Grammatical and Indexical Convention in Honorific Discourse

This article examines the structure of honorific expressions in Lhasa Tibetan and their contextualized function in discourse. Honorific expressions are grammatically valued items of the language that are indexical of deference toward referents picked out in interactional events. Moreover, the category of referent deferred-to varies by the grammatical class of the expression. Four grammaticalized indexical categories are distinguished in these terms. Additional themes discussed include the role of ideology in shaping speaker awareness of conventional indexical effects, and the role of discourse-based indexicality in transcending the limits of such conventions.

Introduction

Speech is available to us not only as a modality of representation but also as an instrument of action, as Malinowski noted many years ago: "in all communities, certain words are accepted as potentially creative of acts" (1935:53). My immediate concern here is to clarify the nature of speech as social action in the case of a very particular type of speech activity, namely the use of speech to convey respect to others. Such honorific discourse, as it has been called, appears to occur in every language. It has been studied in the greatest detail, however, in those languages that have a positively specifiable honorific register formation; for in such languages, the efficacy of honorific discourse is particularly clear and robust to the analyst. In the present article I offer an account of honorific discourse and honorific register in one such language, Lhasa Tibetan, in order to clarify certain analytic principles that appear to me to be applicable cross-linguistically and cross-culturally to the general understanding of speech as social action.
Honorific register is a speech variety within Lhasa Tibetan, the very use of which constitutes a culturally valued mode of interational engagement. Native grammarians use the term $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ to refer to honorific register. As an ethnometalinguistic term, $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ is used to refer both to contextually situated honorific utterances on the one hand, and to decontextually considered honorific items on the other. Such systematic ambiguity suggests that the very forms comprising this register are felt to be imbued with all the power manifest in acts of utterance. Native speakers characterize $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ as speech whose very words show respect. Such accounts leave open the question of how, and in what way, $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ speech is indicative of respect at all.

It is not necessary, after all, to resort to speaking in order to show respect. Many other kinds of acts, differently situated within a frame of strategic interaction may serve to signal respect in ways too various to admit to any uniform characterization. But to act respectfully by speaking in $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ register dimensionalizes the prospects for respectful comportment in terms of such conventional relationships of form-meaning as are socially shared and thus interactionally invokable in linguistic utterances.

The first problem, then, is the problem of distinguishing the kinds of linguistic convention that make acts of speaking in honorific register tantamount to acts of respect in some sense. I argue in the next section that we need to distinguish at least two kinds of convention—grammatical and indexical convention—in order to account for the isolability of the register phenomenon as such. A detailed analysis of $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ register is given in these terms below.

A second problem regarding the systematicity of honorific register is the problem of how such linguistic conventions inform historically situated varieties of social practice. For whom do these conventions hold, and in what way? How are such conventions distributed across speech communities? This is the problem of specifying the boundary conditions that give such form-meaning relationships a kind of stability in an isolable region of place and time below. I will argue below that historically inherited social ideologies play the decisive role in this regard.

A third problem is the problem of the limits of conventionalization of discursive interaction: to what extent is the meaningfulness of honorific discourse explicable wholly in terms of conventions? Are there any principles of interpretation that are not themselves conventional? These questions are taken up in the last three sections, in light of the data on honorific discourse.

**Grammatical and Indexical Convention in $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ Register**

A first level of conventionality in $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ register emerges from the fact that $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ items are grammatically valued expressions of the language. They may be grouped into distinct grammatical categories with distributionally definable sense characteristics (Lyons 1968:427ff., 443ff.). At the most generic level of such categorization, we might note that $\text{s}\text{gs}\text{a}$ forms occur productively only for nouns and verbs. Syntactically dependent elements such as case markers, aspect/evidentiality markers, clause conjoiners, and subor-
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dinators, etc., lack sesa alternants. Thus, the signaling of respect is possible only in certain special morphosyntactic positions and only by items belonging to sense categories that can fill those positions. Grammar stands, then, as an intermediate level of analysis between item and utterance, delimiting the class of linguistic expressions that can be used to signal respect in such a system.

The pervasiveness of such grammatical valuation of items in honorific register systems across the world has led certain writers to suggest that grammatical value is the only linguistic principle accounting for the systematicity of honorific registers. Brown and Levinson (1987), for example, have claimed that honorific expressions are “direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants, or between participants and [referents]” (1987:276), thus proposing an analysis that seeks to map categories of grammaticalized lexico-syntactic form directly onto categories of macrolevel social structure, such as status role. It is not at all clear, however, how the notion of a grammatical code gives us any analytic power to describe the interactional variability of such respect marking at the level of utterances. First, the linguistic marking of respect is not mappable in any one-to-one fashion onto preestablished categories of social status (as Duranti notes, for example, in his discussion of honorific register in Samoan, “the referent’s status/rank alone cannot be used to predict the lexical choice made” [1992:86]). It is always possible to be rude to one’s social superiors or polite to one’s inferiors. Second, grammatical considerations alone do not suffice to clarify the timebound provisionality of respect marking within the real-time flow of discourse, even within utterances of sentence scope: the marking of respect in any given temporal phase of an utterance is always subject to revision—whether cancellation or augmentation—in any subsequent temporal phase of the same utterance, even if by “the same utterance” here we mean “the same sentence token” (as discussed in the last three sections below). Thus, the notion that there is any kind of direct coding relationship between grammaticalized form and social structure becomes doubly difficult to sustain.

In this article, I will argue that sesa items do not encode social status but index deference entitlements. I owe the italicized distinction to Shils (1982), who distinguishes social status as the objective status role of an individual, conceptualizable in terms of variables of social structure such as birth, breeding, age, profession, wealth, etc., from deference entitlement, namely the interaction-specific comportment of an individual toward some alter. Social status is a monadic concept establishing the position of an individual within a system of social stratification, whereas deference entitlement is, minimally, a dyadic (otherwise, polyadic) concept establishing the relationship of a given interactionally positioned individual to some other(s). Since my concern here is with discursive interaction (i.e., interaction involving, at the very least, linguistic signal, whatever other signal it may involve), let me sharpen the distinction somewhat in the interest of clarifying its applicability to the analysis of interactional events of this type. Although both social status and deference entitlement are positional concepts, we are really dealing with two very different measures of “positioning” here.
Social status specifies cardinal position within a system of social stratification, so that the social status of an individual requires appeal to variables of social structure of the sort mentioned above. Deference entitlement, I will say, specifies ordinal or relative position within events of discursive interaction, and such relative position is establishable only by appeal to some utterance linking dyads (or, generally, n-ads) of interactional role categories (such as speaker-of, addressee-of, bystander-to, referent-of, etc.) relative to such utterance. Of course, individuals linked by some discursive signal can be seen to be "positioned," simultaneously, by more than one criterion. And insofar as communicative events are informed by assumptions about social structure, we might say that the social statuses of individuals are presupposed, to a greater or lesser extent, as part of the initial conditions of any event of signaling deference entitlements. But it should be clear that the two notions are logically distinct.7

Here the indexical character of §£sa items must be fully appreciated. The signaling of deference entitlement (or simply "deference") appears to have the structure "deference to somebody from somebody," or more precisely "deference to [rolei] from [role2]." I will say that the interactional role category to which deference is directed is the focus of deference, and the interactional role category from which the deference emanates is the origo of deference, so that deference in this sense is always "deference to [rolei] from [rolej]." The indexical character of §esa items lies, then, in their ability to establish a link between two interactional role categories—one serving as a focus of deference, the other as an origo of deference—within the real-time flow of discursive interaction.

To clarify the usefulness of these notions, it is helpful to place §esa register within a typological perspective. Many different types of repertoire formations have been described as characteristic of register phenomena in the literature (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Dixon 1971, 1977; Errington 1988; Haviland 1979; Hill and Hill 1978; Inoue 1979; Irvine 1988; Sherzer 1983; Silverstein 1988). From a typological point of view, §esa register indexes deference toward some referent; it is not specifically a system signaling deference toward addressee (e.g., Krama (vs. Ngoko) in Javanese) or toward bystander (e.g., "mother-in-law" register in Dyirbal).

Thus, in §esa register, the indexical focus of deference is always an entity denotationally picked out in discourse. Deference to addressee or to bystander are derivatively possible only under certain conditions, for example, if the utterance contains an honorific second-person pronoun referring to addressee, or if the utterance occurs in a setting where the referred-to (and thus deferred-to) individual is physically co-present. But unlike the Dyirbal- and Javanese-type systems mentioned above, §esa register contains no items that can signal deference to bystander or to addressee independently of denotation to them. Whereas in Dyirbal the "mother-in-law" register is a [bystander focu] system and whereas the Javanese Krama/Ngoko contrast differentiates an [addressee focu] system, Lhasa Tibetan §esa register forms a [referent focu] system.8

In §esa discourse, the indexical origo of deference is typically the role-relation speaker, so that deference marking is typically "deference to [refer-
ent from [speaker$_{\text{origo}}$].” However, in certain discursive events (to be discussed below), other types of origo appear to be possible. Thus, Lhasa Tibetan speakers sometimes take on the perspective of the addressee in marking deference to some referent, and this type of use is parallel to the kind described for Javanese as mbasakake ‘to use language as another would or should’ (Errington 1988:160ff.). Thus, as Beyer has noted in the case of a classical text (1992:207), the teacher Mar-pa generally uses nonhonorific forms in referring to his disciples, thus signaling his own lack of deference toward them; but he switches to honorific forms in referring to them while talking to a much younger disciple, thus prescribing a deferential relationship between the younger man and his older peers. Such prescriptive usages appear to mark the deference relation “deference to [referent$_{\text{focus}}$] from [addressee$_{\text{origo}}$].” Moreover, such prescriptions are socially warranted only if the speaker is of higher status than the addressee. If the young disciple were to prescribe a deference relation as holding between his master and the older disciples, such prescription would simply be considered rude.

