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BOOK NOTES

Language in Society **36** (2007). Printed in the United States of America
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CATHERINE E. TRAVIS, *Discourse markers in Colombian Spanish: A study in polysemy*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. Pp. x, 327. Hb US$128.00.

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Pragmatics, the study of language use in context, has largely been positioned as an autonomous branch of linguistics that has little or nothing to do with semantics. However, it seems counterintuitive to me to attempt to understand language use without at the same time trying to understand what it means. Catherine Travis's publication is in this sense an important piece of work; it showcases how language use may be more fruitfully studied through focusing on language meaning. The aim of Travis's book is to identify the "conversational conditions" under which a set of discourse markers is used in Colombian Spanish, and, on the basis of those "conversational conditions," to "determine and explicate the meanings of these markers" (2). In particular, it attempts to "demonstrate that the pragmatics of use of the discourse markers under consideration is semantically driven: the use of discourse markers is determined by their inherent meanings, which interacts with context-driven features to give rise to different pragmatic functions" (2).

The Colombian Spanish discourse markers that Travis selects for study are *bueno* 'well, all right, OK, anyway', *o sea* 'I mean, rather, that is to say', *entonces* 'so, then', and *pues* 'well, so, then' (2). For each discourse marker, she first tries to establish the relationship between the marker and the non-marker form (e.g., discourse marker *bueno* and adjective *bueno*). Then, looking at the range of functions that each discourse marker performs, she proceeds to try to find out whether "homonymy, polysemy, or generality of meaning" is involved (4). More specifically, for each of these discourse markers, Travis traces its semantic development, looks at its functions, works out the number of related meanings it represents, and describes each of these meanings in the form of a paraphrase. She proposes "four different meanings" (78) for *bueno*, "three related meanings" for *o sea* (133), "three core meanings" for *entonces* (172), and "two-way" polysemy for *pues* (240).

I find Travis's book highly commendable for a number of reasons. First, it shows us that, contrary to what some linguists might think, discourse markers are not void of semantic content. It fact, it has meaning that can be clearly stated from the insider's perspective. Second, it gives us a good representation of what happens during semantic change. In a new phase of development, some parts of the mean-

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ing remain. At the same time, some other parts may be lost and some new parts may be gained. Third, it opens up a number of interesting and important issues for discussion (e.g., what goes into meaning, how meaning is related to functions, how to identify polysemy in relation to discourse markers, how to construct the path of semantic change). Fourth, it is an easy read, for Travis seems consciously to avoid the unnecessary use of technical labels. Last but not least, its interdisciplinary nature would give it wide appeal to scholars working in a number of fields: semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, language education, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, historical linguistics, and Romance languages.

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CATHERINE E. TRAVIS, *Discourse markers in Colombian Spanish: A study in polysemy*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. Pp. xiii, 327.

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This book sets an excellent example of how a semantic focus may enrich a theme usually identified as belonging to pragmatics. Discourse markers are usually considered to be discourse support resources (fillers). They are known in Spanish as *muletillas* 'crutches', with a negative evaluation. Because they are independent from the syntactic core structure, their presence seems arbitrary and optional. It is also generally believed that they do not contribute to the referential content of the clauses they are used in. Their use, however, is far from random; it is governed by precise conversational conditions and discourse criteria. Furthermore, they play an important pragmatic role in the verbal interaction associated with negotiation between speaker and hearer. This book with its detailed study is an excellent contribution to the field.

This study presents an analysis of a set of four discourse markers frequent in Spanish as spoken in Cali, Colombia: *bueno*, *o sea*, *entonces*, and *pues*. These markers have been previously described in morphosyntactic and pragmatic contexts, but until now they have not been semantically accounted for. The analysis is based on a corpus of several hours of conversational Colombian Spanish, registering 400 tokens of these items.

It is widely accepted that discourse markers are pragmatic devices with context-based semantics. Consequently, their meaning cannot be identified nor exhaustively described. Contrary to this belief, Travis's research shows how the pragmatic use of discourse markers is governed by their inherent meanings, which interact with context-based features, from which their pragmatic functions derive.

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The pragmatic, multifunctional nature of discourse markers is explained as resulting from the interaction between an invariant semantic core and diverse occurrence contexts. The study gives a detailed account of the polysemous relations of discourse markers and allows better comprehension of the concept of polysemy in discourse.

