexively aware of the language they and the people around them used. By marking certain utterances as problematic, they also problematized the dominant language ideology that normalized those utterances.[5] Questioning the dominant language ideology "from below",[6] they were trying to stop the reproduction of relations of inequality that characterized patriarchy and capitalism as well as to challenge the privilege of the speakers.

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3   Michael Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," in *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. John Lucy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Michael Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description," in *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. Keith Basso and Henry Selby (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976).

4   Kathryn Woolard, "Language Ideology: Issues and Approaches," *Pragmatics* 2, no. 3 (1992); Kathryn Woolard and Bambi Schieffelin, "Language Ideology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994).

5   Jane Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

6   Susan Philips, "A Marx-Influenced Approach to Ideology and Language: Comments," *Pragmatics* 2, no. 3 (1992): 377; Susan Gal, "Multiplicity and Contention among Language Ideologies: A Commentary," in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 320.

These instances of metapragmatic discourse were themselves part of a register that characterized performance in which my interlocutors assumed their social role. One would thus have to learn to properly employ models of action, especially the alignment of one's language performance according to the criteria of appropriateness, in order to be allowed to take part in certain spheres of activity.[7] I will analyze how a certain way of speaking would signal that someone might be a member of Food Not Bombs because of this reflexive practice of language.

Employing metapragmatic discourse and registers properly and consistently created a specific frame of interaction that characterized Food Not Bombs. The frame of interaction was related to the perceived dominant macro-context. It was simultaneously understood by the participants and informed their actions, including the metapragmatic discourse itself.[8] Employing the metapragmatic discourse based on the linguistic ideology of situated personalism can be taken as a performance of belonging to the group. The instances of metapragmatic discourse as instances of micro-interaction stand in a dialectical relationship with the frame of interaction since they entailed and presupposed it. This kind of performance within the group to a certain degree obliged the member to employ metapragmatic discourse when appropriate. Mastering this discourse was a de facto prerequisite for membership in the group, which contradicts the members' commitment to inclusion expressed through their language ideology. Thus, the language use that was supposed to stop the reproduction of relations of inequality paradoxically became the ground for exclusion from the group.

Speech community, identity, belonging

There has been a lot of research that focuses on the way belonging to a social group is enacted through language. One productive theoretical approach rests on the application of the notion of community of practice, as opposed to the notion of speech community.[9] The notion of speech community was seen as problematic because it was used to determine boundaries between groups based on external factors, i.e. purely linguistic factors were taken to indicate belonging to a group. Using the notion of community of practice, researchers could follow language use ethnographically and determine boundaries of

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7   Asif Agha, *Language and Social Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145, 147.

8   Michael Silverstein, "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," *Language & Communication* 23, no. 3–4 (2003).

9   Marcyliena Morgan, "Speech Community," in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, "Language and Identity," in ibid.

social groups according to the meanings of language use.[10]

Bucholtz demonstrates the usefulness of this approach in her analysis focused on a group of students in the context of a high school in California who belonged to neither one of the two dominant groups of the time. They were distantiated by certain practices from "cool teenagers" and defined as belonging to the group of nerds by other practices. In this case, their identities were produced through both linguistic and non-linguistic practices.[11] Criteria for membership could be contested by either practitioners or others because they did not stem from fixed identity categories but emerged and were maintained in relational contexts. Bucholtz describes situations when membership was contested which reveal the heterogeneity of membership in any community of practice. Interactional choices of individuals were crucial for the determination of membership and adjustments of the boundaries.

In Bucholtz's example, the linguistic practices of nerds did not need to be codified within an explicitly elaborated language ideology in order to be salient. Similarly, Kiesling describes how, by drawing on cultural models of race as an interactional resource, white college fraternity members reaffirmed categories and claimed dominance without performing Whiteness directly.[12] Global structure thus becomes evident in local social practice because linguistic features, speakers' stances, and cultural models are indexically connected within a context of interaction. Language serves as a tool that enables such processes to happen directly or indirectly.