Judgments of rudeness and politeness, then, require appeal to social status. This constitutes the major difference between deference and politeness. We can evaluate items belonging to a register formation in terms of deference functions insofar as these items conventionally establish relationships of deference entitlement between interactional role categories such as speaker, addressee, referent, bystander, etc. Deference functions indexically link the signal order to the interaction order. As such, deference functions can be specified independently of which actual social categories of individuals are recruited to the interactional roles themselves. However, judgments of politeness and rudeness depend in an essential way on these very facts of role recruitment, namely facts regarding the social category of the individual who fills the role of speaker, addressee, referent, etc. For any given role dyad indexically linked by a deference function, judgments of politeness depend upon the map from deference entitlement to status differential, insofar as the latter can be established for social categories of individuals considered pairwise. Thus, politeness judgments link deference in interaction to the social order. In formulating politeness judgments, native speakers make appeal to certain societal norms of interaction, and at their clearest, such norms are articulated as social ideologies that seek to constrain the recruitment of categories of social status to interactional roles in events of signaling deference entitlement. It is to a consideration of such ideologies that I now turn.

Indexical Valorization and Ideology

Most expressions of the language are easily evaluated by native speakers to be either honorific in force or not honorific, and this may suggest that the distinction is one of binary contrast. We might suppose on the basis of this kind of evidence that one set of forms is respectful or polite, and the second set is not. However, despite the existence of binary distinctions, as
Table 1
Gradient Levels of Respect in Lhasa Tibetan Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonhonorific speech</th>
<th>Honorific speech (\text{šesa})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) 'body': suq-u</td>
<td>qū-suq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) 'mind': sēm</td>
<td>thuū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) 'food': tōo &gt;&gt; qhā-laā &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>šč-g-laā &gt;&gt; sūū-tshū &gt;&gt; cÅ·-mīi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In (a)–(b) of Table 1, there are a number of cases, as in (c), where lexical distinctions in deference levels are gradient in character.

In the case of apparent binary contrasts, the two forms may be derivationally related (e.g., Table 1 (a): qū-suq 'body(NH)' vs. suq-u 'body(H)') or they may be unrelated (e.g., (b): sēm 'mind(NH)' vs. thuū 'mind(H)'). (The precise nature of such derivational processes is examined in greater detail below.)

In the case of gradient repertoire distinctions, as in the five-point scale of words for ‘food’ in (c), some items are formally related (qhā-laā, šč-g-laā) while others are not (tōo, sūū-tshū, cÅ·-mīi). If we move from left to right in row (c), we find that each word is successively more polite than the preceding word. (This relation is marked by the symbol >> in the table.) However, only the last three are šč-ga words.

It should be clear, then, that distinctions of “respect” or “politeness” exist for nonhonorific as well as honorific vocabulary, and are often gradient in both repertoires. “Politeness” as a notional category crosscuts honorific versus nonhonorific distinctions. Conversely, the register termed šč-ga by native speakers is but one ideological formation within a graded series of ways of expressing politeness in the language.

When asked about the usage of these forms, Lhasa speakers give very particular types of responses. Most speakers note that among the two non-šč-ga words, tōo and qhā-laā, tōo is actually disrespectful in Lhasa usage and is really only used for food for animals or servants. Some informants add—somewhat disparagingly, it seems—that speakers of “upper region” dialects (e.g., speakers of the Kham dialect) use it more widely and may even use it in referring to food for people. qhā-laā, they go on to say, is a fairly informal term, used in most casual contexts with family members of equal or lower age, and with other friends or intimates. Among the šč-ga words, šč-g-laā is generally said to be used in speaking of food for an older family member or a guest; sūū-tshū is generally food for an elevated personage; and cÅ·-mīi, according to one informant, is now hardly used except in referring to food for the Dalai Lama.

This type of conscious speculation on that part of native speakers about their own speech practices constitutes a very particular genre of metapragmatic accounts (i.e., accounts that describe the pragmatics of speech use). Such elicited statements respond to questions about items with answers describing imaginary events of talking about certain stereotypic social beings. In giving such accounts, speakers formulate the regularities of...
speech use in terms of the social identities—including the status roles—of individuals being spoken about in such imagined usages (e.g., 'food for a family member,' 'food for an elevated personage,' 'food for the Dalai Lama,' etc.). Such data is, in itself, unreliable with regard to the isolation of indexical categories in šesa speech and, for this reason, must be supplemented with the data of natural conversation. However, it offers a privileged window into the ideological norms associated with the register. Moreover, such norms themselves are socially distributed in highly interesting ways.

Thus, different social categories of informants tend to offer slightly different explanations. Upper-class speakers tend to characterize their speech as involving relatively polite forms used in a wider range of settings. For example, in the case of interspousal communication, lower-class speakers generally say they use the nonhonorific qhā-lāa, and that they do so reciprocally, whereas upper-class speakers say they prefer the more polite—and honorific—form šeg-lāa. The point is not that these accounts are incorrect, for naturally observed speech use appears, in many cases, to accord with such self-descriptions. The point is, rather, that such elicitable metapragmatic norms are themselves socially distributed across categories of speaker identity.

There are other aspects of this socially distributed character of ideology whose detailed discussion I must leave aside for another discussion. Briefly, although such ideologies appear to serve as norms for particular social categories of speaker-referent dyads, they seem to entail attendant ideologies about speaker type as well. This follows naturally enough from the fact that not all speakers control the use of this graded series of forms equally well, or in the same way. Some Lhasa speakers, for example, hesitate when asked about ċaṅ-mīi, the most honorific of the forms cited in Table 1(c). When other Lhasa speakers are asked about these individuals, they usually suggest (or say outright) that these people are probably not very educated or refined. Similarly, when Lhasa speakers say (as noted above) that the term tū2 is used somewhat less discriminately by "upper region" speakers—such as speakers of the Kham dialect of Tibetan—they are constructing a stereotype about Kham speakers that accords with, indeed reinforces, the general stereotype that Kham-pas are somewhat more earthy and less sophisticated than natives of Lhasa themselves.

As such, these metapragmatic accounts have a high degree of intersubjective or public repeatability for native speakers. They are easily elicited by means of direct questions and are easily formulated in answers to such questions. Statements belonging to this genre of folk-metapragmatic accounts also occur naturally, as in the case of prescriptions of etiquette, for example. Children are frequently told not to speak to such-and-such an individual in such-and-such a way, but to say something else instead, something that accords better with the ideological norms of the relevant social group. The contrastive appeal to group identity (where explicit) may, of course, be organized at any of several nested levels of social structural grouping (family, clan, lineage, regional affiliation, social class, etc.) and, in its most normatively insistent and, perhaps, clearest form, involves some
appeal to ideologically constructed counterexamples (as in 'Who told you to speak like that? . . . Well, they’re so-and-so . . . not like us!).

The existence of such sociohistorically transmitted ideologies provides the necessary boundary conditions that give a certain stability in time and place to the register phenomenon as such. Contrary to Brown and Levinson’s reductivist claim that honorific registers may be regarded as “frozen outputs of face oriented strategies” (1987:279) available to a “model person” endowed solely with “rationality and face” (1987:58), it would appear, then, that the element of ideology is an irreducible component of the register phenomenon, that it is the sine qua non without regard to which the identifiability of šesa expressions, their primary valorization as indexicals of deference, their secondary valorization as markers of speaker identity, and the socially distributed character of such valorizations, all remain incomprehensible. Such ideologies associate repertoires of linguistic expressions with forms of social praxis, and in this way are constitutive not only of the social reality of the register formation but also of its objectual character as an empirically isolable phenomenon. And, as I have suggested, the genres of folk-metapragmatics discussed above provide us much insight into the character of such ideologies.

As has widely been noted, however, actual discursive practice is found not always to accord with ideological norms, no matter how fine-grained an analysis of the latter we are able to give. My principal quarry here, consequently, is not such ideological norms of respect, abstractable as they may be from genres of folk-metapragmatic description; it is the indexical categories of deference that constitute the pragmatic phenomenon itself.

Such indexical categories are constituted at the intersection of two kinds of principles: the grammatical values of items, and their indexical capacity to pick out a variable of context as focus of deference. Four such grammaticalized indexical categories exist in the language. These are described in the next section.

**Honorific Repertoires and Deference Functions**

**Formation of Honorific Nouns**

Honorific nouns fall into several different form classes. The formation of pronouns and personal appellations is relatively straightforward, as illustrated in Table 2.

As far as pronouns are concerned, distinct honorific forms occur for second- and third-person categories, but not for first-person. Honorific apppellations for people, such as proper names, kin terms, and titles, are formed by a regular derivational process whereby the clitic particle laa occurs either after the noun stem (e.g., (e), (h)–(j) in Table 2) or after a reduced variant thereof (e.g., (f)–(g)).

