

Norm and Trope in Kinship Behavior

Asif Agha
University of Pennsylvania

1. Introduction

This paper proposes an approach to the study of kinship relations that focuses on the activities through which they are performed and construed. The study of kinship has traditionally been formulated around several problematic assumptions, such as the idea that kinship is fundamentally a system of genealogical relations, or that 'kinship systems' may be conceptualized as closed, internally structured mental models. I argue that neither the genealogical reduction nor a mentalistic approach to kinship is particularly plausible. The difficulty with the first is that, in all human societies, kinship terms are frequently used to enact interpersonal tropes (e.g., varieties of fictive or metaphoric kinship) and thus to express social relations that contradict known genealogical facts. The difficulty with the second is that mental models become socially consequential only if they are embodied in perceivable semiotic behaviors; a better analysis of how kinship behaviors are performed and construed in context reveals that much of the complexity of kinship relations derives not from disembodied ideas in the head but from models of social relationship inferrable from text-in-context relations among perceivable signs.

By **kinship behavior** I mean meaningful behaviors *performed* through the use of kinterms, as well as behaviors *construed* through the use of kinterms. The two may be phenomenally quite distinct. A typical example of the first kind is a case where a kinterm occurs in an utterance; here the use of a kinterm is a discursive act that formulates a sketch of social relations that depends on the utterance of the kinterm. In behaviors of the second kind, however, kinterms need not occur in practices that performatively establish kinship relations but do occur in subsequent stretches of activity that seek metasemiotically to construe the first; although practices that perform kinrelations in this sense may be non-linguistic, and phenomenally quite various (e.g., gift giving, divisions of household labor, patterns of inheritance, land ownership, etc.), their status as kinship behaviors derives from the way in which they are construed through discourses of kinship. Thus kinship behavior in my sense includes cases where a kinterm is deployed as a sign-token in interaction, as well as cases in which a kinterm is employed as a metasign grouping together a diversity of other types of significant behaviors. My main focus here is on kinship behaviors of the first type (but see Agha [in press] for discussion of the second).

I argue that any form of kinship behavior that is normalized in the perceptions of language user—whether ‘normal’ because habitual, or ‘normative’ by some codified standard—can be invoked in social interaction in ways that either conform to the norm or trope upon it. Many of the examples I discuss below involve utterances that trope upon genealogical relations. My goal is to clarify the ways in which language users are able to perform and construe such tropes. Simply put, **a tropic use of a kinterm** is an entextualized act in which the semiotic sketch of social relations implemented through the use of the kinterm is non-congruent with a contextual model of social relations independently readable as holding among current participants and referents. Such tropes can also become widely recognized or enregistered (Agha, 2003a, 2003b) as habits of speaking appropriate to certain contexts and thus themselves acquire the status of normalized models, which, in turn, can iteratively be troped upon. A fuller analysis of this dialectic—of processes that normalize tropes, and acts that trope upon norms—reveals that kinterms mark social relations in highly principled ways in social life, even though the notion of a ‘kinship system’ obscures what is principled or systematic about them.

Now, to say that kinterms mark *any* social relations is to make a semiotic claim, one that treats kinterms as signs of something else. There is a simple semiotic theory implicit in the traditional view that kinterms encode genealogical relations. I begin by considering the limitations of this view before proposing alternatives to it.

2. Lexicalism, codes, and the genealogical reduction

The central empirical fact on which all discussions of kinship depend is the existence of a particular class of lexemes, **kinship terms**, or **kinterms**, found in all human languages. The view that kinterms encode genealogical relations rests on three assumptions about the semiotic status of kinterms. The first assumption is that the sign-vehicles that mark relations of kinship are lexical items; second, that the ‘standing for’ relationship between sign and object is usefully described by the metaphor of ‘code’; and third, that the type of relations marked by kinterms are necessarily genealogical relations.