Crucial in this approach are the inherent meanings of the forms as discourse markers and as non-discourse markers. For example, the adjective *bueno* and the discourse marker *bueno* have to be interpreted as polysemous – as forms sharing an invariant semantic core. This allows us to explain the various pragmatic functions of the markers (acceptance, pre-closing, dispreferred response, etc.) based on the adjectival meaning 'good'.

Travis's study innovatively demonstrates that the methodology of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Wierzbicka 1996) can be successfully extended to discourse-based features. This model allows precise identification and description of aspects of meaning through semantic explanations based on a set of universals or primes ('good' being one of them), organized according to a semantic syntax.

The acceptance function, which refers to the speaker's answer to an offer, would be semantically based on the evaluation of this offer as something 'good'. Consequently, the semantic explanation of *bueno*, marking acceptance, would be:

(1) *bueno*
You said something to me now
I think you want me to say something now
I say: "this is good"

Thus, the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker derive from the permanent core meaning of the adjective *bueno*.

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JOANNA THORNBORROW & JENNIFER COATES (eds.), *The sociolinguistics of narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005. Pp. vi, 299. Hb $126.00.

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What do we mean by "narrative"? How is it used as descriptive term? What are its theoretical limits? What social and contextual variations can determine the production and form of situated stories? What are the core components of narra-

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tive as a discursive unit and interactional resource? How are related narrative discourse and social context articulated in the building of cultural identities? These questions – related to theoretical, contextual, and cultural issues – underlie this collection, *The sociolinguistics of narrative*, co-edited by Joanna Thornborrow and Jennifer Coates. The volume includes the latest achievements in theory and practice in narrative analysis from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, aiming to help us to understand "the ways in which narrative constitutes a fundamental resource in social interaction" (p. 2).

There are thirteen chapters. The co-editors' introductory chap. 1 deals with the broad notions of narrative form, function, and contexts in order to provide the common ground for the collection. They consider identity, performance, and culture as the key issues to sociolinguistic work on narrative.

In chap. 2, Jenny Cheshire & Sue Ziebland investigate the stability of the "life story" in the context of illness. In chap. 3, Heidi Armbruster & Ulrike H. Meinhof analyze three versions of the experience of people living on the German-Polish border. In chap. 4, Nikolas Coupland, Peter Garrett, & Angie Williams aim to establish the cultural value of narratives of personal experience that mid-teenage boys created and performed in the classroom settings. In chap. 5, Coates analyzes collaborative narration by a heterosexual couple, arguing that the collaborative construction of conversational narratives is not confined to female speakers. In chap. 6, Neal N. Norrick explores how two tellers (re)contextualize interwoven stories in mutual cooperation, and with others. In chap. 7, Dick Leith focuses on male friendship in terms of how it can support someone struggling to reinvent himself. In chap. 8, Shoshana Blum-Kulka argues that young children's conversational narratives function simultaneously in sociocultural and discursive domains. In chap. 9, Amy Sheldon & Heidi Engstrom show how the activity of interactionally constructing and enacting pretend-play stories can be affected at its core by the community's gender order. In chap. 10, Janet Holmes & Meredith Marra examine the contribution of narrative functions to the construction of professional identities. In chap. 11, Sandra Harris examines different narrative types and structures generated in a single court trial, exploring the presence of hybridization and strategic pressure. In chap. 12, Martin Montgomery outlines aspects of TV news reports in order to propose some principles of non-narrative coherence on which the discourse of TV news reports relies. In chap. 13, Terry Threadgold rounds off the collection and moves closer to the ideological function of narrative discourse.

This volume fully meets its aim of improving readers' understanding of narrative discourse and its social dimensions. It also offers valuable data from numerous contexts, such as workplaces, courtrooms, schools, media, and informal everyday settings. The collection deserves all praise as it contributes substantially to the study of narrative discourse, simultaneously raising a number of relevant questions that open avenues of future research in this field.

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ROBBINS BURLING, *The talking ape: How language evolved*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. ix, 286. Hb $30.00.

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Among those who theorize about the evolution of language, there are several camps, including those who argue that language evolved slowly from primate gesture-calls, and those who surmise that syntax is so complicated that it must have come from a single genetic mutation. Robbins Burling agrees fully with neither and argues that language is a separate system from gesture-calls, but that language did evolve slowly through natural and sexual selection. He invites us to look at the social uses of language and the cultural value of its complicated, embellished nature.