The formation of honorific alternants for nouns denoting nonhuman entities is rather different. Two distinct types of such honorific nouns occur—monolexemic nouns and compound nouns—and their formation is exemplified in Table 3.
Table 2
Honorific Forms for Pronouns and Personal Appellations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun category</th>
<th>Nonhonorific form</th>
<th>Honorific form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) na 'I' (1st sg.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) khōra 'you' (2nd sg.)</td>
<td>kvē̤ ŋ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) qhō 'he' (3rd sg. masc.)</td>
<td>qhō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) mō 'she' (3rd sg. fem.)</td>
<td>qhō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names, kin terms, titles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Tāši [proper name]</td>
<td>Tāši laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) cō-cō 'older brother'</td>
<td>cō laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) ā-ma 'younger brother'</td>
<td>ā-ma laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) ācaā 'older sister'</td>
<td>ācaā laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) māčē ē 'cook'</td>
<td>māčē ē laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j) Amci 'doctor'</td>
<td>Amci laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(k) qeqē ē (~qe ē) 'teacher'</td>
<td>qeqē ē laa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In rows (a)–(d) of Table 3, we see honorific nouns that are simple lexemes, not formally related to the corresponding nonhonorific forms. Thus, in (a), the honorific word corresponding to the nonhonorific qo 'head(NH)' is u 'head(H)'. The two forms share no morphemic partials, as is the case with the examples in (b)–(d) as well.

In examples (e)–(h) in Table 3, we see honorific nouns that are formally compounds with a [STEM₁-STEM₂]₁₁ internal structure. In most cases, the STEM₂ element of the honorific noun is formally identical with an element of the nonhonorific form. If the nonhonorific word is monomorphemic, the STEM₂ element of the honorific word may simply be that morpheme (e.g., (e): ta 'hair(NH)'/0-ta 'hair(H)'). If the nonhonorific word is bimorphemic, the STEM₂ element of the honorific word may either be the first element of the nonhonorific word (e.g., (f): chaā-lgē 'work(H)' vs. lgē -qa

Table 3
Formation of Nonhuman Honorific Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonhonorific form</th>
<th>Honorific form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monolexemic nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) qo 'head'</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) laq-pa 'hand'</td>
<td>chaā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) mtq 'eye'</td>
<td>ēcē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) chū 'water'</td>
<td>chaap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compound nouns ([STEM₁-STEM₂]₁₁)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) ta 'hair'</td>
<td>0-ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) lgē -qa 'work'</td>
<td>chaā-lgē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) kuq-šē 'comb'</td>
<td>0-šē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) mtq-chū 'tears'</td>
<td>ēcē-chap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'work(NH)') or the second (e.g., (g): u-šèè 'comb(H)' vs. kwa-šèè 'comb(NH)'). Or, if distinct honorific forms occur for both morphemes of the nonhonorific word, the honorific alternant may be formed by corresponding substitutions, morpheme by morpheme (e.g., row (h): miq-chu 'tears(NH)' [literally, 'eye(NH)-water(NH)'] vs. čèè-chap 'tears(H)' [literally, 'eye(H)-water(H)']—cf. rows (c) and (d)).

In all cases where the [STEM₁-STEM₂] honorific item is an endocentric noun, the STEM₂ element functions as the head of the noun. Thus, the STEM₂ element is always a nominal element, whether lexically honorific (e.g., (h)) or not (e.g., (e)–(g)).

The STEM₁ element, on the other hand, is always an honorific lexeme, whether it be the honorific form of a noun or a verb. Note that, in Table 3, the STEM₁ elements of the honorific nouns in (e)–(h) all occur as independent honorific nouns in (a)–(d). The STEM₁ element functions as a pragmatic operator on the STEM₂ form, signaling the honorific value of the compound noun thus formed. In the honorific lexicon of the language, we find that a relatively small number of lexemes can occur as STEM₁ modifiers on the STEM₂ heads of compound nouns. The class of STEM₂ elements, on the other hand, is potentially unbounded in size. The STEM₁ elements thus function as a delimited set of noun classifiers within the repertoire of honorific compound nouns considered as such. All items that can occur as STEM₁ classifiers can occur as independent honorific nouns as well. The lexical items that occur most productively as STEM₁ classifiers are listed in Table 4.

All 20 items listed in Table 4 are lexically honorific words in the language and are all associated with corporeality in some way. Thus, the verbs in the right-hand column, numbered XV–XX, are all verbs of bodily activity. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body-part nouns</th>
<th>Verbs of bodily activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. qè 'body (H)'</td>
<td>XV. sùn 'to say/tell (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. thù 'mind (H)'</td>
<td>XVI. sòô 'to offer (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. u 'head (H)'</td>
<td>XVII. sjm 'to rest, sleep (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. chà 'hand (H)'</td>
<td>XVIII. šèè 'to eat, incorporate (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. quù 'neck (H)'</td>
<td>XIX. phèè 'to come; go (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. càà 'tongue (H)'</td>
<td>XX. šùù 'to sit, stay (H)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. šèè 'mouth (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. čèè 'eye (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. šèp 'foot (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. ńèè 'ear (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. šàn 'nose (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. tshèm 'tooth (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. qa 'speech (H)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. chap 'water (H)'</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
words in the left-hand column of the display are all body-part nouns. Note that whereas honorific nouns I–XII are body-part nouns in a narrow anatomical sense, the nouns in XIII and XIV are not anatomical terms, strictly speaking. They are, nonetheless, associated with the body in cultural terms. Thus, qa’a ‘speech(H)’ is considered to be one of the three “corporeal” attributes—body, mind, and speech (cf. I, II, and XIII)—by which a soul is recognized when it is reincarnated into a new physical body (Norbu and Turnbull 1976:235). Similarly, ch’ap ‘water(H)’ is not obviously a body-part term. It is, nonetheless, associated with a number of bodily effluvia (e.g., caa-ch’ap ‘spittle(H)’, literally ‘tongue(H)-water(H)’) and is body-related in this secondary sense.

Further examples of the formation of honorific nouns are given in Table 5. (Underlining represents the endocentric head of the noun; all stems shown are nonhonorific unless the symbol (H) appears in the English gloss.) Note that in examples (a)–(c), the nonhonorific form is monolexemic and the honorific noun blexemic. In all three cases, the honorific noun is formed by the adjunction of a STEMi element to the monolexemic nonhonorific base that occurs, then, as the STEM2 element of the compound. In these three cases, the STEMi elements are, caa ‘tongue(H)’, see ‘to eat, incorporate(H)’, and šyu ‘to sit(H)’. All three are honorific lexemes (cf. VI, XVIII, and XX in Table 4, respectively), the first being a noun and the second

Table 5
Calibration of Denotational Practice to Corporeal Attributes in Honorific Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonhonorific noun</th>
<th>Honorific form: [STEM₁ - STEM₂]N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) ts’ha ‘salt’</td>
<td>caa-ts’a ‘salt (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ca’a ‘tongue (H)’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) tse ‘rice’</td>
<td>see ts’e ‘rice (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see ‘to eat (H)’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) thi ‘throne’</td>
<td>q’u-thi ‘throne (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(q’u ‘sit (H)’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) le-ga ‘work’</td>
<td>ch’a-ga ‘work (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(le ‘action’;</td>
<td>(ch’a ‘hand (H)’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa, a suffix)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) me-taa ‘gun’</td>
<td>ch’a-taa ‘gun (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(me ‘fire’, taa ‘arrow’;</td>
<td>(ch’a ‘hand (H)’;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lit., ‘fire-arrow’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) nji-tu ‘parasol’</td>
<td>0-tu ‘parasol (H)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nji ‘sun’, tu ‘canopy’;</td>
<td>(0 ‘head (H);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lit., ‘sun-canopy’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
two being verbs. The three honorific words formed from them, caa-tsa 'salt(H)', sêe-tse 'rice(H)', and shu-thi 'throne(H)' are all compound nouns whose morpheme-by-morpheme translation would be 'tongue(H)-salt', 'eating(H)-rice', and 'sitting(H)-throne', respectively. However, native speakers will translate them simply as 'salt', 'rice', and 'throne', adding in each case that these are sêsa words. The honorific lexemes occurring as STEM₁ elements serve, then, to contribute an honorific value to the compounds formed from them. In addition, however, they serve to recalibrate denotational practice relative to the body (or the bodily state) of the person to whom deference is being paid.

In examples (d)–(f), both the nonhonorific and the honorific forms are bilexemic. Note that, in the nonhonorific nouns, the endocentric head can be either the first (lê-qa) or the second (mê-taa, nê-tu)(i) element of the word. But in honorific words, the head is always the second, that is, STEM₂, element (chaa-lê, chaa-taa, u-tu(i)). There occurs, then, a structural limitation on headship in honorific vocabulary: the head (if any) is the STEM₂ element.

The STEM₁ element occurs as an adjunct or modifier to this head. The class of nouns formed by a particular STEM₁ element may be quite large and, for the most productive classifiers, is open ended in size. Some of the honorific nouns belonging to classes VI and VII are exemplified in Table 6. From a morphosyntactic point of view, this system of classification is a noun-classifier system (akin to those seen in Thai and Japanese numeral paradigms) rather than a system of noun classes proper (such as the gender-class systems of Indo-European or Bantu languages): while the prefixal classifiers serve to partition the nominal lexicon into smaller sets, these sets do not form grammatical categories of the sort found in noun-class systems proper, where distinctive paradigms of agreement and case marking give to noun classes a categorial definition and distinctness in morphosyntax.

Moreover, as opposed to mensural classifiers (like English cup, gallon, pound, ton, etc.) that code properties of stereotypic individuation of denotata, and numeral classifiers (as in the Japanese system) that code properties of stereotypic countability, the STEM₁ forms in Lhasa Tibetan are really sortal classifiers that group STEM₂ forms into distinct sets on the basis of properties of the sense stereotypy of their denotata (Putnam 1975; see also Friedrich 1969 for a similar system of sortal classifiers in Tarascan).