The intuition that kinterms comprise a lexical code for social relations derives from their structural sense properties. Kinterms are lexico-grammatical units of a language, semantically two-place predicates, which denote a relation between two roles. The set of kinterms in a language formulate a space of inter-relationships by virtue of their sense relations to each other. Thus the kinterm *mother* denotes an individual, *y*, who bears a kinrelation to another, *x*, i.e., *mother* (*x*,*y*). The relation has a semantic inverse, which may also be lexicalized as a simple kinterm, i.e., *mother* (*x*,*y*) \rightarrow *child* (*y*,*x*). If the inverse is not lexicalized in the language, it can be characterized as a semantic type through the use of algebraic and logical notation; if the kinterm is not a simple expression (e.g., *great-great-grandmother*) it can be decomposed into simpler units through the same notation. By virtue of these properties kinterms and logical kintypes can be used to locate denotata in a grid of logico-semantic relationships. A genealogical grid becomes a syntagmatic environment for specifying arbitrarily complex kinrelations. All of these features of kinterms—that they are lexically relational, that they comprise a semantic space closed under inversion, that their structural sense is compositional—have tended to imply to many writers that repertoires of kinterms comprise a denotational code autonomous of contextual facts of usage.

Yet taken by themselves the lexical semantics of kinterms also suggest a highly misleading view of how kinterms refer to anything at all. The sheer transparency or ease of reportability of facts of lexical sense obscures the critical role played by co-textual indexicals in anchoring kinterm reference to particular social dyads. Indeed, the relationship denoted by a kinterm can be mapped onto a specific social dyad—i.e., be understood as a relation between *particular* individuals—only if the use of the kinterm token is accompanied by indexical forms which provide directions for finding the referent in relation to the event of speaking. For example, in the case of third-person reference, accompanying deictic expressions occur as modifiers to the kinterm (e.g, *my* mother, *her* mother, *John's mother*, *someone's* mother), formulating directions on how to locate the referent of the expression with varying degrees of deictic selectivity.

If we ignore co-textual indexical formulations of referent, and focus only on matters of lexical sense, it becomes easier to suppose that kinship terms comprise a semantic code—a system of logically structured lexical primes—for characterizing and classifying social relations. The code metaphor suggests that from the semantic space of kinterm denotation—itsself organized around elementary kinrelations, or relations of the semantic type KIN (x,y)—we can reconstruct a space of social relations which, once identified from these lexical labels, can be shown to have some independent organization. Thus, lexical structure encodes social structure. Yet the question of whether such social structure is best characterized in terms of biological facts of procreation and parturition, or modes of genealogical reckoning, or land ownership and other economic relations, or through some combination of these and other factors has remained controversial until today. Such controversies are ultimately unresolvable since all code-based views of kinterms—and independently of whether they favor biological or genealogical reductionism—share a common problem.

Any code-based view of kinterms runs into intractable difficulties with indexically creative uses of language. W. H. R. Rivers (1915) famously used this fact to argue against biological reductionism in favor of a genealogical interpretation of kinterm function. Yet the irony is that the genealogical reductionism he proposed as an alternative is subject to the same difficulty. Rivers argues that if our criterion of correct denotation for *mother* and *father* is the existence of a consanguineal bond between parent and child then this criterion is clearly violated in cases of adoption and other practices where kinship ties are performatively established. He notes that in many societies it is not knowledge of blood relations but the performance of a ceremony that establishes kin relations among persons:

Thus in the Banks Islands in Melanesia the relationship of parent does not come into existence by the facts of procreation and parturition, but it is such acts as the payment of the midwife, the first feeding of the child, or the planting of a tree on the occasion of a birth that determines who are to be the parents of the child for all social purposes...Kinship cannot be determined and defined by consanguinity even among ourselves, still less among other peoples... (p. 700)

Rivers (1915) proposes an alternative criterion, namely that kinship relations are those established through pedigrees:

'Among many peoples, and especially those of rude culture, the knowledge of relationship thus genealogically determined is far more extensive than among ourselves. Pedigrees preserved in the memories of a rude tribe of cannibals may rival, if not surpass, anything which even the most enthusiastic genealogist is capable of carrying in his mind. Among such peoples it is the facts recorded in the pedigree of a

person that largely determines his use of terms of relationship and *regulate all the social functions which the terms connote*. (p. 700; emphases added)

