



# Conspicuously past: Distressed discourse and diagrammatic embedding in a Tibetan represented speech style

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## Abstract

Using as a point of departure Vološinov's discussion of a dialectic between reported speech styles and large-scale cultural-ideological formations, this article examines how a represented speech construction can diagram and be reciprocally 'embedded' by its sociohistorical context of occurrence. I focus on a form of represented speech in diasporic performances of Tibetan Buddhist debate, in which monks tropically subsume the voice of the animator into the voice of tradition. In making tradition manifest, monks 'distress' or 'antique' debate discourse, rendering it conspicuously past under conditions in which its authenticity seems suspect. The significance of this style is shown to rest on its social embedding, illustrating one way in which represented speech can reflect and refract the experience of certain categories of Tibetan diasporic subjects.

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## 1. Introduction: from dialogicality to diagrammaticity in represented speech

Represented speech constructions are renowned for their 'dialogicality', a quality that manifests in the relationship between two events, customarily termed 'reported' and 'reporting' or 'represented' and 'representing' (Vološinov, 1986; Jakobson, 1971; Lucy, 1993). To count as represented speech, these two events must be keyed to distinct images of

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personhood or ‘voices’.<sup>1</sup> And to the extent that this utterance-level juxtaposition of voices serves as a sign-vehicle in its own right – an internally complex sign, a little text of interacting voices, as it were – represented speech constructions exhibit their familiar trait, dialogicality.<sup>2</sup> They serve, in Agha’s (2005b) words, as a ‘structure of entextualization that juxtaposes images of speaker-actor as contrasting with or appearing to react against each other’ (p. 39). The voice keyed to the representing event may seem to infiltrate (Vološinov, 1986) the represented speech segment, or hold it at arm’s length, or feverishly embrace it; the range of interpretable dialogic relations is large, naturally. But what has attracted many, and what I pursue here, is the way ‘utterance-level’ dialogicality – the felt interplay of voices in a represented speech construction – can stand for and participate dialectically in larger scale socio-historical processes, what I will caption roughly as ‘macro-social’ dialogicality.

On this dialectic, we may recall how Vološinov (1986) saw in reported speech the ‘*active relation* of one message to another’ (p. 116) and suggested, more ambitiously, that these relations somehow reflected and refracted large-scale cultural-ideological formations. In his remarks on ‘authoritative discourse’, discourse cast in a ‘linear style’, Vološinov proposed a correlation worth restating: ‘The stronger the feeling of hierarchical eminence in another’s utterance, the more sharply defined will its boundaries be, and the less accessible will it be to penetration by retorting and commenting tendencies from outside’ (Vološinov, 1986, p. 123; Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342 et passim; see Parmentier, 1993, p. 263). Left unremarked is the most remarkable feat, his capacity to fluently read off facts about social relations from the way voices are juxtaposed in the represented speech construction itself. How does he step so surely from utterance to large-scale social relations, from what transpires in a few seconds to what crystallizes over decades, even centuries? In the case of authoritative discourse, the textual juxtaposition of represented and representing speech events presumably serves as a higher-order sign-vehicle: firm event-boundaries figure ‘hierarchy’.<sup>3</sup> And as for the semiotic manner in which Vološinov moves from utterance-level dialogicality to macro-social dialogicality here, we may read him – in presentist fashion, of course – as relying implicitly on ‘diagrammaticity’ (more broadly, indexical-iconicity),

<sup>1</sup> My terminological avoidance of ‘reported speech’ is in keeping with Tannen’s (1995) point that the very category of ‘reported speech’ risks obscuring the primacy of the reporting context (see also Koven, 2001). In terms of the event boundary in represented speech constructions, without matrix clause or other devices to distinguish voices, an utterance risks not being readable as ‘represented speech’ at all. In transparent cases like direct reports (*Bill said, ‘I’m hungry’*), a clause boundary marks an event boundary. With so-called ‘free direct’, ‘free indirect’ and analogous varieties, no such matrix clause exists; these styles separate represented/ing events and voices by other means. Agha (2005a,b) considers how text-metrical principles can provide an event-boundary in the absence of a clause boundary and may help ‘contrastively individuate’ voices. An event boundary may be cued by other means, of course. Proverbs, for instance, lack matrix clauses, as Irvine (1997) notes, but are ‘[r]ecognizable [as represented speech] by genre conventions and metaphorical content’ (p. 147).