Sometimes, however, the maintenance of boundaries requires group members to prescriptively regulate language. The prescriptive regulation of language is a well-researched topic in the context of nation-states and minority groups. However, the notion of policing was proposed by some researchers to grasp the multiplication of agents who work to produce "order".[13] This notion of policing captures the analytic move from official policy-making institutions within hegemonic nation-states to the production of normativity in the contexts of heteroglossia and polycentric multilingual environments.

Language policing is thus an actor-based discursive process in which actors construct multiple ideologies contested and shaped by larger sociopolitical conditions.[14] For example, Collister describes a group devoted to the creation of a hate free zone within an online gaming community

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10 Mary Bucholtz, "'Why Be Normal?': Language and Identity Practices in a Community of Nerd Girls," *Language in Society* 28, no. 2 (1999): 214.

11 Ibid., 220.

12 Scott Kiesling, "Stances of Whiteness and Hegemony in Fraternity Men's Discourse," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (2001): 112.

13 Jan Blommaert et al., "Media, Multilingualism and Language Policing: An Introduction," *Language Policy* 8, no. 3 (2009): 203.

14 Prem Phyak, "(En)Countering Language Ideologies: Language Policing in the Ideospace of Facebook," *Language Policy* 14, no. 4 (2015).

through policing speech and educating the speakers who used hate speech in the game.[15] The rules of this group were set out publicly and the members enforced them using surveillance. Collister is optimistic about the possibility to enact social change and empower individuals in such a way. Holden and Schrock come to the opposite conclusion.[16] Their work was focused on an intentional community whose members used liberation psychotherapy as a way of talking about one's emotions in order to create conditions for egalitarianism. However, liberation psychotherapy served as a tool against newcomers' dissent because it allowed the leaders of the group to discredit newcomers. The leaders used their discursive power to attack newcomers by depicting community problems they raised as psychological problems and discrediting them as psychologically troubled.[17]

Holden and Schrock's research reveals how groups that prescriptively regulate language can sometimes reproduce the very relations of inequality and practices of exclusion that they set out to fight against. In their example, such exclusion was done explicitly and it was evident in the leading members' discourse. In the following sections, I will focus on exclusion that happened in a subtler way, through the process of enregisterment.

Food Not Bombs

I collected the material I will be analyzing from August 2011 to April 2012. My research was based on participant observation while volunteering at the local branch of Food Not Bombs. Food Not Bombs is a global anarchist movement whose local branches comprise of non-hierarchically organized volunteers fighting against violence and the lack of food in hundreds of cities around the world.[18] The organization's three main principles are veganism or vegetarianism, the autonomy of every branch and non-violence.

The branch I worked with was founded in 2011. We would prepare food in a house where two members were living and serve it on College Square in downtown Athens, adjacent to the University of Georgia campus. As my interlocutors from the group explained, their goal was to make visible the homeless' problems in the city and the lack of food available to them and to other poor people living in Athens. Local grocery shops donated the food

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15 Lauren B. Collister, "Surveillance and Community: Language Policing and Empowerment in a World of Warcraft Guild," *Surveillance & Society* 12, no. 3 (2014).

16 Daphne Holden and Doug Schrock, "'Get Therapy and Work on It': Managing Dissent in an Intentional Community," *Symbolic Interaction* 30, no. 2 (2007).

17 Ibid., 184.

18 Cf. David Boarder Giles, "'A Mass Conspiracy To Feed People' Globalizing Cities, World-Class Waste, and the Biopolitics of Food Not Bombs" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, 2013).

they could not sell[19] and Lena "dumpster-dove"[20] to salvage food that had been thrown away but had not yet gone bad.

I helped my interlocutors prepare and serve food every Wednesday. Beside cooking and serving food, I helped in the organization of Really Really Free Markets and visited these events which took place every second Saturday of the month. Really Really Free Markets are temporary events that connect people who give things and services they do not need without entering into the relationship of exchange, either in the form of barter or in the form of monetary exchange.