Rivers (1915) uses this argument to propose that the biological conception of kinship ought to be replaced by a genealogical conception. Yet the alternative he proposes is susceptible to the same difficulty, the problem of indexically creative usage. A pedigree is a genre of ethnometapragmatic discourse regimenting discursive events of kinterm usage by linking genealogical facts to proper names, thus anchoring speech-event dependent varieties of deictic kin reference (e.g., 'my father...') to reference by means of relatively event independent referring expressions ('...is Tom Jones'). A pedigree appears to formulate normative denotational criteria on the correctness of many situated acts of kinterm reference. Yet Rivers' assertion that such norms 'regulate *all* the social functions' of kinterms is too strong a claim, one which assumes that all the social functions of kinterm usage depend on acts of genealogically correct reference. Indeed, Rivers is aware that this assumption is *prima facie* incorrect, since in all human societies kinterms are also used metaphorically, in direct contradiction of known genealogical facts. Hence the reduction of kinship to genealogy famously proposed by Rivers faces the awkward problem of requiring the systematic exclusion of metaphoric usage from the domain of study so constituted: "Kinship may be defined as relationship which can be determined and described by means of genealogies...The definition of kinship as genealogical relationship will also exclude the metaphorical sense in which terms of relationship are often used by peoples at all stages of culture." (pp. 700-1)

The genealogical model moves away from biological facts of procreation and parturition to a conception of kinship rooted in cultural belief. The model treats culturally reportable facts of kinrelation—such as those described in pedigrees—as the social facts that kinterms encode.

Yet the difficulties caused by metaphor for a genealogical conception of kinship are entirely parallel to the difficulties posed by adoption for the biological view of kinship: Just as events of performative nomination (e.g., adoption) constitute social ties which contravene facts of biology, the metaphoric uses of kinterm performatively constitute interactional relations inconsistent with known genealogical facts. In both cases, it is the indexically creative uses of language—matters of performativity and metaphor—which constitute the problem.

The attempt to reduce kinship to genealogy requires the exclusion of several kinds of data from theoretical consideration. The reason for the exclusion of metaphoric usage is very simple: Acts of metaphoric kinterm reference are by definition inconsistent with genealogical facts and must be excluded if the genealogical reduction is to go through. More surprising, however, is the relative lack of attention given in this tradition to the use of kinterms to refer to speech participants, such as addressee. This is surprising since if kinterms do mark social relations between individuals they do so most concretely when the persons so related are co-present, as in cases of address. Yet models of kinship that seek to reduce kinship to genealogy have historically accorded centrality to acts of third-person kinterm usage in theorizing the phenomena of kinship, treating acts of kinterm address—the so-called 'vocative' use—as peripheral or secondary in formulating the theory itself.

The genealogical model thus conceives of kinship in a very narrow way. The model treats the lexical sense of kinterms to be the property criterial to the marking of social relations, and genealogical relations to be the only kinds of relations marked. The model is also incomplete since it requires the exclusion of metaphoric usage. Finally, the model gives insufficient attention to the address use of kinterms in formulating its theoretical claims.

I turn now to a discussion of how we may overcome these limitations. I begin with a discussion of the vocative use of kinterms, then turn to matters of so-called metaphoric usage.

3. Kinterm semantics and speech-event indexicality

In anthropological discussions of kinship, a distinction is traditionally drawn between the ‘referential’ or third person use of a kinterm and its ‘vocative’ use. Although the distinction between these two types of usage is important, the terminological opposition between the ‘referential’ and ‘vocative’ use—and, especially, the mutual exclusivity it implies—is entirely misleading. The vocative use is simply a special kind of referring use. It is a usage where *the kinterm refers to addressee*. In other words, the vocative use of the kinterm is not characterized by the absence of referential effects. It consists of a referential effect that links particular values of variables on the functional planes of semantic denotation (referent is kin) and speech-event indexicality (referent is addressee).

Unlike second person pronouns, however, kinterms are neither inherently speech-event indexicals nor specifically addressee-referring forms. Thus the use of the kinterm to refer to addressee requires a distinctive treatment of the kinterm whereby deictic reference to addressee is established by co-occurring indexical cues. The index may be formally segmentable from the kinterm lexeme, whether as an affix or a syntactic pattern, or be constituted by a distinct lexical shape of the kinterm; in the latter case indexical and semantic cues co-occur in the lexical shape itself.