<sup>2</sup> I use ‘dialogicality’, especially ‘utterance-level dialogicality’, narrowly to mean the felt interplay of voices in the compass of a represented speech construction. For reflections on the use of this and related terms. See Crapanzano (1990), Linell (1998), Mannheim and van Vleet (1998).

<sup>3</sup> I cannot catalog here the various conditions under which represented speech constructions diagram extralinguistic relations. Admittedly absent, for example, is a consideration of personifying meta-discourses. In characterizing authoritative discourse, Bakhtin (1981) seems to imbue this style with qualities that motivate diagrammaticity: ‘The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it’ (p. 342). Bakhtin personifies authoritative discourse (it ‘demands’, it ‘binds us’), creating what Agha (1998) terms ‘leakage’ across objects of metasemiosis. In blurring the boundary between discourse and social relations, Bakhtin facilitates cross-domain diagrammaticity.

to use a Peircian idiom.<sup>4</sup> Peirce's diagrammatic icons are, as Mannheim (2001) crisply summarizes, 'signs that represent the relations of the parts of their objects by analogous relationships among their own parts' (p. 102). Or, as Vološinov (1986) words it in reference to reported speech, the 'dynamic interrelationship' of reported speech and reporting context 'reflects the dynamism of social interorientation in verbal ideological communication between people...' (p. 119).

Diagrammatic icons, and icons generally, need not strictly resemble their objects, not for Peirce.<sup>5</sup> Insofar as superstructural styles of reported speech 'reflect and refract' base socio-economic conditions (though not by means of mechanical causation (Vološinov, 1986, p. 17 *et passim*)), language, as a semiotic medium, appears figured as either a window or prism, inviting us to speak of 'correspondence' and 'distortion' respectively. At such moments we risk viewing language as a mere reflex of the extra-linguistic, at the expense of considering the creative and dynamic role played by represented speech constructions in emergent sociohistorical processes (see Parmentier, 1987). As interdiscursive operators, represented speech constructions may seek to diagrammatically reconfigure their surround, recreating the world in their image. And they may do so in diverse ways, mimesis – representation through imitation – being but a special case.

In the 'tropic' represented-speech style I consider in this essay, it is a kind of anti-likeness, an 'inversive' diagrammaticity, that speakers put into play. This style occurs in Tibetan Buddhist debate, a form of argumentation that is the premier mode of education for monks of the dominant Geluk sect in India (Lempert, 2005). An appreciation of this style begins with a reappraisal of the matrix termed the 'representing speech event'. In concert with Hanks' (2005) discussion of 'socially embedded' deictic fields, I suggest that the representing speech event, as a kind of 'field', should not be reduced to what Bühler (1990) termed the *Zeigfeld*: the local, egocentric 'experiential present of utterance production' (Hanks, 2005, p. 192) within which referring expressions like 'here', 'now', 'I' – the trio that Bühler used together to name the *Zeigfeld* itself – serve as 'coordinates' for steering attention and orienting speaking subjects. Nor will the slightly more expansive sense of 'context' presumed in most transcript-centric interactionist studies suffice, studies which, as Briggs (1997) notes, 'narrow... the focus primarily to the intricate relations that link an utterance to what immediate precedes and follows it' (p. 454). Hanks demonstrates how the intelligibility of deixis (referential indexicals, in particular) rests not on an expression's core semantics but on its interaction with multiple 'relevancy structures' (a term he adapts from conversation analysis) that have distinct scales associated with them.<sup>6</sup> Included are emergent relevancy structures, those locally defined and redefined by interactants over turns-of-talk, as conversation analysts have long studied well; and relatively non-local relevancy structures, including independently presupposed contextual facts derived from one's expe-

<sup>4</sup> Following Silverstein (1981), Parmentier (1997) notes how, in Peircian terms, emergent text-structures in ritual 'often take the form of indexical icons, that is, of diagrammatic signs whose organizational arrangement either resembles the extra-linguistic realities of the situation (the hierarchical order of a ritual procession, for example) or reflexively mirrors the linguistic event, and signal some aspect of the performance context' (p. 20; see Silverstein, 2004; Wilce, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> In Peirce's semiotic, iconicity refers to the way in which one can learn something about the properties of an object by attending to properties of the sign that stands for it. Indexicality refers to that aspect of a sign that 'points to' or 'picks out' some object as part of its context of occurrence (for an overview, see Parmentier, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> For some recent reflections on the methodological problematic of 'scale' in studies of language and culture, see (Blommaert et al., 2005; Wortham, 2005; Collins and Slembrouck, 2005).