Thus honorific words for things that are related in some way to the tongue or to activities of the tongue generally take the honorific word caa 'tongue(H)' as a STEM₁ classifier, as shown in class VI of Table 6: 'salt', 'taste', 'price', 'sugar', 'mantra', etc. all fit into this class. Similarly, we see in class VII that words pertaining to the mouth, like 'goatee', 'moustache', 'flute', 'cup', 'face', 'towel', etc. take sêe 'mouth(H)' as honorific STEM₁. However, it must be understood that, in general, evaluations of sense stereotypy are not readily transparent in culture-independent terms. Thus, it is not obvious why 'mantra' and 'price' belong to the tongue class, while 'prayer' and 'number' belong to the mouth class. Moreover, in some cases we find more than one honorific word corresponding to a single non-honorific form, and in such cases the honorific nouns may belong to
different classes. Thus sgeh-la‘ food(H)’ takes seh ‘mouth(H)’ (class VII) as
STEMi, while caa-mii ‘food(H)’ takes caa- ‘tongue(H)’. (The alternant caa-
is a result of vowel harmony with STEM; see n. 11.) However, the latter is
gradiently more deferential than the former, and in general, the few exam-
examples that occur of a one-to-many relationship of nonhonorific to honorific
forms are really examples of gradient deference levels within honorific
repertoires (cf. Table 1 above).

All of the lexemes in Table 4 form productive classes of honorific nouns
like the two exemplified in some detail in Table 6. What, we might ask, is
the significance of this fact? It is sometimes supposed that such principled
organizations of lexical repertoires provide evidence for inferences about
the basic “ontology” or “worldview” of the culture (Witherspoon 1977). It
might be argued, then, that the organization of a large part of the honorific

Table 6
Honorific Classifier Sets: Classes VI and VII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI. caa- ‘tongue’</th>
<th>Nonhonorific form</th>
<th>Honorific form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cē ‘tongue’</td>
<td>caa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsha ‘salt’</td>
<td>caa-tsa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa‘-la‘ ‘food’</td>
<td>caa-mii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tha‘ ‘taste’</td>
<td>caa-tho</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā ‘breath’</td>
<td>caa-ō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa‘-chū ‘spittle, saliva’</td>
<td>caa-chap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>čni/chga qara ‘sugar’</td>
<td>caa-šēē</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qen ‘price’</td>
<td>caa-qon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na‘ ‘mantra’</td>
<td>caa-nāa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsil ‘calculation; responsibility’</td>
<td>caa-tsil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsil-ta ‘accounts (statement of expenses)’</td>
<td>caa-tsil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VII. seh ‘mouth’</th>
<th>Nonhonorific form</th>
<th>Honorific form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qha ‘mouth’</td>
<td>seh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chu-to ‘lips’</td>
<td>seh-chū</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng (~ton-pa) ‘face’</td>
<td>seh-no (~seh-rge )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-ra ‘moustache’</td>
<td>seh-ra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sq-tsom ‘goatee’</td>
<td>seh-tsom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liq-ū ‘flute’</td>
<td>seh-liq</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qar-yōō ‘cup’</td>
<td>seh-qar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa‘-la‘ ‘food’</td>
<td>seh-laā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāā ‘mask’</td>
<td>seh-pāā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-cū ‘towel’</td>
<td>seh-cū</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an-tan ‘number’</td>
<td>seh-tan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qhā-pār ‘telephone’</td>
<td>seh-pār</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qha(p)-sgē ‘cookies’</td>
<td>seh-bēō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qhā-chem ‘will, testament’</td>
<td>seh-chem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qhā-tōō ‘prayer’</td>
<td>seh-tōō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lexicon in terms of anatomical terms provides evidence for the existence of a cultural classification of the universe in terms of such basic prototypical things (or denotata) as parts of the human body. Tibetans, it might even be argued, actually perceive the denoted universe in anatomical terms.

Several aspects of this classification suggest that this is not the case. First of all, such forms are found only in sgsa repertoires and so occur only in deferential usage. They can hardly be argued, then, to provide a neutral window into some universe of denotables. Second, when anatomical expressions occur as STEM1 elements in [STEM1-STEM2]n-type compound nouns, the referent of the noun is identified by the STEM2 element, not by STEM1. Thus the referent of the word caû-tsa ‘salt(H)’ [literally ‘tongue(H)-salt’] is always salt; it is never tongue. And yet, the occurrence of a STEM1 element as an attributive modifier to a STEM2 form indexically reorganizes the denotational capacity of the noun as part of its entailing work. Honorific nouns index a corporeal attribute in the very instance of specifying an object qua referent. We might say that such nouns calibrate denotational practice to corporeal attributes. This is an essential aspect of how such nouns achieve the signaling of deference, as I argue below.

**Honorific Nouns and Deference Functions**

I want to turn now to the question of how nouns specify foci of deference in situated interaction. Nouns denoting human beings, such as those exemplified in Table 2, differ in this regard from nouns denoting nonhuman entities, exemplified in Table 4.

The deferential function of nouns denoting human beings may be observed in question-answer exchanges of the type shown in (1) below. The question in (1a) has as its context a presupposable group of people and asks after the oldest person within that group. Four denotational categories of response are given in (b)–(d), and these are glossed on the right-hand side.

(1)

(a) qēē šōō sū rgē 'Who is [the] oldest?'

(b1/b2) (NH form) / (H form) / COP.ASR

(khôrâ / kheââ) / rgē 'You are'

(c1/c2) (tāši / tâši laâ) / rgē 'Tâši is'

(d1/d2) (mâčë / mâčë laâ) / rgē 'The cook is'

(e1/e2) (âma / âma laâ) / rgē 'Mother is'

For each denotational category of response, two variants are given, the first nonhonorific (b1, c1, etc.), the second honorific (b2, c2, etc.). Although both variants are denotationally equivalent, they differ in deference marking by virtue of the alternation between the nonhonorific and honorific forms of a particular noun: the alternating noun is a pronoun in (b), and a personal appellation in (c)–(e) (see Table 2 for glosses). Thus, for example, in (b1), khôrâ rgē 'You(NH) are', no deferential value is specified; but (b2), kheââ rgē
'You(H) are' specifies speaker’s deference entitlement to a particular focus of deference—the referent of the pronoun itself, the addressee. Moreover, the focus of deference for the honorific personal appellations in (c2), (d2), and (e2) is exactly the same as that for honorific pronouns: it is the referent of the noun itself. In the case of nouns denoting nonhuman entities—such as those exemplified in Table 3—the focus of deference is not the referent of the noun but some human being associated with that referent. Consider the examples in (2) below:

(2)

(a) ti qhare rge 'What is this?'

(b1/b2) ti {liq-u / sëg-liq} rge 'This is a flute'

(c1/c2) ti {qår-yobb / sëg-qår} rge 'This is a cup'

The responses in (b1), (b2), (c1), and (c2) are all possible answers to the question in (a). Responses (b1) and (c1) are formed with the nonhonorific nouns liq-u ‘flute(NH)’ and qår-yobb ‘cup(NH)’, respectively, while the variants (b2) and (c2) are formed with the honorific variants of these words, sëg-liq ‘flute(H)’ and sëg-qår ‘cup(H)’. Note that both honorific words belong to honorific class VII, formed by means of the classifier sëg- ‘mouth(H)’.

The question that immediately emerges with regard to (b2) and (c2) is this: To whom is deference paid by such usages? Native speakers tend to hesitate when confronted with this question. They want to know who is speaking, and to whom, and in what sort of context. When pressed further, they agree that one does not generally defer to inanimate objects such as cups and flutes. One defers to people. A statement such as (c2), ti sëg-qår rge ‘This is a cup(H)’, is typically interpreted as marking deference to a person who is in some way associated with the cup. The manner of such association cannot be clarified without appeal to discourse context. Let us say that question (a) is addressed by person A to person B who then replies with (c2). Let us assume further that A and B are the servants of another individual—let us call him C—and that they are engaged in taking stock of their master’s possessions. In such a context, response (c2) would normally be construed as marking deference to the owner of the cup, namely person C.

The use of such honorific nouns denoting inanimate objects is a way of marking deference to people associated with those objects. Thus, this morphosyntactic class of nouns, exemplified in (2), differs in an important way from pronouns and personal appellations—exemplified in (1)—for which the indexical focus of deference is the referent of the noun itself. We can see, then, that there are two kinds of deference functions identifiable in the nominal repertoires of Lhasa Tibetan and that these functions are associated with two different classes of nouns. These facts are summarized in (3) below.
There are, therefore, two types of indexical categories identifiable with the two types of honorific nouns. For nouns with human denotata—such as pronouns, kin terms, and personal appellations—the indexical focus of deference is identical with the referent of the noun. In the case of nonhuman nouns, on the other hand, the focus of deference is not the referent of the noun, but some individual discursively associable with the referent. The mode of such discursive association requires appeal to additional aspects of discourse structure, to be discussed below.

**Formation of Honorific Verbs**

Most nonhonorific verbs have corresponding honorific forms in Lhasa Tibetan. Regarding their formation, honorific verbs are of two distinct types, monolexemic and compound. As for their deference functions, they fall again into two functional categories, and I will term these categories D1 and D2. However, the two distinctions crosscut each other so that we get both monolexemic D1 and D2 verbs, as well as compound D1 and D2 verbs. I will discuss the functional contrast between D1 and D2 verbs in the next section. First let me take up the question of the formation of these verbs.