In some languages a marker of vocative case occurs as an affix to the kinterm stem, e.g., Skt. *pita-r* ‘father!’ (vocative), a construction where the word stem denoting the genealogical relation (*pita-*) is formally segmentable from the vocative suffix indexically referring to addressee (*-r*). In other cases a change in lexical shape marks deictic reference to addressee, yielding contrasts where one lexical shape may routinely be understood as an address term (e.g., English *ma!*) and others, while usable for address, are not specifically so understood (*mother*). A third pattern involves the syntactic and prosodic isolation of the kinterm from co-occurring forms, yielding a more configurative pattern of vocative case marking; here, an addressee-referring construal obtains for any lexeme that occurs in this pattern (*Mother/mom/ma, are you ready?*) and contrasts with a third person construal of that lexeme in other patterns. Finally, the kinterm token is often embedded in a sequence of kinesic cues (e.g., eye-gaze, bodily orientation) so that, in the general case, reference to addressee is achieved by a pattern of co-occurring indexical signs, a multi-modal text containing both linguistic and non-linguistic indices.

In considering any such use, the structural sense of the kinterm lexeme must therefore be distinguished from the indexical cues which identify the referent in the instance. Lexically, kinterms are two-place predicates which specify a relation between a denoted kin and an origo or zero-point of reckoning. Thus a kinterm has the semantic structure KIN (x, y), where the x is the origo of reckoning and y is the referent, i.e., KIN ($x_{\text{origo}}, y_{\text{referent}}$). In

the vocative or addressee-referring use, we have a specific alignment of denotational and interactional variables (motivated by the mapping of sense structure onto speech-event indexicality), whereby the referent is understood as the person addressed and the origo ordinarily as speaker, viz., KIN (speaker_{origo}, addressee_{referent}).

Once we attend to the problem of indexical anchoring of reference it is evident that the so-called ‘third person use’—which excludes reference to speech act participants (SAP), i.e., speaker or addressee—also involves an alignment of denotational and interactional variables. The simplest pattern for unambiguous third person reference is the possessor-possessum construction, where both relata are explicitly denoted by noun phrases. In examples like ‘*John’s* / *your* / *my*... mother’ the referent (the mother) is formulated as a non-SAP and the origo of reckoning is the possessor denoted by the adjunct-modifier (*John’s*, *your*, *my*). Calling this type of usage ‘third person reference’ is simply a way of saying that the referent is understood as a non-speech-participant and the origo established by some accompanying form, here the possessor noun phrase, i.e., KIN (possessor_{origo}, non-SAP_{referent}).

The general point is that the referential effects of kinterm usage always involve a particular mapping from semantic denotation (kinrelation) to speech-event variables (interactants and referents of current utterance) that is established by co-textual semiotic cues. The ‘vocative use’ and the ‘third person use’ are both names for entextualized patterns of this kind, the former aligning the kin referred to with addressee, the latter with a non-SAP.

Since kinterm reference involves two semiotic components—semantic denotation and speech-event indexicality—the two may have effects that are relatively independent of each other. For example, a particular act of kinterm reference may be indexically anchored in the interaction in a successful and effective way even though the act is denotationally incorrect. That is, an expression like *John’s sister* may be interactionally successful in communicating information about a particular, nameable woman, even though (as current interlocutors later discover) the woman in question happens not to be John’s sister. Hence the conditions on the *interactional success* and *denotational correctness* of the act of kinterm reference are not the same. The usage is interactionally successful if accompanying indexical cues suffice in the instance to identify a particular referent. It is denotationally correct if the referent thus identified happens to be related to origo in a way consistent with the semantics of the kinterm.

The difference is critical to the tropic use of kinterms. In cases of tropic address, for example, the use of kinterm for addressee may be interactionally successful even though the person in addressee role may be non-kin to speaker, or be a kin, but of a different genealogical type than the one semantically denoted by the kinterm. Patterns of denotationally incorrect reference are often culturally valued and even prescribed under particular interactional conditions. One common reason that denotationally incorrect reference is culturally valued is that such usage implements interactional tropes of ‘voicing’ where the usage is understood as an act of referring from someone else’s point of view, a type of transposed anchoring which, as we shall shortly see, has distinctive sociological effects of its own.

