

ALESSANDRO DURANTI. *Key Terms in Language and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. xvi + 282.

*Key Terms in Language and Culture* includes 75 terms concerning language matters in anthropology. These terms, clearly printed on the cover and alphabetically listed in the volume, include: **acquisition, act, agency, body, brain, category, codes, color, community, competence, conflict, contact, control, crossing, deaf, dreams, endangered, evolution, expert, functions, gender, genre, gesture, grammar, healing, heteroglossia, humor, iconicity, identity, ideology, ideophone, improvisation, indexicality, individual, inference, intentionality, interview, literacy, maxim, media, metaphor, meter, music, names, narrative, orality, oratory, participation, particles, performativity, plagiarism, poetry, power, prayer, prophecy, proverb, reconstruction, reflexivity, register, relativity, repetition, signing, socialization, space, style, switching, syncretism, theater, translation, truth, turn, variation, vision, voice, writing**. For each of the terms, a 1000-word original essay is composed to provide 1) a brief description of the concept; 2) issues associated with the concept; 3) major contributions to its study; and 4) a set of suggested readings. The contributors who wrote the essays are mainly linguistic anthropologists though there are some from other fields like folklore, linguistics, philosophy of language, psychology, sociology, ethnomusicology, conversation analysis, biological anthropology, and medical anthropology. Their names are listed at the beginning of the volume together with their snail addresses and email addresses. An index is provided at the end of the volume. It is clear that Alessandro Duranti, the editor of the volume, intends to produce a reasonable layout for the convenience of the readers.

As linguistic anthropology deals with the language matters involved in human social activities, most of the essays in this volume address topics concerning discourse and society. These terms are gender, genre, identity, ideology, individual, media, metaphor, power, to name only a few. We will take two of the terms for example to associate this volume with the concerns of the readers of D & S.

**Media:** The author begins with a definition of media as a channel or conduit for the transmission of some kind of communication. Then the author illustrates the categories and subcategories of media. What is important for readers of D&S to notice is that, as the author states, investigating the linguistic dimensions of media should not only be confined to sociolinguistics or linguistic anthropology, but also involve the cultural, social, psychological, and political function of media. For this argument, the author outlines four areas of greatest importance. First, media are key agents in the political economy of language. Utilizing certain linguistic varieties in national media can legitimate the social, economic, and political dominance of some social groups at the expense of the others. Second, media can be important catalysts for language

socialization and language change. They contribute to the circulation and valorization of standard phrases, key words, and ready-made formulations in public culture. Third, the ability of media to delineate social identities and to function as forums for collective participation is greatly dependent on language use. Social identities (e.g. class, gender, age, ethnicity) of both media producers and media audiences are constructed through the choice of topic, code, register, and style. A fourth area of emerging research focuses on the intertextual relations across different media and various forms of face-to-face communication. In all of these domains, media's relevance for culture rests heavily on language's relevance in media.

**Identity:** The author begins with the definition of the term as the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories. Though other, non-linguistic criteria may also be significant, he points out, language and communication often provide important and sometimes crucial criteria by which members both define their group and defined by others. This typology of identity includes national, racial, class and rank, professional, and gender identities. After outlining researches on these identities through language and communication, he points out that most of these different types of identity are neither exclusive nor singular. "Though researchers sometimes focus on only one of these levels, individuals, as social actors, experience the multiplicity and interactivity of these levels, in their repertoires of identity." The author finally points out that the emphasis on identities has met objections by some social scientists who argue that the focus on an individual's freedom to manipulate a flexible system of identities fails to take into account that some identities are imposed and coercively applied.

From the above two examples, we can see that the two short essays in the volume briefly illustrate terms involved with discourse and society. We have had dictionaries of language or linguistics, such as Hartmann & Stork (1972) and Crystal (1997). But we do not, until we read this very volume, have a companion for introductory courses in language and culture and advanced seminars in anthropology. The leading scholars provide not only a brief review of but also an insight into the researches done in the field concerning the linguistic matters of anthropology.

References:

Crystal, D. (1997) *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Hartmann, R.R.K. & Stork, F.C. (1972) *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. London: Applied Science Publishers, Ltd.

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