rience in a social ‘field’, that is, a ‘space of positions and position takings in which agents (individual and collective) engage and through which various forms of value or ‘capital’ circulate’ (Hanks, 2005, p. 192).<sup>7</sup> Hanks’ argument naturally extends to referential indexicals used in reported speech constructions – like verb tense and participant pronouns in matrix reporting clauses. But the notion of ‘social embedding’ is more expansive in charge, permitting us to look beyond referential deixis. I extend it here to explain how utterance-level dialogicality in represented speech constructions can articulate with macro-social dialogicality. I argue below that monks diagram their position in a social field through represented speech, and the social field they diagram reciprocally ‘embeds’ the textual juxtaposition of voices in the represented speech construction, overdetermining its significance. Monks inversely diagram their position within the monastic field in a bid to reposition themselves within it, from discourse up. So conspicuous and strenuous is their effort, however, that it betrays – it ‘gives off’, Goffman would say – a diasporic anxiety: a concern that their hold on doctrinal tradition may be slipping, irrevocably.

## 2. Distressed discourse in Ithaca, New York

It is February 7, 1998, and two Tibetan monks who hail from India’s Namgyal Monastery hold a philosophical debate at my request at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Ithaca, New York – Namgyal’s US chapter. They are reluctant at first, noting how a few years have passed since they last practiced debate at their home monastery in the Himalayan foothills. With video-camera on, the standing monk challenger begins. He begins by citing from memory a scriptural passage, but 21 seconds into his recitation, he falters: ‘uh...what should [I] say?’ (*ga re za*), ‘[I’m] forgetting a line’ (*tshigs grub cig brjed ‘gro gi ‘dug*). The defendant, a more senior monk seated crosslegged on a square maroon cushion, tells him to press ahead, his voice hushed in a bid to remain off-record. The debate that ensues is a lean fifteen minutes – a third of a typical courtyard debate. And in terms of content, the challenger circles around the same argument, which concerns the topic of ‘refuge’, the foundational act in which Buddhists commit themselves to the Buddha, his doctrine, and community. The defendant repeats the same answers. It is a stiff, halting performance, one that lacks the electricity and fluency one expects of seasoned monks.

Disfluent it may have been, but as I discovered upon transcription this was a performance dense with a tropic represented speech construction that suggested the very opposite effect, namely, that the two monks handled tradition well, and that, by implication, the debate genre itself was executed with fidelity. This speech construction, ‘tropic’ for reasons that will soon be apparent, rests on the quotative clitic *-s*, a morpheme whose categorial properties require attention. The clitic *-s* marks the right-most (end) boundary of the represented speech segment. Categorially it presupposes that the segment is not authored by the animator of the utterance framed by the *-s* token. No distinction analogous to so-called ‘direct,’ ‘indirect,’ or ‘quasi-in/direct’ reports is directly inferable from *-s* alone.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This broader ‘field’ notion is appropriated primarily from Bourdieu (see Hanks, 2005, pp. 72–75).

<sup>8</sup> The abbreviations used are as follows: AUX = auxiliary verb; DAT = dative; ERG = ergative; GNM = gnomic evidential; LOC = locative; NEG = negation marker; NZR = nominalizer; PN = proper name; QT = quotative clitic; [ ] = brackets indicate author’s interpolations; : = lengthening; [line break] = intonation unit boundary. I alternate in this article between orthographic (specifically, the Romanized Wylie (1959) transliteration system) and phonemic transcription (see Chang et al., 1964).

Denotes ‘author’ of quoted segment	Represented speech segment	Matrix verb
t̥ʰʌʃi-qi PN-ERG	cha tshāpo tu- <i>s</i> tea hot AUX-QT	ser-qi tu say-NZR AUX

‘Tashi says ‘the tea is hot.’’

Fig. 1. Represented speech segment with denoted actant structure.

Implied author of quoted segment	Represented speech segment	Implied matrix verb
∅ [unnamed author, ≠ speaker] [t̥ʰʌʃi-qi] [PN-ERG]	cha tshāpo tu- <i>s</i> tea hot AUX-QT	∅ [ser-qi tu] [say-NZR AUX]

‘[Tashi says] ‘the tea is hot.’’

Fig. 2. Represented speech segment without denoted actant structure.