The book is divided into eleven intricately linked chapters that loop back and forth through Burling's main arguments as well as the supporting evidence from the fields of anthropology, linguistics, and animal communication. The book is written for a broad audience and does not distract readers with footnotes or in-text citations, but notes for each chapter are given at the back of the book, along with a long reference list.

Burling's evidence for the unrelatedness of animal calls to human language rests on two points. The first is that humans still have a gesture-call system that is homologous to the primate one. Direct parallels such as human smiling and chimps' silent bared-teeth displays, both of which are used to manage social relationships, are evident. This shared system makes communication possible between humans who speak mutually unintelligible languages, or in fact, between humans and primates. Burling finds vestiges of primate gesture-calls in human facial expressions, gesticulation, cries and laughter, and the intonation of speech and tone of voice.

The second point on which this argument rests is Burling's assertion that gesture-calls and language are fundamentally different, in that the former is an analog signal while the latter is digital. By this, Burling means that gestures are "continuously variable" (p. 246); there are no sharp breaking points between gestures such as sobs, giggles, and laughs. On the other hand, linguistic units such as phonemes are discrete, having no gray areas between them. Digital signals can more easily contrast with one another and can be combined to form a large number of different, meaningful units.

To argue his second stance on the rate of evolution of language, Burling discusses the probable advantages of traits that contributed to language development. These include high comprehension ability, which he argues drove linguistic development. Another is upright posture, which bent human vocal tracts to al-

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low them to produce a wider range of vowels than other primates can. Others include the ability to learn or imitate – based on the ability to discern others' intentions, thoughts, and actions – and the ability to engage in joint attention.

Burling also argues that language was in many ways an evolutionary indulgence of the species; like the peacock's cumbersome but brilliant feathers, it is a trait more linked to culture than to survival or technology. To all readers who are curious about language, culture, and society, this book offers a wealth of evidence, in readable terms, about the emergence and purposes of language among people past and present.

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Valerie Pellegrino Aveni, *Study abroad and second language use: Constructing the self*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xii, 188. Hb $75, Pb $32.99

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Aveni's book is the result of her experiences in Russia as a coordinator and researcher with a cohort of 76 American students in a study abroad program during the 1995–1996 academic year. The volume consists of four chapters and three appendixes. Focusing on the construction of "the self," Aveni's study examines the social and psychological factors that affect language learners' spontaneous use of a second language (L2) and the ways in which learners exploit and avoid spontaneous speaking opportunities (p. 2).

The first chapter explores the reasons why L2 learners choose to use the L2 to create and maintain an ideal self-image in the face of threatening situations in an L2 context. Chap. 2 analyzes how these L2 learners present the self in their social interactions while trying to protect their sense of security along two social scales: the social hierarchy (represented in social status and control), and social distance (represented in being validated and safe). In Chap. 3, we read a detailed investigation of the factors (and their interaction) that may affect L2 learners' self-presentation, both socio-environmental and learner-internal cues. The former involves caretakers' (and interlocutors') behavior, attitudes, and personal characteristics such as age, gender, and physical appearance, while the latter includes learners' attitudes toward themselves, self-comparison, their L2 proficiency, the L2 learning environment, and their ability to predict the potential outcome of communicative interactions. The final chapter highlights the ways in which learners address the presentation of the self in the L2 and overcome bar-

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riers to their L2 use. It also explores the "fight" and "flight" behaviors in self-presentation and preservation strategies in the L2.

Many insightful analyses of constructing the self in the L2 have enriched the literature of second language acquisition (SLA) studies. Aveni uses Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998) as the foundation for this study, thereby demonstrating its usefulness for the field of SLA. It is by drawing upon GTM that Aveni is able not only to describe an observed phenomenon but also to derive a theory from it. This is why her research is "novel" in many ways (p. 3).

Appendix 3, which gives profiles of individual participants, helps us get the gist of the differences among the narrators and interviewees. As a whole, however, the book lacks detail in the comparison between Russian and American cultures, which may be considered a flaw from the point of view of American learners of Russian as L2. And yet, it is this very overarching experience of self-presentation and the maintenance of security in an L2 that makes the book beneficial both to professionals in any L2 learning program and to classroom teachers, as well as to students of any foreign language and culture (Bailey 1983).