The name of these events is a play on the meaning of the word "free" which means both not costing any money and enjoying freedom from constraints. The participants in this form of giving used this name to point out their view that capitalist markets were not free due to the crucial difference between capitalists and workers. They also wanted to create a space in which access to things was free rather than determined by the payment. My interlocutors wanted to organize these events as a means of fighting against capitalism by temporarily inhibiting capitalism and disseminating anti-capitalist propaganda.

During the period I spent working with Food Not Bombs, I developed relations with several members of the group who were present at either of the events. Most of my interlocutors were connected to the University of Georgia as students or teaching assistants, and few were people employed in Athens.

Language policing

Language policing took place relatively frequently in this group, often while we were preparing food and sometimes when we were serving it. The importance of those situations became blatantly obvious to me after I had made a couple of blunders, like the following one. On one occasion, Lena played a loud grindcore punk song while we were cooking. I really disliked the music and I jokingly asked her to change it since it was "raping" my ears. She reproached me and asked me not to say such things because by saying it, I was devaluing the experience of rape victims. I felt ashamed, even though I did not intend to say anything about rape since I thought I was using a usual term to describe that the music was not pleasant.

Lena's intervention is a good example of an overtly metapragmatic discourse. The notion of metapragmatics builds on the idea that language does not simply serve to denote objects in the world, but that it has pragmatic and metalingual function as well.[21] The understanding of pragmatics of a certain

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19 David Boarder Giles, "The Anatomy of a Dumpster," *Social Text* 32, no. 1 (2014).

20 Sarah Fessenden, "Food Not Trash: Dangerous Dirt, Dumpster Diving, (Dis)Taste, and Disgust" (exhibit, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2014).

21 Roman Jakobson, *The Framework of Language* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1980).

speech event rests on demonstrating the indexical relationships that the speech event has with other aspects of the situation of its occurrence, or its context.[22] The context encompasses the linguistic aspects of the occurrence (co-text), but it is not limited to them. Silverstein claims that every utterance has a pragmatic component in that it entails and presupposes the context and language reproduces the social reality in which it exists through these indexical relationships.

Jakobson's early contribution distinguished between several functions that language can perform. He identified metalingual component in utterances that focused on the code itself. Authors dealing with the similar phenomena expanded the range of types of reflexive language use.[23] Pragmatics of a speech event requires metapragmatics which will give it interactional coherence by bracketing indexicals as interpretable events.[24] There is a range of indeterminacy in this relationship, because there is no unique metapragmatic text for a set of indexicals used in interaction and no metapragmatic text can give a unique interpretation of any set of indexicals.

An important distinction between the semantic and the pragmatic function of signs can also be made in the sphere of metacommunication to differentiate between the metasemantic and the metapragmatic component. The metasemantic component which typifies meaning is less general than the metapragmatic component which typifies consequences of the speech act.[25] Both components are present in the example of Lena's reaction I described, as it is denotationally explicit in typifying my utterance according to its quality and effects.[26] By interpreting the word "rape" literally, Lena made a metasemantic remark: she typified the meaning of my utterance. At the same time, she made clear what she thought my utterance was doing in the world by saying that it devalued the experience of rape victims and in doing so, she made a metapragmatic remark.

As Silverstein notes, metapragmatic discourse is ideologically saturated because it describes the pragmatics in terms of socio-culturally salient frameworks.[27] The comments Lena made proceeded from certain beliefs that she and others in the group held with regard to what language can do in a social context. During the course of my research, I came to know that Lena

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22 Michael Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," in *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. John Lucy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 36.

23 John Lucy, "Reflexive Language and the Human Disciplines," in ibid., 9–32.

24 Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function."

25 Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description," 48–49; Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," 39ff.

26 Agha, *Language and Social Relations*, 28; Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," 39, 45.

27 Silverstein, "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," 196.

and others in the group held the belief that social inequalities and domination could be reproduced in language. I heard them talking about the reproduction of oppression through discourses about sexuality, gender, and the economy.