In Fig. 1, the actant structure (information about who-said-what-to-whom) is (partially) denoted through a proper name (Tashi) and ergative case marking. Speakers need not supply the outer matrix verb and topic omission is commonplace, as illustrated in the example in Fig. 2. Despite such omissions, the actant structure can, of course, be made inferable through other means (e.g., through antecedent topic marking).

Though monks do have at their disposal what Vološinov termed ‘linear’-styled represented speech constructions, where the re-represented–representing speech-event boundary is sharply demarcated, in debate they routinely zero-out the outer representing speech frame.<sup>9</sup> In cases where monks use the quotative clitic *-s* without matrix verb and without any candidate for the participant role of ‘author’, the default construal of the author variable may be glossed as ‘tradition’, that is, a virtual (i.e. not empirically manifest), authoritative locus of knowledge indexed as anterior to, or transcendent of, the utterance in which it is invoked. If personified in a Bakhtinian idiom, one may speak of a ‘voice’ of tradition (cf. Kroskrity, 1993). As an interdiscursive operator in debate, this type of represented speech construction employs what Silverstein (2005) terms ‘type-sourced’ interdiscursivity. This register-specific use of the clitic in debate indexically presupposes that the utterance-artifact is part of and coeval with the doctrinally cohesive intertext that we may caption as ‘tradition’.

As for the tropic represented speech construction, simply put, the represented speech segment is independently recognizable as the animator’s but is framed with the clitic as if it came from the impersonal voice of tradition.<sup>10</sup>

That this type of utterance involves a tropic merger of voices can be appreciated by considering role differentiation in the debate genre. Debate features two primary roles: ‘chal-

<sup>9</sup> When recounting the words of important lineage masters, the quoted segment is typically preceded by a verse of homage, and the segment’s left and right borders are clearly demarcated with the ablative case marker *las* (‘from’) on the left and on the right a formula familiar in literary registers of classical Tibetan, *zhes gzhungs pa’i phyr* (‘because it is said..’). The ‘linear’-styled architecture of this form of citation shares certain formal similarities with so-called ‘authoritative discourse’ (Bakhtin, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> As illustrated in Fig. 3, the default construal of the representing speech frame is the nominalized verb ‘say’ (*zer*) with the gnomic auxiliary verb (*yog red*).

Implied author of quoted segment	Represented speech segment	Implied matrix verb
∅ [unnamed author, ≠ speaker] = default construal of author variable, ‘tradition’	tāā mΔ tɯp-s reason NEG established-QT	∅ [ser-qi yɔðree] [say-NZR AUX.GNM]

‘[I/Tradition says] ‘the reason is not established.’’

Fig. 3. Tropic merger of animator with impersonal voice of ‘tradition’ in the debate register.

lenger’ and ‘defendant’. Monks who inhabit the defendant role must hold together the diverse and often competing propositions found in authoritative Buddhist doctrine. By smoothing out surface inconsistencies, the defendant struggles to uphold a belief in the global interpropositional cohesiveness of Buddhist doctrine, while also indexing his knowledgeability (Lempert, 2005). Challengers inhabit an inverse role. They rend cohesiveness, inducing inconsistencies at any expense, even if it means asserting something counter-factual. By default, the challengers’ utterances are not evaluated as, or encouraged to be, ‘sincere’ – in the sense of involving a normative correspondence between signs and intentions. Nor is their knowledgeability per se on trial (for details, see Lempert, 2005).

Knowledgeability is indeed at stake when the defendant speaks, however. As far as debate’s sanctioned procedures go, challengers present propositions which the defendant then evaluates using a small set of responses that belong to debate’s lexical register, especially four: ‘[I] accept’ (*‘dod*), ‘why?’ (*ci’i phyir*), ‘the reason [is] not established’ (*rtags ma grub*) or ‘there is no pervasion’ (*khyab pa ma byung*). When the defendant uses register-specific responses, it is presumed by default that he epistemically commits himself to his utterance’s propositional content (see also Dreyfus, 2003, p. 211). It is therefore somewhat marked for a defendant to displace responsibility for his response by framing it as represented speech, as illustrated in Fig. 3. The resultant non-congruence of co-occurring elements – or better, their ‘fractional congruence’ (Agha, 2006) – creates a metaphoric or more broadly tropic (Agha, 1996) effect: the defendant seems to merge his voice with the impersonal voice of ‘tradition’.<sup>11</sup>

This tropic style, which merges the voice of animator with the voice of tradition, occurred in nearly every debate I witnessed, but in varying densities. In the Ithaca debate, the defendant used this tropic represented speech construction with abandon. Of the four register-specific response-types, ‘[I] accept’ (*‘dod*) was by far the most frequent, and 32 of its 33 tokens received the quotation clitic – 97%, extremely high relative to other debates in my corpus. If we consider all four of the defendant’s canonical response-types, 34 of 44 received the quotative clitic, 77%. The defendant, in brief, relies heavily on this relatively marked, tropic represented speech style.