Table 7 lists the D1 and D2 equivalents for a representative sample of nonhonorific Lhasa Tibetan verbs. Column I lists the nonhonorific verb form and an approximate English gloss, which also serves to gloss approximately the corresponding honorific form. Separate English glosses for the honorific forms in columns III and IV are provided only where the nuance of the Tibetan honorific verb is sufficiently different from the nonhonorific English gloss. Note that although distinct D1 forms occur for all the verbs listed in the table, distinct D2 forms occur only for some of them. The crucial grammatical variable that determines whether or not a corresponding D2 form exists for a nonhonorific verb is the case frame of the verb. For this reason, the case frame of each of the nonhonorific verbs listed in column I is explicitly listed in column II.

D1 forms occur for all the case-frame types of nonhonorific verbs in the table, as shown in column III. Several nonhonorific verbs (e.g., (a)–(e)) have monolexemic D1 alternants. For those that lack lexical D1 alternants, the D1 item is formed derivationally by a compound verb construction with [STEM1, STEM2]v constituency, as illustrated in rows (f) and (g) in column III. The STEM1 verbal element is simply the nonhonorific verb in each case, cēē and yuùù in (f) and (g), respectively. The STEM2 element is the D1 verb stem nāā in all such cases. Note that in independent occurrence, nāā occurs as the monolexemic D1 alternant of a number of nonhonorific verbs (e.g., chēē ‘do(NH)’ in (e) and āgā ‘give(NH)’ in (h)). Its function as the STEM2 element in the compound verb constructions illustrated in (f)–(g) is a
Table 7  
Types of honorific verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonhonorific verbs</th>
<th>Honorific verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. form and gloss</td>
<td>II. case frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) ši 'die'</td>
<td>p(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) yuq 'come'</td>
<td>p(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) ngé 'sleep'</td>
<td>p(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) sa 'eat'</td>
<td>p(A, O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) chèè 'do'</td>
<td>p(A, O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) cèè 'cut'</td>
<td>p(A, O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) yuùù 'throw'</td>
<td>p(A, O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) ñgèè 'give'</td>
<td>p(A, O, D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) lâp 'say, tell'</td>
<td>p(A, O, D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j) thùùù 'meet with'</td>
<td>p(A, D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(k) thi-wa thiùùù 'ask a question'</td>
<td>p(A, [O], D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l) rào chèè 'help'</td>
<td>p(A, [O], D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m) qèè tàà 'call, cry out'</td>
<td>p(A, [O])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n) qèè tàà 'invite'</td>
<td>p(A, [O], D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary derivational function. In such constructions, nàà occurs as a pragmatic lexical operator on nonhonorific stems, contributing an honorific indexical value to the compound verb so formed. Due to the productivity of this derivational process, moreover, the class of possible D1 elements becomes open ended in size.

D2 forms occur for a smaller set of verbs than do D1 forms, as may be seen by comparing columns III and IV in the table. In fact, the language apparently contains only two distinct lexical items that carry a D2 force, and these are the lexemes phùù and sù exemplified in rows (h) and (i), respectively, in column IV. Both are ditransitive verbs with a p(A, O, D) case frame. However, these lexemes occur productively in periphrastic constructions of various types to form the D2 honorific equivalents of a much
larger number of verbs in the language, as may be seen in rows (j)–(n) in column IV.

All D2 verbs have an underlyingly p(A, O, D) syntax, even if in some cases they are derived from transitive p(A, D) nonhonorific verbs. In row (j), for example, the nonhonorific verb *thâu 'meet with(NH)' has a lexical D1 alternant ceeq. Both are two place predicates, case frame p(A, D), where the A argument takes the nominative (or ergative) case, and the D argument takes the dative case. The D2 form, ceeqa sù, is formed periphrastically (from the honorific noun ceeqa 'audience, meeting(H)', and the D2 lexeme sù 'beseech, request(D2)' by a productive process of semantic incorporation whereby the noun ceeqa, while syntactically a direct object of the verb (hence in O case relation to it) becomes semantically fixed as part of the predicate. Here, the underlyingly p(A, O, D) D2 verb, ceeqa sù, functions as a p(A, O, D) verb in surface syntax. (The square brackets around the O argument indicate the semantic incorporation of the argument into the predicate.) A number of such reduced ditransitives occur in nonhonorific register as well, and in such cases their honorific forms are constructed in a morphosyntactically parallel fashion. Thus, in (k), the noun *thi-va 'a question(NH)' and the related verb stem *thi- 'ask(NH)' are combined in construct to yield the phrasal nonhonorific verb *thiwa thi- 'ask a question(NH)'. The corresponding D1 and D2 verbs are formed from the corresponding, regularly derived honorific noun, qāt-x-thi 'a question(H)' [STEM₁=qāa 'speech(H)' (cf. Table 4, class XIII), STEM₂=ti (cf. nonhonorific noun base thi; see also n. 11)], occurring in construct with a lexically D1 or D2 honorific verb, as shown in the third and fourth columns of row (k). Different honorific nouns may be used in the D1 and D2 constructs for some items, as illustrated in row (l). Finally, a verb that is ambiguous between two meanings, such as qèètżà in (m)–(n), will have a D2 equivalent only for its p(A, O, D) interpretation.

**Deference Functions and Honorific Verbs**

The functional contrast between honorific D1 and D2 verbs in Lhasa Tibetan is parallel to the Krama Inggil versus Krama Andhap contrast described for Javanese (Errington 1988), and the Sonkei-go versus Kenjoo-go contrast described for Japanese (Inoue 1979). Each type of honorific verb has a distinct deference function, and the contrast in deferential indexicality can be characterized precisely by appeal to utterances that are tokens of appropriate sentence types. Since honorific nouns have distinct types of deference functions associated with them (see (3)ff. above), I will limit my discussion in the present section to example sentences that contain no noun arguments in order to focus exclusively on deference marking in verbs. Unlike languages like English, where such sentences would not be grammatically well formed (e.g., “Billy/he/she/it slept,” but not “∅ slept”), Lhasa Tibetan is a language in which a high degree of argument ellipsis (or “null anaphora”) is acceptable even in monoclausal sentences, and tokens of such sentences occur quite frequently in connected discourse. Two examples are given in (4).
In (4a)–(4b), soö is a perfective auxiliary verb, thus yielding an implicature of past time in both utterances. The verbs nég and sim may both be glossed by the English verb ‘sleep’. Both (4a) and (4b) have the same denotation or propositional content (i.e., the same truth conditions), and this may be captured informally by the English gloss ‘[somebody] slept’. Note that neither Tibetan sentence contains an explicit nominal argument; we cannot tell who slept without appeal to further discourse considerations. The glosses supplied in the middle column in (4) make use of a referential variable, x, for this reason.

The difference between the two sentences lies in the fact that the first contains a lexically nonhonorific verb, nég ‘sleep(NH)’, and the second, its honorific equivalent, sim ‘sleep(D1)’. Although both verbs may be rendered with the same English gloss, the honorific verb has a deferential content that the nonhonorific verb lacks: its occurrence in (4b) signals the speaker’s deference toward the person who slept, x, whoever he or she may be.

Nonhonorific verbs that have both D1 and D2 honorific forms permit a three-way sentence contrast, where all three sentences have the same denotation but differ in deferential content. This is illustrated in (5) below.

All three sentences in (5) describe a situation in which somebody gave something to somebody else. We do not know who, what, and to whom, due to the absence of explicit nouns in these sentences, once again, and referential variables, x, y, and z are used to represent these entities in the denotational glosses. (5a) contains the nonhonorific verb tge ‘give(NH)’ and, like (4a), signals no deference entitlement to anyone. (5b) is like (4b) in that it contains a D1 honorific verb, so that its deferential content is exactly parallel to (4b): the occurrence of the verb nää ‘give(D1)’ signals the speaker’s deferential comportment toward x, the entity understood as the referent of the verb’s subject. The deferential value of the D2 honorific verb phūū ‘give(D2)’ in (5c), however, is quite different. Such an honorific verb marks the speaker’s assessment of the deferential relationship obtaining between the giver, x, and the receiver, z. Thus, (5c) does not signal the
speaker's deference entitlement to x. It signals, rather, that the speaker evaluates x as owing deference entitlement to z.

We can see, then, that the deference functions associable with these two types of honorific verbs are really quite different and are, in fact, independent of each other. The independence of D1 and D2 types of deference marking can be seen by the fact that the two honorific verbs *phūū 'give(D2)* and *nāā 'give(D1)* can co-occur in a compound verb construction, to yield a fourth, composite type of deference marking, as shown in (6) below.

\[
\text{(6) phūū nāā sōn 'x gave [y] to [z]'}
\]

- (i) speaker signals
deference to x;
- (ii) speaker evaluates
x as owing
deference to z

A sentence like (6), while denotationally impoverished like the ones in (5), has two distinct foci of deference and differs in this respect from (5a)–(5c). It signals both the speaker's deference to x (by virtue of the occurrence of *nāā*) and the speaker's assessment that x owes deference to z (by virtue of the occurrence of *phūū*). The indexical foci of deference for these two kinds of verbs are given in (7) below.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Type of honorific verb} & \text{Focus of deference} \\
\text{(a) D1 verbs} & \text{topic (i.e. referent of subject NP, or recoverable discourse topic)} \\
\text{(b) D2 verbs} & \text{actor-receiver (where actor is the referent of the agent NP, or recoverable as such; and receiver is the referent of the dative NP, or recoverable as such)}
\end{array}
\]

Both types of deference functions share three characteristics that must be carefully noted. First, it should be clear that "topic", "actor", and "receiver" are not labels for linguistic expressions but for referents of linguistic expressions. These two kinds of honorific verbs, then, index different referents as their foci of deference. Second, the verbs do not themselves refer; they merely predicate properties to entities picked out by referring expressions—such as noun phrases—in discourse text. Third, in some given discourse-text segment, the relevant referring expressions may be in some grammatical relationship to the honorific verb in question, or they may not. In the former case, the denotational focus of deference is identifiable as the referent of the noun phrase(s) bearing that grammatical relationship (i.e., "subject-of", "agent-of", "dative-of") to the verb. In the latter case, the construal of focus of deference requires appeal to coreference relations construed as holding across sentence boundaries between a zeroed argument of the verb and the noun phrase at issue.
Honorific Discourse and Ideologies of Utterance

Any account that seeks to map honorific usage directly onto categories of social status fails to explain why a variety of utterances of different degrees of honorificity are available as a matter of choice in interactional events where status roles are otherwise fixed as identical. I have argued, therefore, that honorific forms qua items are better viewed as signaling interaction-specific relationships of deference entitlement rather than interaction-independent values of social status.