But how are such tropes construed? In the foregoing I have been using the term **co-textual indexical cues** to refer generically to any co-occurring sign—whether linguistic or

non-linguistic—which clarifies features of context, including the social contours of the encounter itself. The act of construing kinterm reference therefore has a text-in-context organization: Such acts always occur under conditions where aspects of the social situation are already understood from accompanying semiotic activity. The semantics of the kinterm simply imposes a further semiotic sketch on the sense of social occasion established by co-textual indexical cues. The co-textual sketch may or may not be congruent with the one performed through the kinterm; correspondingly, the overall construal may suggest that the sketch performed through the kinterm token ‘literally’ fits its co-text, or effectively transforms it through an interactional trope.

One aspect of the social occasion indexically presupposed from the readable co(n)text is an emergent **model of role inhabitation**, namely a semiotically mediated sketch of who is speaking to whom—including an understanding of social relations between persons in role speaker and addressee—by participants themselves. For example, the referential interpretation of an utterance like ‘Mommy told you not to do that’ can vary by facts of role inhabitation as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Role inhabitation and referential gloss: the use of ‘mommy’ to refer to speaker

<i>Role inhabitation</i>	<i>Utterance</i>	<i>Referential gloss</i>
$\left\{ \begin{array}{cc} S & A \\ (a) \text{ aunt} & \text{child} \\ (b) \text{ mother} & \text{child} \end{array} \right\}$	$+ \text{ ‘...’ } \rightarrow$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} (a) \text{ ‘your mother told you not to do that’} \\ (b) \text{ ‘I told you not to do that’} \end{array} \right\}$
\uparrow <p>‘Mommy told you not to do that’</p>		

In case (a), where an aunt (or other caregiver) tells a child ‘Mommy told you not to do that,’ the utterance is construable as ‘*your mother* told you not to do that’; here the act of reference to an absent parent is voiced from the perspective of the child addressed i.e., KIN (addressee_{origo}, non-SAP_{referent}). But if, as in (b), the utterance is produced by a mother speaking to her child—a type of usage common in the register of ‘motherese’—the utterance conveys the meaning ‘*I* (already) told you not to do that’; here the origo is again the child addressed but the referent is the speaker, viz., KIN (addressee_{origo}, speaker_{referent}).

Observe however that in glossing such utterances as referential tropes we are not talking about the meaning of words, or even of sentences, but of the cumulative effects of text-patterns containing these utterances. For example, in Table 1 (b), a particular type of role alignment, namely *that a mother is speaking to her child*, must be established independently of the utterance of the kinterm in order for the kinterm to be construed tropically as referring to self. Languages differ in the range of textualized role alignments with which such tropic effects can be performed felicitously in discourse, as well as in the range of speech participants to which reference is possible through such tropes.

In a language like Vietnamese, such tropes are not only ubiquitous in everyday usage but are permitted with a much wider range of participation frameworks than in English. For example, the Vietnamese sentence in Table 2, *mẹ đã mua cho bố cái mũ hôm qua rồi* ‘Mother already bought the hat for father yesterday,’ can be interpreted in one of seven different ways depending on co-textually mediated facts of role inhabitation.

Table 2. Co(n)textualized construals of Vietnamese kinterm usage

I. Role inhabitation		II. Utterance	III. Referential gloss
S	A		
(a) mother	father	+ '.....' →	(a) 'I already bought the hat for <i>you</i> yesterday.'
(b) father	mother		(b) 'You already bought the hat for <i>me</i> ...'
(c) mother	child		(c) 'I already bought the hat for father ...'
(d) father	child		(d) 'Mother already bought the hat for <i>me</i> ...'
(e) child	mother		(e) 'You already bought the hat for father ...'
(f) child	father		(f) 'Mother already bought the hat for <i>you</i>'
(g) child	child		(g) 'Mother already bought the hat for father ...'
mẹ đã mua cho bố cái mũ hôm qua rồi mother PST buy for father CL hat day past already			'Mother already bought the hat for father yesterday.'