The act of invoking authoritative voices like the impersonal voice of tradition in debate can implement a range of pragmatic effects, as Parmentier (1993) reminds us. Obeisance may be a first-order effect, but if the authoritative voice is handled deftly an animator

<sup>11</sup> In terms of epistemic stance, since debate is considered a test of the defendant’s knowledgeability of doctrine, this tropic style shoulders a second-order gnomic evidential stance effect: the propositional content is framed as ‘generally known’ to be true.

may also succeed in ‘transferring the aura of historical objectivity and representational naturalness from the inner to the outer frame of discourse’ (Parmentier, 1993, p. 263 cf.; Shuman, 1993). In this event, however, the effort to invoke an aura of tradition seems strained, for the scene is riddled with signs of disfluency. Before, during, and after the debate recorded in Ithaca, the two Namgyal monks showed signs of their flagging competence: disclaimers before the performance, slips during the performance, even an apology during a post-event interview. To record this event, I had also ventured to Ithaca with a large videocamera and tripod in tow. The event transpired under the bright light of cultural objectification, and the monks, in due measure, lathered their discourse with a patina of ‘tradition’ using this tropic represented speech style. This is especially apparent if we consider propositionally empty vocalizations like *ya*, a continuer that the challenger often used intonation-unit finally.

C:	t̪a m̪a-yĩ-par thaa::-s now NEG-be-NZR.LOC/DAT follows-QT	now [it] follows that [it] isn’t <sup>12</sup>
→	ya::-s [continuer]-QT	ya
	q̄ñcòòṣum-l̪a q̄ḥp-su ʈo-tshūũ qh̄ant̪ɛɛṣiq̄ ṣaá three jewels-LOC/DAT go-method what sort posit	what method of going for refuge to the Three Jewels do [you] posit?

43% ( $N = 77$ ) of *ya* tokens were framed with the quotative clitic – high relative to other debates in my corpus. Even more striking is the following sequence, where the challenger struggles to formulate a line:

C:	t̪a m̪a-yĩ-par thaa::-s now NEG-be-NZR.LOC/DAT follows-QT	now [it] follows that [it] isn’t
	k̪ap̪sum-l̪a s̪a three refuges-LOC/DAT say	to the three refuges-
	a::-s [continuer]-QT	ah
	a::-s [continuer]-QT	ah
	s̪ānk̪ɛ́ l̪as̪q̄- Buddha and so on-	the Buddha and so forth-
	ɔ̄ɔ̄::-s [continuer]-QT	oh

<sup>12</sup> This is a formulaic expression in the debate register that often occurs at a topic boundary. It denotes opposition to an unstated proposition ascribed by default to the defendant (see Lempert, 2005, p. 189).

The challenger's disfluency is accompanied here by a high density of the quotative clitic, this time applied repeatedly to the vocalizations *ah* and *oh*. If we consider this flagging competence together with the objectifying environment I unwittingly helped create, it would appear that the monks strenuously invoke tradition in a context where their command of it seems both questioned and questionable. They merge their voice with the voice of tradition in a bid to reflexively stamp the real-time event-in-progress as canonical, a token of a type. The strident use of this tropic represented speech style, which subsumes the animator's voice in the voice of tradition, amounts to a kind of 'antiquing', an application of a 'distressed' patina to debate discourse (cf. Stewart, 1991).

And this antiquing appears conspicuous, its authenticity belied by signs of disfluency. Had this tropic merger of voices been fluently executed, and executed by highly statusful participants (a renowned scholar, a recognized reincarnated lama), it might have indexed speaker-knowledgeability. It might have signaled a monk's capacity to channel tradition with such fidelity that his own voice becomes diaphanous, a transparent medium for conveying tradition's words. But we are handed instead a fractured text. What, then, of this apparent disjuncture between the ascribed traditionality of discourse through the clitic and the monks' manifest disfluency with a traditional practice? This disjuncture becomes intelligible when we consider how the interplay of voices articulates with a larger, diasporic monastic field. I would suggest that this tropic absorption of the voice of the animator into the voice of tradition, this distressing of discourse, serves as an inversive diagram of the monks' location in the diasporic monastic field. It is a creative (i.e. context-transforming [Silverstein, 1976]) and compensatory move made under conditions of cultural objectification in exile – an attempt to collapse the divide acutely felt to separate them from tradition.