(8) Different ways of saying 'Mother went home'

(a) ama qhānpaa chū són
   mother (NH) house (NH) -DAT went (NH) AUX

(b) ama laā qhānpaa chū són
   mother (H) house (NH) -DAT went (NH) AUX

(c) ama sim-qhāā laā chū són
   mother (NH) house (H) DAT went (NH) AUX

(d) ama laā qhānpaa phēē són
   mother (H) house (NH) -DAT went (D1) AUX

(e) ama laā sim-qhāā laā phēē són
   mother (H) house (H) DAT went (D1) AUX

Thus, a speaker may say 'mother went home' in any of the alternative ways given in (8): (8a) is entirely nonhonorific, while in (8e) every possible item is in honorific form (underlining represents honorific lexemes). The utterances in (8b)–(8d) are intermediate possibilities in that they mix honorific and nonhonorific forms. It is important to note, however, that the mixed utterances in (8b)–(8d) are not judged as straightforwardly acceptable by all categories of speakers as are the purely nonhonorific (8a) and the purely honorific (8e). Some speakers judge the mixed utterances as awkward; others admit to the fact that such mixed utterances occur in their own speech, though not without some embarrassment. As we turn to honorific-discourse data, we find that native-speaker judgements about utterances are themselves couched in ideological terms. Such mixed utterances violate no grammatical norms of sentence structure; moreover, qua utterances, they do occur, and occur with a particular type of efficacy. The point is not that these utterances are not, in some way, odd; many native speakers seem to think that they are, although such views are themselves socially distributed in highly interesting ways. The point is to account for the actual metapragmatic principles that underlie the co-occurrence of honorific forms, in order to explain the native speakers' point of view and, thus, the particular folk-metapragmatic beliefs to which they make appeal.

Lexical Cohesion in Utterances and the Coherence of Indexical Projection

In the discussion above, I distinguished four types of indexicals of deference in Lhasa Tibetan. Two such indexical categories occur in the noun repertoires in the language as noted in (3) above: honorific forms for
pronouns and personal apppellations index deference to the referent of the noun, as noted in (3a); honorific forms for nonhuman nouns index deference not to the noun's referent but to some human being discursively associable with such referent. In the case of verbal honorifics, summarized in (7), we have again two kinds of indexical categories: D1 honorific verbs index speaker's deference toward utterance topic, whereas D2 honorific verbs index speaker's assessment that the referent picked out as actor is viewed as deferring to the referent picked out as recipient.

What we are really dealing with in the case of all four indexical categories is a map from deference to denotation: each indexical category may be seen as radially projecting some deferential value to some denotational focus. Of course, the isolability of such indexical categories at the level of repertoires of lexical items should not be taken to suggest that either deference or denotation is accomplished by means of lexical categories alone. We need an utterance of some kind to accomplish either. However, tokens of such category types occur in utterances. Moreover, they co-occur in utterances. Thus any šesa utterance can be seen as instantiating multiple types of indexical-to-denotational projection by category tokens occurring as distinct utterance segments.

The occurrence of each šesa item is an occurrence in some real-time phase of discourse text; insofar as it is an occurrence, it is, a fortiori, an event. It should be clear, then, that discourse text is a real-time order of semiotic signal consisting of multiple events of indexing deference. The most general principle that regiments the construal of the pragmatic force of deference marking—that is to say, the most general metapragmatic principle—is the comparability of distinct events of indexical-to-denotational projection across real-time phases of discourse text. Thus, although the four types of deference marking have thus far been characterized as constituting four distinct types of indexical categories of deference, we must turn now to a consideration of the interaction effects of the co-occurrence of tokens of such categories in discourse text.

Let us first consider discourse text of sentence scope, namely discourse-text segments that may be viewed as single utterances insofar as they are analyzable as sentence tokens. Two examples are given in (9) below.

(9)
(a) pēma qhanpaa chū sōo ‘Pēma went home’
P NOM house(NH)-DAT went(NH) AUX
(b) amā làa sim-qhāā h phēk sōo ‘Mother went home’
mother H-NOM house(H) DAT went(D1) AUX

In (9a), the complete absence of honorific forms signals lack of deference, and the utterance is analogous to (8a) above. This contrasts with (9b)(=(8e)), where every noun and verb is in honorific form. The verb phēk is a typical D1 verb, specifying utterance topic as the focus of speaker deference. The topic is independently denoted by the honorific kin term amā làa 'mother(H)', occurring as sentence subject. The honorific noun is of indexical type (3a), indexing deference toward its own referent, that is, the
mother. We can see, then, that the indexical categories instantiated as honorific verb and honorific subject noun index deference to the same individual, namely the speaker's mother. We might say that from the point of view of the comparability of indexical-to-denotational projection in different phases of discourse text, the two instances of such projection are here congruent.

Consider now the second noun in the same utterance, the honorific compound $sim$-$qhMáá$ 'house(H)'. The noun is formed by the verb $sim$ 'to rest(H)', occurring as the STEM$_1$ element, and the noun stem $qhM$ (phonologically reduced, word finally; cf. $qhá-pa$ 'house(NH)'), occurring as STEM$_2$. The form $sim$ 'to rest(H)' is a verb of bodily activity that functions productively as an honorific-noun classifier in the language (cf. XVII, Table 4). Note, moreover, that a nonhuman honorific noun such as $sim$-$qhMáá$ 'house(H)' is an indexical category of type (3b): such nouns do not index deference to their denotata, but to individuals associable with such denotata in contextualized discourse.

When native speakers are asked about the kind of respect achieved by the occurrence of $sim$-$qhMáá$ 'house(H)' in such utterances, they give the following type of response, and do so with great unanimity: one does not defer to houses, one defers to people; the speaker uses this word here in order to signal deference to his mother. There are two aspects of such answers which require careful attention: (i) the denotational focus of deference is construed as congruent with the denotational focus indexed by other honorific expressions (here $ama$ $láá$ and $phée$); (ii) hearers routinely attribute certain intentions to the speaker of such an utterance in so construing the form.

With regard to the first point, it may be noted that the formal structure of the word $sim$-$qhMáá$ 'house(H)' is a perfect example of the calibration of denotational practice to the anatomy of some individual, as discussed above (Table 5, ff.). In that case, such individual is construed as being the individual to whom deference is independently establishable from the indexical projection of other co-occurring honorific forms. The occurrence of $sim$-$qhMáá$ 'house(H)' (literally, 'rest(H)-house'; cf. the forms listed in Table 5) makes possible the associability of two individuals, the referent of the word (i.e., the house itself) with the person deferred to (i.e., mother), by incorporating within it the bodily activity verb $sim$ 'rest(H)'. The link between house and mother is made manifest by means of this STEM$_1$ element: the house in question is, as it were, the house where mother rests or dwells. Such perspectival "voicing" by means of lexical devices co-occurring in discourse text is itself well known in the literature. (See, for example, Sacks 1986[1972]:325 discussion of "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up", where the mother is construed to be the baby's mother.) What is fascinating here is the existence of regular paradigms of honorific nouns that function regularly in discourse to entail such correspondences. It must be understood that the character of such suggestion is neither necessary nor noncancellable by other means. It is merely the construal that occurs given the utterance itself, and no discourse presuppositions to the contrary.
We have seen, then, that the lexical items ama laà ‘mother(H)’, pheè ‘come(DI)’, and sim-qháá ‘house(H)’ occur as lexical conjugates in utterances such as (9b). The comparability of indexical-to-denotational projection in three distinct phases of the utterance yields a global construal of what is being done by means of the utterance itself. We might say that the cohesion in co-occurrence of such lexical conjugates allows for a coherent construal of the act of speaking deferentially in the instance.

We noted also that such utterances are normatively valued by native speakers. However, violations of such norms do occur, as noted above in (8b)–(8d). Consider, for example, an utterance such as (8c), reproduced in (10) below.

(10=(8c)) ama sjm-qháá 1A chuí són ‘Mother went 
mother (NH) house (H) DAT went (NH) AUX to the house’

Here, the only honorific lexeme is the noun sim-qháá ‘house(H)’. Speakers sometimes object to such utterances on the grounds that they are impure examples of ðesa usage. Indeed, discourse constraints on the co-occurrence of conjugates are violated here, and for this reason, there is a kind of underspecification of deferential focus: the hearer cannot tell to whom deference is paid in the instance. Such underspecification of deferential focus has as its corollary a second, related type of contextual indeterminacy: the hearer cannot tell to whom the speaker intends to defer in the instance.