While rigorous in its intellectual and scholarly character, the book also reads like an intriguing story. Embedded with moving narratives and interesting interviews from 11 participants, Aveni's book impresses readers not only with its theoretical exploration but also with the participants' experience and life stories.

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Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes, *American English: Dialects and variation*. (Language in Society, 25). 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006. Pp. xv, 452. Pb $36.95.

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American English, an introductory textbook about dialect variation, is a revised version of the textbook that first appeared in 1998 and represents another addi-

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tion to the array of educational materials about American dialects that the first author has been producing for over three decades. It is a versatile textbook with an intended audience of any student who takes a "course on dialects" (p. x). Its lack of linguistic formalism and statistics makes it accessible to students with no linguistics background, and its continued emphasis on the relevance of dialect awareness to American society will help non-linguists apply the material effectively. Owing to its wide scope, it cannot delve too deeply into any of the theoretical issues; however, its succinct overviews of the debates, annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter, and copious examples from a range of dialects make it a useful reference for experienced linguists.

The first three chapters introduce the basic concepts necessary for understanding dialect variation. Chap. 1 attempts to dispel myths about dialects normally believed by the general public. It goes beyond the standard discussions of prescriptivism vs. descriptivism and provides nuanced definitions of the terms *informal standard*, *formal standard*, and *vernacular*. Chap. 2 presents sociohistorical and linguistic explanations for the existence of different dialects, and chap. 3 provides examples of dialect variation from all linguistic levels. The inclusion of isoglosses based on differences in language use and pragmatics in this section is novel and stimulating.

Chap. 4 traces the origins of the specific dialect regions in the United States and illustrates their current trajectories in light of the most recent findings of dialectologists. Chaps. 5 through 9 describe how dialect variation is affected by various social factors, including region, social status, gender, ethnicity, and style. An entire chapter on African American English (chap. 7) is a welcome addition to the original edition, as are sections devoted to Latino English and Cajun English. The two final chapters, "On the applications of dialect study" and "Dialect awareness: Extending application," provide a wealth of practical information on how linguists' discoveries about dialect variation can be put to use for the benefit of society, especially in educational settings. These two chapters should be required reading for any educator or policy maker who makes decisions about English instruction or standardized testing.

American English is exemplary from a pedagogical standpoint. Its lucid prose, engaging examples, and coherent structure make it enjoyable to read. The exercises promote application and retention of the material by tapping into the general public's interest in dialect differences. Finally, the appendix is a handy compendium of socially significant phonological and grammatical features that distinguish dialects of American English. The only possible addition to improve the book's pedagogical value would be an accompanying CD or Web site to provide students the opportunity to hear actual examples of the features that are discussed in the text. We can hope that the popularity of *American English* leads to further collaboration between the authors and future editions of this fine textbook.

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Susana Mühleisen & Bettina Migge (eds.), *Politeness and face in Caribbean creoles*. (Varieties of English Around the World, G34.) Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005. Pp. vi, 293. Hb.

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This collective volume starts with an overview by the editors on "Politeness and face in Caribbean creoles." Eleven chapters, mostly fieldwork-based, are presented in three sections: I, "Performing rudeness and face maintenance," II, "Face attention and the public and private self," and III, "Socialization and face development."

In "The use of 'bad' language as a politeness strategy in a Panamanian Creole Village," Peter Snow discusses the use of "obscene" curse words in "good ways" in the Panamanian Creole English spoken on the Island of Bastimentos. His study demonstrates that this constitutes a politeness and face preservation strategy that builds social action and maintains social order. In "Ritualized insults and the African diaspora: *Sounding* in African American Vernacular English and *Wording* in Nigerian Pidgin," Nicholas Faraclas, Lourdes Gonzalez, Migdalia Medina & Wendell Villanueva Reyes analyze verbal dueling matches of "Wording" and systematically compare them to U.S. African American Vernacular English "Sounding." Turkish "Dueling" (insults exemplified to illustrate contrast with the former) deals with sexual domination and is meant to hurt the opponent in devastating ways. "Rude sounds: Kiss teeth and negotiation of the public sphere" by Esther Figueroa deals with this oral gesture, providing insight into both shared norms of human interaction in the public sphere and social and linguistic theories. The book's first section closes with "*Faiya-bon*: The socio-pragmatics of homophobia in Jamaican (dancehall) culture." Joseph T. Farquharson places homophobic speech acts, *faiya-bon*, into sociopragmatic perspective by showing how they support heterosexual norms, refusing acceptance of white people's values.