This is an example of what linguistic anthropologists call language ideology, namely, a set of beliefs about language that are related to the social position of those who hold the beliefs and the power relations they reproduce or challenge.[28] Language ideology is usually understood as a body of commonsense ideas about language and its nature, implicitly or explicitly shared within a group. Furthermore, language ideology came to be understood as simultaneously shaping and being shaped by social relations and language use. This term brings to the foreground the fact that cognition and consciousness are situated in the particular social position of individuals and groups and derived from experience that legitimates or brings into question social power.[29] This particular notion moves away from the idea that language ideologies are only beliefs, and false ones or mystifications at that. It views language as intimately tied to interests and power.

The study of language ideologies can focus on conflict and resistance, where dominant ideologies are questioned "from below" by subordinate groups with their own beliefs about language.[30] The situation I described is an illustration of this phenomenon. A very important feature of the dominant American language ideology is that meaning comes from the intentions and beliefs of the speaker, which some linguistic anthropologists refer to as personalism.[31] It is coupled with the idea that the main function of language is to denote objects in the world, or referentialism.[32]

My interlocutors were explicitly against this view of language. Instead, they employed something similar to what Hill calls performative ideology, which is focused on the idea that language can hurt people because it can be employed as hate speech.[33] This is similar to what Duranti describes in the case of Samoa, where the effect words produce was central, and not their denotation or the intention of the speaker.[34] The consequences of my utterance were what Lena pointed out when she was reprimanding me for using the word "rape"

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28 Woolard, "Language Ideology: Issues and Approaches"; Woolard and Schieffelin, "Language Ideology."

29 Woolard, "Language Ideology," 237–238.

30 Philips, "A Marx-Influenced Approach to Ideology and Language," 377; Gal, "Multiplicity and Contention among Language Ideologies," 320.

31 Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, 38.

32 Ibid., 39

33 Ibid., 41.

34 Alessandro Duranti, "Intentions, Self, and Responsibility: An Essay in Samoan Ethnopragmatics," in *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*, ed. Jane Hill and Judith Irvine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

and, according to her, the effect of my words was independent of my intention.

Performative ideology, as described by Hill,[35] was only one part of the complex set of ideas that my interlocutors shared explicitly or implicitly. They did not simply point out that I might hurt someone with my words, they also pointed out how language helped reproduce the social relations of inequality. They tried to subvert the dominant language ideology by calling out the ones who might produce the undesired effect, as was the case with my bad joke.[36] Similar to what Reyes points out in her analysis of decoding racist language by Korean American boys, in these cases it was not enough to either label someone as racist (invoking personalism) or say that some words are inherently racist (invoking referentialism). Rather, claiming that an utterance is racist emerges through indexical signalling to the context of interaction.[37]

Situated personalism

These metapragmatic interventions were not only aimed at other people. My interlocutors were policing their own speech as well, often at the same time as they policed the speech of other people. The following conversation that took place while we were preparing food one afternoon in April: Lena played the new song by the band Spraynard called "Trembling".[38] Rob used to play in a punk band in his spare time, and Lena was trying to start her own punk band with her friends. She started commenting on the lyrics depicting a man's relationship to a rape victim saying that the relationship was patronizing. She said that she understood the song as saying "I'm here for you, be grateful." A fast exchange between my interlocutors started then:

Rob: That's what Matt from RVIVR says 'We take care of the queers'. I don't know, I think I have a problem with that hypermasculine representation, the use of the position of domination. Maybe they are working for a good cause, but are they addressing the problem the right way? They are against aggression in an aggressive way. He was hurt, and that is why he speaks up against the male and oppressive scene.

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35 Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism*.

36 Cf. Elise Kramer, "The Playful Is Political: The Metapragmatics of Internet Rape-Joke Arguments," *Language in Society* 40, no. 2 (2011); Angela Reyes, "'Racist!': Metapragmatic Regimentation of Racist Discourse by Asian American Youth," *Discourse & Society* 22, no. 4 (2011).