However, (10) only appears to be unfelicitious when considered in isolation. Such utterances occur quite felicitously in events of discursive interaction where discourse presuppositions include some individual who can be construed to have some relationship to the house (e.g., that of owner, builder, etc.). By virtue of this relationship, that individual then becomes the focus of deference. Moreover, such discourse presuppositions are most highly salient in interactional terms when they themselves are recoverable from earlier phases of discourse text.

Consider, then, the discourse text in (11) below. The text consists of two utterances of sentence scope. These utterances do not occur contiguously in discourse, and the omission of intervening material is marked by the ellipsis.

(11) pëema laà qí sim-qháá sàapa tuò... PN (H) GEN house (H) new AUX
ama sjm-qháá 1A chuí són ‘Pëema’s house is new. . . . Mother went to the house.’
mother house (H) DAT went AUX

The subject of the first utterance in (11) is a possessor noun phrase, containing two honorific lexemes: the first, pëema laà, indexing deference to the individual named Pëema, and the second, sim-qháá, construed congruently with the first. In this first utterance, the grammatical construction of the possessor noun phrase regiments the construal of sim-qháá, so that in the absence of any other mode of construal, the best candidate for the
individual deferred to by the occurrence of the honorific word for house is the individual named Peema, the owner of the house.

Note that the second utterance in (11) is identical to the utterance considered previously in isolation as (10). In (11), then, this second utterance (ama sim-qhia l\ chondrous) with its single honorific lexeme has a clear construal with regard to deference entitlement. In the absence of any discourse presuppositions to the contrary, the occurrence of the honorific word sim-qhia would here be taken as evidence for speaker's deference, not toward the mother, but toward the individual named Peema, due to lexical cohesion with the first utterance. For, such individual has been presented in the first utterance as: (i) the owner of the house, thus “associated” with it, and (ii) deferred to and, thus, presupposable as deferrable to again in some later phase of discourse text. Note once again that it is the comparability of different events of indexical-to-denotational projection in different phases of the discourse text that yields the construal as such. In the case of the second sentence token in (11), such comparability is not possible within the sentence boundary (since no other honorific forms occur within it), so that the utterance at issue becomes construable relative only to cotextual events of signaling deference in some earlier utterance.

We have noted that the organization of sesa utterances into systems of cooccurring lexical conjugates is highly valued in normative terms in sesa discourse. There are two kinds of “reasons” for this. The first reason is an ideological one, a reason that native speakers themselves articulate easily enough in their folk-metapragmatic grounding of the pragmatics of sesa use: the ability to form such utterances is itself taken to be a mark of speaker's social refinement. Not all speakers have the same degree of control over sesa repertoires. The apparent mastery of systems of lexical conjugates can, by its very display, reduce an interactant to an awed silence in which the speakers' dicta acquire enormous power, a kind of nomothetic noncancellability in interactional terms.

But there is a second, underlying reason of which native speakers give no account in ideological terms: the cooccurrence of sesa items as lexical conjugates “solves” the problem of the interactional efficacy of sesa speech use (e.g., the problem of the saliency of deferential foci, the problem of the saliency of speaker intentions) by creating a greater transparency or recoverability of the pragmatics of speech use from the relatively localizable level of utterances themselves. Utterances in which several honorific items occur (e.g., (8e)) acquire a relatively greater detachability from context and cotext. The hearer can understand who is being deferred to (and even who is intended as deferred to) by relying more completely on the utterance itself and by triangulating, as it were, to the focus of deference (and to speaker's intentions) as something coherent-in-context from lexical items and their cohesion-in-co-occurrence. Discourse presuppositions remain crucial, of course. But such self-focusing of the signal makes the focus of deference more highly salient; the pragmatic force of the signal becomes more inescapable. We might say then that such self-focusing of the signal is itself a metapragmatic variable that controls the orderliness of the pragmatics of speech use. And such dimensions of the pragmatic event (e.g., focus of
deference, speaker’s intentions) as are regimented by this second metapragmatic principle are quite different from such dimensions as the degree of speaker refinement conceptualized as regimented in native ideology and espoused as so regimented in the folk-metapragmatic norms discussed above.

Origo of Deference

The origo of deference was characterized earlier as the interactional role category (e.g., speaker, addressee, referent, etc.) from which the deference seems to emanate in any act of signaling deference entitlement. I have thus far maintained that the origo of deference is generally the speaker (that is to say, deference is generally interpreted as speaker’s deference).

There are, however, certain cases in which this appears not to be so. The first such case is the grammatical transposition of origo associated conventionally with D2 honorific verbs. As noted in (8) above, D2 honorific forms differ from D1 forms in that the occurrence of a D2 verb in discourse text signals not the speaker’s owing deference entitlement to a referent (as does the occurrence of a D1 verb) but the speaker’s assessment that the referent construable as actor owes deference entitlement to the referent construable as recipient.

Thus, in an utterance like (12), the occurrence of the honorific verb *šuš* ‘ask, speak to (D2)’ indexes the fact that the speaker views Pǝ́ma as owing deference to Tshlrin. Note that Pǝ́ma has not deferred to anyone; he has not even spoken. It is the speaker who has represented Pǝ́ma as owing deference to Tshlrin. D2 verbs thus form a regular grammatical class of *šesa* items that allow for the separability of the roles of speaker and deferrer in events of discursive interaction.

However, such separability is possible by other means as well. I noted in my introduction that Lhasa Tibetan speakers sometimes take on the perspective of the addressee in events of deferring and that this type of use is parallel to the kind described for Javanese as *mbasakake* “to use language as another would or should” (Errington 1988:160ff.). This type of transposition of origo is quite common in *šesa* discourse and generally involves the prescription of a deferential relationship as holding between addressee and referent.

The following example, collected during the course of fieldwork, involves a man sharing a household with his daughter and his grandchildren. In the course of a conversation with him about various members of his household, I noted that in talking to me about his daughter (a young woman by the name of Yāakii) he did not normally use honorific forms, as may be seen in one of his utterances, reproduced below as (13a).
(13)
(a) yaakii maamob pee yaqo su qi tuu 'Yaakii makes very
dumpling very good make PTCLAUX
(b) ama laa qumpaa pha phnee son
Mother has gone
mother (H) went (D1) AUX to the monastery

However, only moments after uttering (13a), when his granddaughter
asked him about the whereabouts of her mother, he spoke of Yaakii (his
daughter, her mother) by means of (13b), in this case speaking of her
deferentially. I concluded that the use of honorific forms for his daughter
in such an utterance involved the speaker taking on the perspective of the
addressee—his granddaughter, Yaakii’s daughter—and prescribing a def-
erential relation as holding between addressee and referent (i.e., daughter
and mother) in the very act of so speaking. However, my very ability to
formulate such a hypothesis about what was being done by means of
speech in this instance itself depended upon the comparability of indexi-
cal-to-denotational projection across distinct phases of discourse text: he
had not used honorific forms in speaking of Yaakii to me only moments
before in (13a); I could therefore suppose that his switching to honorific
forms in (13b) involved an attempt to interactionally achieve some distinc-
tive goal in the event of speaking to his granddaughter.

It should be clear that the actor as such in any event of speaking is always
the speaker. In events of speaking in honorific register, however, we might
ask: who defers? I want to suggest that there is no general answer to be
given to this question in the sense that the origo of deference is not a matter
of any kind of conventional indexical value assodable with $\text{sesa}$
items. It is
a matter of the construability of $\text{sesa}$ utterances in discourse. Consequently,
the only question that admits of any answer is the question: who is defer-
ing in the instance? To say, as I have been saying, that the origo of
deference is typically taken to be speaker is to say simply that in the absence
of any other discursively salient presupposition, the individual most likely
to be taken as deferring in the instance is the speaker himself. The
metapragmatic computation of origo as speaker is a default computation
in the following sense: it is a discursive construal that takes the most
obvious and recurrent regularity of the conditions of production of an
utterance, namely that it is the speaker who produces it, as determinative
of the source or origo of such deference.

However, the role of speaker as a variable of interactional context is not
relevant in the same way to all acts of deferring. Note that our sense of
which aspect of context is “relevant” is itself controlled by the comparabil-
ity of indexical-to-denotational projection in different phases of discourse
text. The cotextual comparability of (13a) and (13b) suggests in this instance
that, given the fact that the speaker (indeed, the speaker-referent dyad) is
the same across these discursive events, the “relevant” interactional vari-
able must be something else. Then noting that what has changed across
these discursive events is the addressee (and thus the speaker-addressee
and addressee-referent configurations), we can formulate the hypothesis
that the event in (13b) is an event of performative prescription to addressee.
It might be said, of course, that the speaker has simply "changed his mind," that in (13b) he now wishes to defer to his daughter with himself as origo of deference. However, the speaker's use of the term ama lāà 'mother(H)' suggests that this is not, in any straightforward sense, what is going on; it suggests that the speaker is taking on the perspective of his granddaughter for whom Yaākii is an ama lāà 'mother(H)'. And the contextualizing force of the honorific term for mother, when coupled with (i) the contextual presupposition that the addressee is of lower status than the referent and (ii) the prescriptive cultural norm that lower status individuals defer to higher-status individuals, yields the construal that, in this instance, the speaker seeks to prescribe a deferential relationship as holding between addressee and referent.

Moreover, such prescriptive transpositions of origo cannot, in principle, be limited to the case of transposition to [addressee]. Other types of discursive events involving [bystander] also occur—for example, cases where parents, in talking to each other, switch to high honorifics in referring to other grown-ups when such speech occurs within earshot of their own children.

It should be noted, however, that radically context dependent transpositions of origo in events of performative prescription are in principle different from the cases of grammatical transposition of origo noted for D2 verbs and exemplified in (12). For, it is part of the conventional interpretation of D2 honorific verbs that it is not the speaker who is viewed as deferring to anyone, but rather that the speaker is viewed as prescribing a relation of deference entitlement as holding between actor and recipient.