The sources of diagrammatic motivation here are manifold. As a Tibetan refugee, the animator in the representing speech event is a diasporic subject by default, first. Second, the monks indexed their position with a diasporic monastic field, specifically, their relative 'distance' from doctrinal tradition vis-à-vis other categories of exiled Tibetan monks, by (i) disfluencies during the debate performance itself, and (ii) disclaimers about their competence in debate in pre- and post-event comments. These disfluencies and disclaimers resonate, importantly, with stereotypes I often heard about Namgyal monks, notably their lack of proficiency in debate – at least relative to monks from the Geluk monastic-seats of southern India. This stereotype rests for its coherence on an understanding of the Geluk monastic field in India. Founded in 16th century Lhasa by a prior incarnation of the Dalai Lama, Namgyal has long been a monastery of considerable prestige, but its prestige rests not on debate-centered Buddhist philosophical studies – though this is a signature pursuit for the Geluk sect and the primary curricular basis on which it distributes symbolic capital. Namgyal's Indian avatar, located next to the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, prides itself instead on the preservation of the past, including sacred art, dance, and tantric rituals, performances of which have been showcased abroad during several international tours. In India's monastic field, the most statusful debate-based educational training is found at the three Geluk monastic-seats replicated in southern India in the 1970s, namely Sera, Drepung, and Ganden monasteries. These had been immensely influential during the pre-1959 period (see Goldstein, 1989) and their Indian forms have re-acquired considerable importance after their expansion in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> Excellent debaters from Dharamsala

<sup>13</sup> These monasteries have undergone substantial transformations in India that I cannot address here.



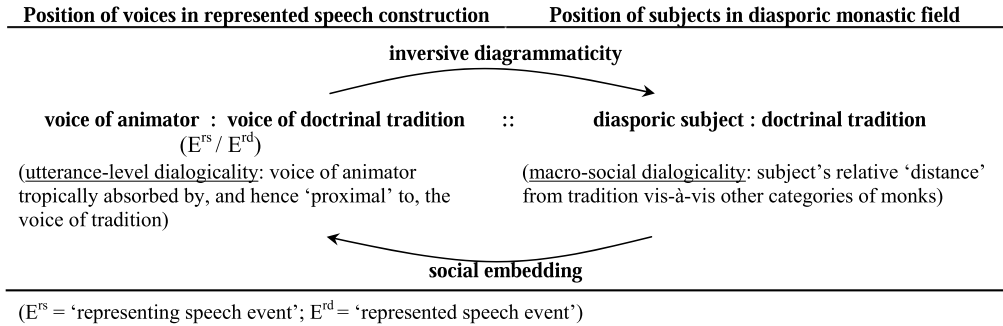


Fig. 4. Diagrammaticity and reciprocal ‘embedding’ of represented speech construction.

frequently aspire to travel south to Sera, Drepung, or Ganden monasteries in Karnataka State to pursue the prestigious Geshe degree (see Dreyfus, 1997). The southern monasteries are thus widely held to be the premier sites for traditional Geluk philosophical study in India.

Under conditions of heightened cultural objectification and in a monastic field in which their competence seems questionable, the Namgyal monks in Ithaca painstakingly distress their discourse, so much so that the debate-event assumes the semblance of a souvenir, an artifact self-consciously emblematic of its authenticity. Fig. 4 represents the inversive diagrammaticity that obtains here between the represented speech construction and its fielded context. The first, left-to-right vector represents the manner in which this text-metrical juxtaposition of voices (‘utterance-level dialogicality’ in the represented speech construction) ‘stands for’ its object (‘macro-social dialogicality’ between a diasporic subject and tradition in the monastic field). From the standpoint of the trope’s intelligibility, this diagrammaticity, in turn, can be said in Hanks’ terms to ‘socially embed’ the representing speech event. It overdetermines the significance of the dialogic relations between voices, narrowing the range of construals so that the surface non-congruence – the fractured text, the disjuncture between tradition’s presence and its absence – becomes ‘fractionally congruent’ (Agha, 2006), a readable whole.