37 Reyes, "'Racist!': Metapragmatic Regimentation of Racist Discourse by Asian American Youth," 460.

38 *The walls shake, the earth quakes / Your hands are trembling again / You need space / Time to erase the fire running through your head / And I know it's long bridge / I hope you know I am ready to cross it // And each time we are intertwined / We will say how we both feel / Sometimes you cannot define what is and isn't real // I know there's a monster behind your back / He's not going anywhere, no, no / I'm here to help you escape the past / I'm not going anywhere, no, no.*

Lena: 'Oh, look how cool I am, I quoted bell hooks once, give me a pop soda!' The same thing with Spoonboy: 'Read the zines on sexism that I wrote, listen to me because I am a man, even though women have been talking about it since forever!'

Rob: For example, I'm supposed to teach about the problems of gender socialization. And every girl taking that class can teach about it better than me.

Amanda: I'm following this tumblr on vegetarianism written by this girl who looks Asian. And she was called a chink, so she responded: 'Can we get over the hatred and racism?' But it's not racism because she's not Asian. It is bullying, but it's not oppression.

Lena: The same thing with sexism. It's not oppression when a guy is called a pussy, but that represents patriarchal discourse in which it's insulting when you as a man are compared to me. There are those songs: 'I'm a white suburban male, but I blame everyone else when I fail.'

Rob: I'm so privileged, so I talk to be heard. That's how you reify, that's the relationship of rhetoric and action in sociology. They talk about racism, sexism, and they act like chauvinist, racist, classist pigs in everyday life. That's dealing with the issue so that we can deal with it, not to change it. Being punk means they are indulged for patriarchy and racism. I think it's a matter of intent. Or truthfulness, the discrepancy between their status and what they are talking about.

Lena: Those are the punks whose parents pay for their punk bands' tours.

Rob: I don't know, I'm ambivalent. Do songs actually mean anything?

Another example was the way my interlocutors criticized the Occupy Athens group, formed in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement. Lena told me she had stopped participating in the activities of that group because she felt that the members of the movement had been "tokenizing" her. She told me that they saw her as a member of an underrepresented group and invited her to participate in order to appear inclusive and as if they had been working towards overcoming discrimination. Lena illustrated it with conversations in which the other members of Occupy Athens had called her to be more active as a strong young woman, because women had not been very numerous in the movement. She felt that that reproduced the power relations that characterized patriarchy because they had not perceived her as equal and valuable addition to the movement, but rather as a token of women as a group.

On the other hand, the criticism she often faced in the Occupy Athens group and in the punk-rock community was that she was too politically correct. When Lena was talking about her engagement with those communities, she was negotiating the way other people had talked and the way she had talked. In this case, the specific language ideology – which states that language produces effects in the world – was coupled with considerations about the social position from which it was uttered. This example also shows the language my interlocutors used as members of the group, i.e. a certain style and register needs to be performed. Following Agha, registers are understood as cultural models of action that allow one to take part in distinct spheres of

activity by aligning one's language performance according to the criteria of appropriateness.[39]

Agha argues against the reified view of registers as static semiotic repertoires. Registers appear as performed in micro-interactions.[40] Distinct forms of speech are enregistered, i.e. socially recognized, as indexing characteristics of speakers. This bears resemblance to voices, which are defined as contrasted ways of speaking which typify speaking personae within the taxonomy based on metapragmatic stereotypes.[41] Typification in this case is a process in which voicing contrasts linked to registers are used to assign socially relevant labels.

Agha points out that part of the formation of metapragmatic stereotypes happens due to a "leakage" across objects of metasemiosis so that ideas about words can be applied to sentences and ideas about sentences can be applied to persons who utter them.[42] He claims that the difference that can be made between words, sentences and persons as analytic categories are collapsed in the formation of "native" stereotypes.[43] A crucial aspect in the creation of these metapragmatic stereotypes is the positioning of the narrator in relation to the persons being narrated about. One common metapragmatic genre he describes includes speaking of the appropriateness of the speech of other people, without explicitly describing the criterion of appropriateness.[44] He points out that language users try to understand the correlation between social positions and speech habits of other language users.