However, although the two cases are distinct, they are not incompatible: D2 verbs can also occur in events of addressee-oriented performative prescription. An example of such a discursive event occurred in the same discourse text from which the examples in (13) are drawn. Recall that the granddaughter had asked the grandfather the whereabouts of her mother; to this question the grandfather had replied with (13b). In the next conversational turn, the granddaughter said that she wanted to go to a fair that was being held in the neighborhood; the grandfather replied that she could not; the little girl became insistent; she pointed out that her older brother had gone to the fair; she saw no reason why she could not go as well. To this the grandfather replied with (14) below.

(14) chó lāà qii lama lāà 1A šiū tuū 'Older brother has older brother E/I mother (H) DAT ask (D2) AUX asked mother'

Note that the honorific verb šiū 'ask(D2)' indexes the kind of grammatical transposition of origo exemplified above in (12). That is to say, the occurrence of such a D2 verb indexes the speaker's evaluation that the actor of the utterance (here, the older brother) owes deference to the recipient (here, the mother). Note, however, that the "actor" is not the speaker's older brother, but his grandson. In fact, he is the older brother of the addressee,
and it is the addressee (the granddaughter) for whom he is a chog laa 'older brother(H)'. The use of the honorific form chog laa 'older brother(H)' to refer to him by speaker indexically establishes a relationship of deference entitlement between addressee and referent by incorporating within the utterance a form appropriate to the speech of a younger sister speaking about her older brother. In the same utterance in which the grandson is represented as owing deference to his mother, the granddaughter is indexically implicated as owing deference to her older brother. The contextual implication is quite clear: who is she to do as she pleases when her betters must seek permission?

The very fact that the interpretability of such transposition of origo requires appeal to utterances in interaction suggests that the specification of origo of deference is not a conventional feature of deference functions associative with different repertoires of sgsa items, but an aspect of the construal of utterances in particular kinds of discourse contexts. We can see, then, that the very notion of an origo or source of deference can become multiply distributed across the structure of the interactional event and that many different individuals can simultaneously be represented as deferring to some other(s). This is not to say, of course, that in some particular instance the manner in which multiple individuals are implicated as origos of deference cannot itself be clarified (or, indeed, be clear to interactants). The point is rather that the interpretability of such interactional tropes involves appeal to aspects of the discursive interactional event that lie beyond the limits of indexical convention, even if, as we have seen, the very possibility of these tropes depends on the existence of such conventions themselves.

Summary and Conclusion: Where the Action Is

Any commitment to viewing honorific discourse as a type of social action requires us to explain the principles that underlie the interpretability of such action. Native conceptions of acts of deferring in sgsa register involve the notion that such acts accord respect to certain people. In inquiring after the principles that account for the socially meaningful character of such acts, we find that certain words and expressions of the language are ideologically valorized as indexical of deference, thus constituting the register phenomenon as such; that such items fall into distinct grammatical repertoires; that every item in each such repertoire has a conventional indexical value; that the specification of such value allows us to identify with each such repertoire an indexical type or category of deference; that each such category indexes deference toward some focus of deference; and that, in the case of sgsa discourse, the focus of deference is either some referent or some individual discursively associable with a referent.

The last observation requires us to move from a repertoire perspective on honorific register to an utterance perspective on honorific discourse in order to understand the kinds of discourse-level principles that regiment the construal of sgsa speech. Given that each indexical category locally projects some deferential value to some denotational focus, we find that the consistency of interpretation of honorific discourse depends upon the
comparability of multiple events of indexical-to-denotational projection across distinct phases of discourse text. Such comparability is not itself bound to any order of convention but is a real-time, textually contingent principle of speech construal. Insofar as such comparability gives shape to the pragmatic efficacy of speech, we can say that such comparability is itself a metapragmatic principle that controls the pragmatics of speech use. The existence of such an implicit metapragmatics (Silverstein 1991) in the real-time course of discursive interaction appears to control the interac-
tants' awareness of many aspects of "what is going on": who is being deferred to; who can be viewed as deferring to such; and what the inten-
tions of the act of deferring may be.

The interactional force of deferring by speaking, while directed by the intentions of interactants, is not reducible to the having of such intentions. For such intentions are themselves subject to discursive construal, and the act of speaking will still have counted as meaningful action in the instance, even if the construal of speaker intention is subsequently found to be incorrect. Nor is it reducible to the ideological norms of the culture; for such norms are frequently violated, as we have seen. Coming to terms with honorific speech as a type of social action requires us to specify the types of indexical categories which can occur in discourse and the way in which the occurrence of such categories specifies deference entitlements to inter-
actional variables. Any single honorific item occurring as a discourse token ranks such variables in a way that depends on its conventional indexical categoriality. Moreover, the lexical cohesion of discourse text allows for the comparability of many such honorific tokens and, thus, of many such indexical rankings, both within and across sentence boundaries; it therefore enables the coconstrual of multiply many such rankings from different phases of discourse text. There is, therefore, no theoretical upper bound on how many individuals can in fact be ranked in terms of deference entitlement relative to each other over the course of discursive interaction. The speech of those who control the use of šesa repertoires in the most refined and skillful fashion in this culture appears even to allow for the construal of relative deference entitlement for every single individual introduced in discourse and for everyone else associable with these individuals. It would appear that the only real empirical limit on the success of such multiple rankings as an interactional achievement is, in fact, the capacity of the hearer to attend to what is being done by means of speech alone.

Notes

Acknowledgments. This article incorporates several earlier versions treating dif-
ferent aspects of the phenomena discussed here: "Deference Marking in Lhasa Tibetan," presented at the 1988 Social Thought Colloquium, University of Chicago; "Honorific-Noun Classifiers in Lhasa Tibetan," presented at the 1988 annual meet-
ing of the American Anthropological Association in Phoenix; "Honorific Register and Social Action in Lhasa Tibetan," presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the AAA in Chicago. I am extremely grateful to Michael Silverstein and to William F. Hanks for detailed comments on the second of these attempts, and to Judith Irvine for stimulating conversations at an early stage in the writing of this article.
1. The following abbreviations are used in the discussion and in interlinear glosses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>nonhonorific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>honorific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>verb deference, type 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>verb deference, type 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>auxiliary verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASR</td>
<td>assertoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>nominative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/I</td>
<td>ergative/instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>case relation: agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>case relation: patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>case relation: dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN</td>
<td>proper name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case markers are realized as postpositions after nouns ending in closed syllables, and as suffixes to nouns ending in open syllables.

2. The earliest use of honorific register appears to be documented in texts dated as far back as the ninth century (Beyer 1992).

3. The term *gesa* is derived from a rather polysemous noun base (*sg* 'affection; inclination, mind; volition') and is glossed by Jäschke as 'reverence, civility, politeness' (1975[1881]). Its metalinguistic usage depends upon this general sense.

4. A similar ambiguity between a repertoire meaning and an utterance meaning in the case of ethnometalinguistic register terminology appears to exist in other register systems as well, as noted explicitly in the case of honorific register in Javanese (Errington 1988:88; Uhlenbeck 1978:301) and suggested indirectly in the case of the deferential/avoidance registers in Dyirbal (Dixon 1971:436-437) and in Guugu Yimidhirr (Haviland 1979:217).

5. A very small number of adjectives and adverbs, and at least one semantic postposition, have *gesa* forms as well. However, these expressions are all derivationally related to nouns or verbs.

6. Brown and Levinson try to account for such a lack of fit in terms of a particular psychosocial model of rational strategic action. But since their notion of strategy includes not only conscious but *unconscious* strategies and since the psychological commitments of the latter notion have never been clarified, their appeal to this extended and ultimately mysterious notion of "strategy" appears to be a largely unmotivated instance of terminological fiat. (Cf. "We continue to use the word 'strategy', despite its connotations of conscious deliberation, because we can think of no other word that will imply a rational element" [Brown and Levinson 1987:85].) The sociological components of this purportedly universalistic account, moreover, have also been shown to lack cross-cultural generality (Duranti 1992; Matsumoto 1988).

7. Social status, too, is discursively negotiable in events of performative nomination (e.g., "baptismal events") or in events of role ascription by means of explicit primary performative constructions (e.g., "I dub thee Sir Lancelot!" and the like). However, such events occur felicitously only in very particular institutional settings. In ordinary conversation of the type discussed here, individuals lack the institutional authority to change the social status of the individuals being discussed. My point is that, even in such types of noninstitutionalized discourse settings, individuals exercise considerable freedom in evaluating the deference entitlements of other individuals.

8. Note that some languages have more than one type of register differentiation. Javanese, for example, has not only this type of [addressee] system but a second type of contrast, called Krama Inggill versus Krama Andhap by native grammarians, that constitutes a [referent] system.

9. English also has many lexical variants for varieties of food (e.g., *meal, snack, food, feast, banquet*, etc.). However, these do not correspond either in an item-by-item sense or as any kind of graded cline to the words in line (c) of Table 1.
10. I have only cited singular pronoun categories in Table 2. A more comprehensive discussion of other number categories, like dual and plural, is currently under preparation as part of a more detailed treatment of denotational/deferential categories in the language.

11. A number of phonological processes such as vowel harmony, deaspiration in stems after prefixes, loss of final glottals to falling tone, semiregular prenasalization before certain stems, etc., occur in the examples cited in this article. None of these pertain specifically to honorific register. A good discussion of these processes is to be found in Chang and Shefts 1964.

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