This was no nonce occurrence either. During fieldwork in India, I often reencountered this tropic represented speech style, sometimes in densities approaching that of the Ithaca debate. Distressed discourse seemed especially apparent in debates that transpired in the vicinity of Dharamsala, where Namgyal monastery stands. In my corpus of debates,<sup>14</sup> this tropic style was pronounced in debates that seemed markedly staged and subject to public scrutiny, contexts where a performance frame was keyed. In January 2001, for instance, I recorded a series of debate examinations at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, a largely monastic but self-consciously modernized school for philosophical study in upper Dha-

<sup>14</sup> This corpus of audio and video data includes a wide range of debates, primarily from Sera Monastery and from sites in the Dharamsala area, including Namgyal. I also sampled debates from a few Geluk nunneries that have recently adopted the debate genre, and a couple monasteries of other Tibetan Buddhist sects. Debates from Sera and Dharamsala were selected based on several dimensions of expected contrast, including (i) debate-type (e.g., twice-daily courtyard debate versus the various, scheduled, annual debates); and (ii) relative status of debate participants, reckoned in terms of age, seniority, and religious rank (recognized reincarnated lamas versus ordinary monks).

ramsala that shares a debating courtyard with Namgyal. The exams convened inside Tegchen Chöling temple in front of the Dalai Lama's residence. As I struggled to set up my tripod and mount my videocamera, I found myself competing with a mass of tourists, many from India, some from abroad. As they clamored to see the Buddhist paintings and statues arrayed in the room, many also peered at and snapped photos of the monks debating nearby.

McLeod Ganj in upper Dharamsala is, in general, a town under glass. Tourists course daily through its streets, pausing at the Dalai Lama's residence and the neighboring temple complex. But for monks taking the exam, more daunting were no doubt the senior monks gathered there to evaluate them. Monks taking the exam serve as either challenger or defendant. The challenger picks at random a slip of paper naming the debate topic, and he must quickly strike up a debate with a classmate who serves as the seated defendant. Each debate-exam proceeds at a brisk pace. Five minutes, then a bell. Of the five consecutive debate-exams I recorded that day, the most frequent of the defendant's register-specific responses was '[I] accept' ('*dod*'), a useful vehicle for tracking the trope. Combined, the five defendants uttered 79 tokens of '[I] accept', 70 of which were framed with the quotative clitic (89%).<sup>15</sup> Like the Ithaca debate, the continuer *ya* received quotative clitic framing too.

Another debate in which the density of this trope was pronounced was a one-on-one debate that transpired on the debating courtyard at a nearby branch of the Institute of Dialectics, a short taxi ride from McLeod Ganj. I approached two monks on the courtyard there and asked whether I might record them. They agreed but suggested that we move to an isolated spot on the grass – perhaps to ensure a clear recording, perhaps also keying a performance frame. Tellingly, the defendant at a moment late in the recording told me that he was dissatisfied with one of his responses and urged me several times to rewind and record again – suggesting that he felt his competence was on trial. Of his responses, '[I] accept' ('*dod*') was by far the most frequent ( $N = 109$ ), and he used the quotative clitic on 97% of the tokens. Like the Ithaca debate, the challenger frequently used quotative clitic framing on the propositionally empty continuer *ya*, 36.5% ( $N = 60$ ).

In comparison, an analogous scene transpired at Sera Mey monastic-college in Karnataka state in southern India. I visited the debating courtyard one Sunday to collect debate footage. I approached two monks and asked whether I might record them. When the Disciplinarian saw me he insisted that we move to a secluded spot so that the audio recording would be clear. These two monks – comparable in age to the monks from the branch school of the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, in fact – accompanied me to a clearing about fifty feet from their peers. No antiquing occurred. The defendant used quotative clitic framing on his '[I] accept' ('*dod*') responses only once out of 242 tokens (.4%).