Enregisterment is premised on the typification that arises from the search for those correlations through the metapragmatic activity of describing, comprehending, and classifying pragmatic phenomena.[45] This type of classification enables speakers to align their roles. Role alignment represents a generalized case of what Goffman calls footing, i.e. the process in which alignment takes place between persons that are co-present in participant roles.[46] Using registers is a practice of reflexive language use within the contexts where registers are meaningfully contrasted to map out social space.

The conversations about "Trembling" and about Occupy Athens illustrate how enregisterment took place among the members of the Food Not Bombs group. There was a certain repertoire that the members had mastered before

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39 Agha, *Language and Social Relations*, 145–147.

40 Asif Agha, "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2005).

41 Ibid., 45.

42 Asif Agha, "Stereotypes and Registers of Honorific Language," *Language in Society* 27, no. 2 (1998): 166.

43 Ibid., 167.

44 Ibid., 169.

45 Ibid., 187.

46 Ibid., 54.

joining this group and used in their metapragmatic discourse. They used notions such as "hypermasculine representation", "domination", "aggression", "oppression", "sexism", "bullying", "patriarchal discourse", and "tokenization", among others, to assess utterances they found problematic. These notions were part of a shared repertoire of terms that could be employed across a wide range of progressive contexts in the media, in the academia, or in the sphere of politics. They were coupled with references to figures such as Spoonboy, RVIVR and its singer Matt, zines, and vegetarianism, which can index belonging to a punk-rock subculture.

My description of these repertoires is deliberately vague because, following Agha, I do not want to ascribe objective existence to these phenomena but to view them as embedded in the negotiation of belonging to social groups. This is why registers have importance in role alignment which Agha views as generalized footing.[47] The conversation that started as a comment on the song "Trembling" went on to discuss other punk-rock performers, sociology classes, tumblr blogging, and other topics. This conversation allowed Rob, Lena, and Amanda to align their roles, to perform mastery of a certain linguistic repertoire, and to claim knowledge of a certain set of social actors and phenomena. Thus, it helped them manifest their belonging to the same social group.

At the same time, it allowed Rob to question his social position and the appropriateness of making certain utterances. As I pointed out in the previous section, agreeing with Reyes, personalist and referentialist language ideology are not enough to make these claims.[48] There are certain considerations of the social position from which one makes an utterance that neither of these language ideologies encapsulates. I refer to this language ideology as situated personalism. Adopting this ideology allows the members of the group to simultaneously master the register to display their belonging to the group and employ the register to negotiate their own privileged social position that might presumably preclude them from making certain utterances.

"Solidarity, not charity"

Conversations I have discussed so far often took place because my interlocutors were concerned with creating a space free of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. This is an example of what Silverstein refers to in his discussion of the sociocultural macro-context: an overarching "universe of cultural imagination" that stands in a mutually constitutive relationship with the micro-contexts of utterances.[49] Silverstein describes the dialectical processes through which some micro-interactions come to be projected to

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47 Agha, "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment," 54.

48 Reyes, "'Racist!': Metapragmatic Regimentation of Racist Discourse by Asian American Youth."

49 Silverstein, "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," 201ff.

form the macro-sociological context. In the micro-contextual interaction, cultural values are evident as naturalized or essentialized and map out the social space in which individuals take up certain identities. These naturalized indices appear as icons, especially in ritualized manifestations where indices appear as grounded in something more than the context of their micro-usage.

The ritualization that transforms indices into icons is subject to a political process and thus always potentially changing. In line with the view of linguistic ideology, historical change is not only reflected in language, but dialectically dependent on semiosis.[50] The interests of social actors with conflicted ideological positions and bolstered with different ritualized essentializations clash within the semiotic processes.

