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UNIT 9

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

As occasionally happens in intellectual matters, the concept *language ideology* named something that anthropologists, linguists, and other analysts of language had been aware of for some time: different values are placed on various aspects of language at different times and in different places. We see it as early as in Malinowski's "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in much work on the ethnography of speaking [including in Joel Sherzer and Regna Darnell's "Outline Guide for the Ethnographic Study of Speech Use" (especially the section on "Attitudes Toward the Use of Speech")], and in a good portion of the work of Michael Silverstein. When Kathryn Woolard and Bambi Schieffelin gave a name to this approach to the understanding of language in 1994, they unleashed a new creative energy in this study (see also Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998, Kroskrity 2000). The term *ideology* (in contrast to *idea*) links notions of power and politics to questions of how people regard the very nature of language.

Writing on language ideology is very broad and very rich. Elsewhere in this book we have also seen it applied to norms of socialization (Chapter 9), to attitudes toward literacy (Chapter 17), and to the meanings of the English word *like* (Chapter 39). The term is now used in studies of gender, multilingualism, language policy, language standardization, prejudice, language shift, language socialization, and many more topics.

Suggested Further Reading

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