(Source: Luong, 1990: 11-12)

If the parents are speaking to each other, as in (a) and (b), the kinterms *mẹ* 'mother' and *bố* 'father' are co(n)textually understood as referring to speech participants; both utterances-in-context may be glossed by using first and second person pronouns in place of kinterms, as shown in column III. If a parent is speaking to a child, as in (c)-(d), a first person pronoun may be used to gloss a kinterm, but only the one denoting the parent in speaker role. Similarly, if a child is speaking to a parent, as in (e)-(f), a second person pronoun may be used to gloss the kinterm denoting the parent addressed. The pattern of pronominal substitution in glosses merely reflects facts of role inhabitation. Hence if two children are speaking about their parents (in their absence) to each other, as in (g), the kin referred to are understood as non-participants, a usage best glossed in English with the third person kinterms 'mother' and 'father.'

It is very important to note that the referential glosses in Table 2 are *not glosses of the Vietnamese sentence alone* (since we have one sentence, but seven glosses), but of effects projected by the utterance of a sentence-token in a readable surround. In each case the semantic content of the utterance along with contextually readable—or co-textual—facts of role inhabitation yields a (default) referential gloss as a cumulative result. The sign-structure that motivates the gloss is partly linguistic, partly non-linguistic. The glosses therefore represent construals of a textualized multi-modal configuration of signs, comprised not only of the utterance but of the set of diverse semiotic cues (including visual cues) that identify the social persons in role speaker and addressee *independently of the use of the kinterm*. For example, in case (d) the co(n)textually readable fact that the person speaking is the father of the person addressed motivates the construal that the kinterm *bố* 'father' is here a speaker-referring expression, a construal rendered in the English gloss by the use of the pronoun 'me' in the syntactic slot corresponding to 'father'. Put differently, if the Vietnamese sentence *mẹ đã mua cho bố cái mũ hôm qua rồi* is presented to a native speaker out of context, the only English gloss likely to be elicited is 'mother already brought the hat for father yesterday,' namely the gloss corresponding to case (g), the case where sentence-internal semantic roles (*mother* doing something for *father*) are maximally independent of contextual interactional roles (*child* speaking to *child*).

4. Normalized tropes

The usages considered in Table 2 are denotational tropes in the sense that they employ third person nouns (rather than first and second person pronouns) for acts of referring to speech participants. At the same time, the usages are culturally valued in acts of referring where interlocutors have kinrelations to each other. In this sense, the usages in (a)-(f) constitute a set of **normalized tropes**, usages that are denotationally anomalous but interactionally felicitous under certain conditions of role inhabitance (here, encounters between kin).

It is not that Vietnamese lacks pronouns. Rather, in acts of referring to co-present kin, pronouns are normatively avoided in Vietnamese (as in many Asian languages) and kinterms are normatively preferred. The use of pronouns, though possible, is interactionally marked. For example switching to pronouns is frequently a strategy for marking disapprobation. In the case in (1), a north Vietnamese grandmother has been speaking to her grandchild using the kinterms *bà* ‘grandmother’ and *con* ‘child’ for self- and other-reference in preceding discourse. In the text-segment below, she switches to the personal pronouns *mày* ‘thou/thee’ and *tao* ‘I/me’.

(1) (Luong, 1990: 128-9)

tao báo **mày** đi tìm cho **tao** cái kéo trong bếp mà **mày** còn ngồi đấy à?

I tell you go find for me CL scissors in kitchen but you still sit there INT

‘I have told you to look for a pair of scissors for me in the kitchen. Why are you still sitting there?’

The shift in denotational categories—from kinterms in preceding discourse to pronouns in the current segment—marks a temporary suspension of the invocation of kinrelations in acts of reference. This constitutes a recognizable shift in interactional stance, namely the suspension of affective/solidary relations between speaker and addressee maintained by the earlier pattern of kinrelational reference. In the case at hand, the speaker’s shift to pronouns is a way of marking exasperation.