In the case I am describing, significant work was put into a redefinition of the perceived macro-context. Through this work against the dominant macro-context, my interlocutors were trying to create an inclusive frame of interaction. Their perception that I misunderstood the context they entailed or presupposed within the micro-interactions was the reason why the metapragmatic commentary was aimed at me on a few occasions. In other words, the understanding of the frame that my interlocutors shared had bearing on their metapragmatic discourse, and vice versa. This presents the dialectical relationship between micro-interactions and macro-context Silverstein is describing, heightened by the reflexive awareness of language that my interlocutors maintained.

In addition to the conversations we had while we were preparing food, the members would also question their own participation when we served food and held Really Really Free Markets and it was possible for passers-by and people who came to eat food or to take free things to take part in them. This was very important for some of my interlocutors. Lena pointed out that the idea behind Food Not Bombs is "Solidarity, not charity". The way she understood this was that the work that Food Not Bombs did was not a form of charity characteristic of religious and similar groups. Food Not Bombs and Really Really Free Markets were supposed to be events that create inclusive space where members of marginalized groups could come and be accepted as equal. The anarchist principles that characterized the organization were supposed to help overcome the privileges that white middle class individuals have.

My interlocutors saw Food Not Bombs as a non-hierarchical organization that did not alienate potential members the way Occupy Athens did. Furthermore, the whole conversation between Rob, Lena, and Amanda could be interpreted as implicitly outlining the "rules" of the frame of interaction within Food Not Bombs. In other words, my interlocutors were specifying what they themselves should not be doing through language policing.

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50 Ibid., 203–204.

Inclusion and exclusion

As suggested in the previous section, Lena and others valued solidarity and hoped to create an inclusive space during the events they organized. The members talked about Food Not Bombs and Really Really Free Markets as spaces where members and visitors participate in the same way – by eating the same food in the case of the former or bringing and taking things in the case of the latter. In the short description of the Really Really Free Market event, which could easily be applied to Food Not Bombs as well, Lena wrote that "participation helps build real community values" and that people should bring any goods and offer any services "that you think would benefit the community". She emphasized this by reference to the principles of "mutual-aid, cooperation, and voluntary association" which made Really Really Free Markets "a decentralized, non-hierarchical, alternative to the market economy".

The conversations I described thus far were limited to people who were already members of Food Not Bombs. I now turn to conversations with people who wanted to become members, which took place less often. I will briefly recount two ethnographic vignettes: the first one involves Will, who was invited to become a member, without explicitly saying that he wanted to become a member, the second one is about Mike, whose explicit wish to become a member was sidestepped and he eventually stopped coming.

Will, a person whom none of us knew, showed up while we were serving food on an April Wednesday, towards the end of my stay in Athens. Will started talking to Amanda and me about the way Food Not Bombs functioned: how often we met to prepare food, how many members there were, if the branch was vegan or vegetarian, and so on. Our conversation was not limited to Food Not Bombs: we also talked about his job, the college that he had attended, UGA, cycling, veganism, my Eastern European background, and politics. At one point, Amanda abruptly asked him if he wanted to join Food Not Bombs. He said that he did and he began showing up to prepare food in the following weeks.

Will was recognized as a person who could fit in Food Not Bombs even though he did not explicitly ask to join. During the conversation, Amanda and I got to know that he was employed, college-educated, vegan, and that he held progressive political beliefs. In other words, he was positioned as someone who was not there because he needed the food, but rather as someone who could potentially help. The way he spoke aligned well with the way the members of Food Not Bombs spoke, which was evident in the choice of topics such as political activism and his attitudes expressed when we were discussing those topics.

Mike, on the other hand, was coming every Wednesday when I was beginning to work with Food Not Bombs. I learned that he was a homeless person the very first time I cooked with Food Not Bombs. He was very happy that we came because he was very hungry, having spent his money earlier. He

said that he had been "blessed" with money that day but that he had had to do the laundry. He went on to discuss the price of food in a nearby grocery shop, saying that he could not even afford a banana. He asked Lena if he could help the next time he came. Lena never answered directly and, several weeks later, he stopped coming.