Though I make no argument here about the precise social distribution of this tropic represented-speech style in India, the cases of conspicuously distressed discourse in my corpus do possess similarities. For certain categories of diasporic monks, especially those in the vicinity of Dharamsala, this represented speech style appears to be a trope of choice, occurring densely under conditions of cultural objectification, especially when a performance frame is keyed. The monks who tropically absorb their voice into the voice of

<sup>15</sup> Defendant's quotative clitic use on '[I] accept' response ('*dod*') in each of the five debate exams, in order: 100% ( $N = 3$ ); 90.9% ( $N = 22$ ); 94.4 ( $N = 18$ ); 80% ( $N = 25$ ); 81.8% ( $N = 11$ ).

tradition tend to be those whose competence in things traditional seemed tenuous and whose anxiety to preserve it is high. An analogy with the classic sociolinguistic phenomenon of hypercorrection is suggestive here (Labov, 1966), for there is a certain ‘anxiety’ in the face of the standard (Silverstein, 2003, p. 219)<sup>16</sup>; it is not a phonological standard that monks race toward and overshoot, of course; it is instead a diasporic demand for authenticity, for a canonical performance. Rather than diagrammatically re-present their location in a preexistent social field, these monks try to performatively re-position themselves within it through the text-metrical juxtaposition of voices.<sup>17</sup> They distress their discourse to demonstrate their hold on the past, though the effort alone suggests that their hold is tenuous. Unlike linear reporting styles, where the represented speech segment is clearly separated out and subject to public inspection, the voice of tradition is everywhere and nowhere: pervasive but diffuse, immanent but ill-defined.

### 3. Discussion: diagrammatic embedding

With his notion of *embedding*, Hanks has explored how deictic fields articulate with social fields in discursive practice. ‘Embedding’, he writes, ‘converts abstract positions like Spr, Adr, Object, and the lived space of utterances into sites to which power, conflict, controlled access, and the other features of the social fields attach’ (2005, p. 194). Left implicit is an account of the means by which speakers align deictic field and social field, how they achieve *cross-field alignment* (Agha, this volume).<sup>18</sup> In this essay I have considered how the text-metrical juxtaposition of voices in represented speech can spur a type of cross-field alignment through what I have termed ‘diagrammatic embedding’. Evident here is the fact that forms of cross-field alignment can also be cultivated, disseminated, and used for various ends (cf. Perrino, Riskedahl, this volume),<sup>19</sup> in this case, for negotiating one’s place in a diasporic monastic field.

Of the many prescriptive discourses that promote cross-field alignment, we may recall, in closing, those that have advocated dialogicality as a way to mitigate ethnographic authority. The rediscovery of Bakhtin and Vološinov in the late 1970s and early 1980s was accompanied by a now familiar reflexive concern with writing and the politics of representation. For some, Bakhtin and Vološinov offered a methodological route into what Foucault saw as massive knowledge/power complexes, and for some they even offered a way out. ‘Critical’ or ‘reflexive’ anthropologists, many inspired by the Bakhtin circle, sought to preserve rather than delete the voices of their ethnographic subjects (Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995), an effort fueled by concerns that were at once epistemological and ethical. The interpretive authority of ethnographic writing is achieved, wrote Clifford (1988), through ‘the exclusion of dialogue’ (p. 43), and those who have taken such remarks seriously have tried their hand at crafting polyphonic, dialogical, carnivalesque texts, with

<sup>16</sup> I thank Doug Glick for this analogy.

<sup>17</sup> If this tropic represented speech style were to take off, we might anticipate a trajectory of grammaticalization in which the quotative clitic’s second-order valence as a gnomic evidential stance marker overtakes its first-order valence as a quotative. The clitic might thus reemerge as a register-specific epistemic-stance marker, analogous to what Kroskrity (1993, Chapter 6) has described in the case of the Tewa evidential particle *ba*.

<sup>18</sup> This problematic may be said to fall within the scope of studies of ‘inter-event semiosis’ or ‘interdiscursivity’ (Agha and Wortham, 2005; Agha, 2005a,b; Silverstein, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> While I have focused on represented speech, diagrammatic embedding is not limited to this medium, of course (see, for instance, Wortham, 1994, 2001, 2003, 2005; Silverstein, 1996).

varying degrees of success and sophistication (see Geertz, 1988; Crapanzano, 1990, p. 269; Urban and Smith, 1998). Consider what is perhaps the simplest, most familiar formula, not limited to anthropological literature, to be sure: one presents copious amounts of reported speech – long stretches of transcribed interview data, oral narrative, testimony – in a bid to counterbalance the weight of one’s own words. Following a poetics of symmetry, one trots out voices of self and subject in an alternating, ‘dialogic’ fashion, as if to allocate rights and privileges equally in a discursive rite of transformative justice: macro-social symmetry, again, from discourse up. However crude and wooden such applications of dialogic principles may in retrospect seem, they are also instructive. They remind us of a problematic that Vološinov long ago broached but which remains with us: the question of how utterance- and discourse-level dialogicality can stand for and help precipitate large-scale social relations.

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