The second part starts with Bettina Migge's "Greeting and social change." She discusses two sets of greeting routines in the Eastern Maroon community of Suriname and French Guiana – the "urban" and the "village" greetings – and new practices that emerge to assert social distinctions. "Advice in an Indo-Guayanese village and the interactional organization of uncertainty," by Jack Sidnell, shows that phenomena such as expert advice and recipient uncertainty are the products of a complex interactional organization of turn-taking. In "Meaningful routines: Meaning-making and the face value of Barbadian greetings," Janina Fenigsen questions the universal function of greetings as a "courteous

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indication of recognition" by demonstrating that Barbadian greetings can serve a subversive and satirical purpose. Susana Mühleisen investigates the use of nominal and pronominal forms of address in "Forms of address in English-lexicon creoles: The presentation of selves and others in the Caribbean context." She has found continuities from African and European practices in nominal addressing that reflect social transformations and the interplay between politeness and face work.

Part III starts out with "'May I have the bilna?' The development of face-saving in young Trinidadian children," by Valerie Youssef. A detailed study of four children shows that, even at the prelinguistic stage, face concerns are primary drivers of the socialization process and of language acquisition. The book ends with "Learning respect in Guadeloupe: Greetings and politeness rituals," in which Alex Louise Tessonneau shows that even when present-day upbringing is less strict, the parameters of polite behavior are still very important in this Creole community.

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Emi Morita, *Negotiation of contingent talk: The Japanese interactional particles* ne *and* sa. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2005. Pp. xvi, 240. Hb $138.00.

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The large category of Japanese words or morphemes commonly labeled "particles," or in Japanese *joshi*, has long been problematic for linguistics. This in large part is due to the variety of apparent grammatical or pragmatic functions the category encompasses. While some particles seem to function as more or less straightforward postpositions, others are said to mark case or discourse functions, and still others have pragmatic functions but no clearly agreed syntactic or semantic position. The two particles tackled by Emi Morita's new book, *ne* and *sa*, are of this last variety. Morita argues that these "interactional particles" serve important roles of marking stance or activity in ongoing talk-in-interaction. As Morita puts it, "The insertion of interactional particles may serve to 'salientize' or 'set apart' certain units of talk in order to make them interactionally relevant to immediately adjacent action" (p. 95).

Morita's opening chapter provides a brief overview of interactional linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996, Schegloff, Ochs & Thompson 1996), a type of linguistic analysis influenced by conversation analysis, which views linguistic structure as emergent from real talk in real time and positions the study within

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this framework. Chap. 2 provides a comprehensive summary of existing literature on the particles *ne* and *sa*, albeit one that could do with more synthesis of the existing work, or a greater attempt to position this analysis relative to previous studies.

The heart of the volume is located in chaps. 3, 4, and 5, which treat the overall concept of interactional particles and the specific functions of *ne* and *sa*, respectively. The basic claim here is that speakers use *ne* or *sa* to mark some portion of a turn-at-talk as interactionally relevant, and therefore provide a space for interlocutors to respond in a variety of ways. For example, Morita shows how the use of *ne* may, in different positions, help secure a turn-at-talk, call for a listener's gaze or minimal response, or mark some component – such as a hedge or assessment contained within a larger turn – as particularly salient. The functions of *sa* are similarly manifold, and subject to the specifics of a particular interaction.

All of this could appear rather unsatisfying for someone looking for THE meaning of a particle. However, as Morita illustrates, such searches are probably misguided. Rather than looking for the meaning or function of a word or other linguistic structure prior to interaction, far more nuanced understandings are possible from the analysis of actual language use.

The main weakness of the book is its sometimes insufficient engagement with other frameworks. Morita presents interesting analysis but does not always explain how this complements or problematizes earlier work. Welcome exceptions to this critique come in discussions of intonational variation and of the function of *ne* as an "attention getter," both areas in which Morita's conclusions fit with existing literature. A bit more of this engagement might show that interactional linguistics is not merely an alternative to cognitive or structural linguistics, but a means of both deepening and widening our understanding of language and social interaction.

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