When I asked Lena why the people who were coming and who wanted to help were not included in any way outside of the times when food was served, she told me that she did not feel safe inviting too many unknown people into the house where we prepared food. The reason that Lena gave me reveals only part of the explanation of why Mike was not invited to join Food Not Bombs, whereas Will was. Although the difference between the two situations implies a form of subtle classism that excluded people like Mike because he was homeless and poor, I believe that a potentially more important aspect of it was the way Mike and Will presented themselves in the way they spoke.

The conversations with Mike were limited to food and poverty, so that Mike's language could not appear as aligned with ours the way Will's language could. Mike and Will are examples of two very different ways of presenting oneself through the use of language. In theory, membership in the group was supposed to be open to everyone. In practice, joining the group was dependent on the relations that a potential member formed with those who were already in the group which, in turn, depended on a certain form of speech potential members could perform. The members of Food Not Bombs were the ones who mediated the community-building effort Lena wrote about in the description of Really Really Free Markets. Those who wanted to become members would have to align their roles with the actual members' roles by presenting themselves as able to use the register the members were using and as subscribing to the ideology of situated personalism. Notwithstanding their explicit political goal to create an inclusive space, the members Food Not Bombs excluded potential members in subtle ways by paying attention to the way they used language.

Final remarks

I have explored how the language ideology of situated personalism allowed the members of Food Not Bombs to police their own or other people's language, how the specific performance that included such metapragmatic discourse was an important part of the membership in the group, and how it informed and was informed by the frame of interaction. The way my interlocutors employed this language ideology was inherently paradoxical. It rested on the understanding of the relations of inequality and domination that pervaded the society and that were reproduced by the people who were privileged. At the same time, in order to become a member, one would need to be ready to police language the way the members did. In practice, this

required one to have, on the one hand, a certain familiarity with critical theory that one could get in sociology, gender studies, and similar courses, and on the other hand, certain cultural capital gained through an intimate knowledge of the punk-rock scene. As Holden and Schrock point out, even when actors intend to be egalitarian, their language use enables discursive definitions of the situation that may prevent them from perceiving the discrepancy between their professed ideals and the consequences of their actions.[51] In the case of Food Not Bombs, enregisterment proved to be crucial in the production of this paradoxical effect, since it went against the explicit understanding of the frame that the group offered for the inclusion of marginalized individuals.

This sheds light on the puzzle from the beginning of the paper. There is a complex system of push and pull factors which might make someone decide to join or not to join any group that cannot be explained away by saying that potential members are not motivated enough or that they are simply lazy. Further work in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics could pay closer attention to enregisterment in order to reveal how groups that are explicitly determined to work against social inequality may end up reproducing some patterns of domination.

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51 Holden and Schrock, "'Get Therapy and Work on It': Managing Dissent in an Intentional Community," 196.

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Резиме

Огњен Којанић

„Надзирање језика" и борба против друштвене неједнакости у једној антикапиталистичкој организацији

Кључне речи: Храна не оружје, метапрагматски дискурс, језичка идеологија, регистар

У овом раду анализирам социолингвистичке аспекте чланства у групи Храна не оружје у Атенсу, у америчкој савезној држави Џорџија. Анализа метапрагматског дискурса чланова групе који се испољавао при надзирању језика открива идеологију ситуираног персонализма, важност перформативног аспекта таквог метапрагматског дискурса за чланство у групи и његову везу са оквиром интеракције унутар групе. Начин на који су чланови групе користили језичку идеологију ситуираног персонализма је почивао на специфичном разумевању односа неједнакости и доминације који су преовладавали у друштву и супротстављању њима кроз језик. Оквир интеракције који су чланови групе желели да створе надзирањем језика требало је да омогући укључивање маргинализованих појединаца. Истовремено, да би особа постала чланом, морала би да буде спремна да надзире језик на начин на који су то радили чланови, што је захтевало специфичан културни капитал стечен кроз образовање и припадност панк-рок сцени. Централно место регистра је стога имало последице супротне ономе за шта су се чланови експлицитно залагали кроз промовисање језичке идеологије ситуираног персонализма.