In contrast, in the usages in Table 2, we see a systematic avoidance of pronominal use in favor of kinterm-based reference to speech participants. Since pronouns are available for reference to speech participants, these uses of kinterms constitute a series of interactional tropes formulated through the act of referring. A pervasive trope in the text-patterns in Table 2 is the **person trope**, namely the use of a third person noun (the kinterm) for first and second person reference. Indeed, in all cases other than (g), one or both kinterms are construed as involving a person trope. These effects depend, in particular, on the fact that the use of the kinterm is understood as an act of **transposed reference**, a usage that voices reference from non-speaker origo, i.e., from the standpoint of someone other than speaker. In case (c), for instance, the speaker uses the form ‘mother’ to refer to herself in speaking to her child, thus voicing the act of reference from the standpoint of the child. The father’s self-reference in (d) is parallel in voicing effect, i.e., ‘for [your] father’ = ‘for me’. Moreover in both cases the transposed origo of reference, the child, happens to be a participant in the interaction.

But in cases (a) and (b) in Table 2, the transposed origo is not a speech participant. Here, the usages recenter address to child-origo simply by presupposing the existence of a child—someone *for whom* speaker and addressee are mother and father—although no child is present as a speech participant (as indicated in column I). Cases of transposed

reference therefore differ in whether the indexically formulated zero-point of referential reckoning is itself a speech participant. Let us consider this contrast in more detail.

Address Inversion

A common type of transposed reference is the case of **transposition of origo to addressee**. In this case, the speaker employs a referring expression for self which the addressee would normally use in referring to speaker. The usage has been termed **address inversion** in the kinship literature since the act of reference by speaker is anchored to the standpoint of addressee rather than self, thus appearing to invert the origo of referential reckoning with respect to the interactional frame.

We have already seen examples of address inversion in English (Table 1, (b)) and in Vietnamese (Table 2, (c)-(d)). Let us now consider the Japanese cases in Table 3.

Table 3. Address inversion in Japanese: referring to self as addressee would or should

<i>Role inhabitance</i>		<i>Utterance</i>	<i>Referential effects</i>	
S	A	<i>kinterm used</i>	<i>referent</i>	<i>origo of reference</i>
(a) father	child	Otō-san ‘father-HON’	speaker	addressee
(b) uncle	niece	Oji-san ‘uncle-HON’	speaker	addressee
(c) grandfather	grandchild	Oji-san ‘grandfather-HON’	speaker	addressee
(d) grandmother	grandchild	Obā-san ‘grandmother-HON’	speaker	addressee

(Source: Suzuki, 1984)

In all four cases the act of referring transposes origo of reference to addressee (last column), and the presence of the honorific suffix *-san* (middle column) makes the voicing structure quite explicit. In case (a), a father speaking to his child uses the kinterm *Otō-san* ‘father (H)’ to refer to self. Since deference to self is considered inappropriate in Japanese (as in other languages), the choice of *honorific* kinterm to refer to self makes it clear that the speaker is referring to self as the child-addressee would. Thus the referent is speaker and the origo of reference is addressee. Note that the centering of self-reference to addressee-origo is preserved not only at the level of lexeme denotation (i.e., it is the child addressed *for whom* speaker is ‘father’) but also at the level of deference indexicality (i.e., it is the child who would use the honorific *-san* to index deference to father). The other examples shown are exactly parallel in this regard; they differ in presupposed role configurations, however, thus illustrating something of the range of social dyads for which tropes of this type are normalized patterns of speaking.

Recentered address

A more general type of transposition with kinterms is the trope of **recentering of origo** where the choice of kinterm transposes origo to some culturally appropriate zero-point other than speaker. Unlike cases of inversion, where the zero-point of reckoning is transposed to addressee (and the referent understood as speaker), cases of recentered address are cases where the origo of reference is not a speech participant (and the referent is the addressee). Recentered address invokes as origo a kinposition specifically distinct from either interlocutor, thus performatively anchoring the current interaction to social positions external to it.

Table 4. Recentered affinal address in Bengali: addressing others as someone else would

Role inhabitance		Utterance	Referential effects	
S	A	kinterm used	referent	origo of reference
(a) H	WF/WM	baba ‘father’ / ma ‘mother’	addressee	speaker’s spouse
(b) H	WB/WZ	dada ‘elder brother’ / didi ‘elder sister’	addressee	speaker’s spouse
(c) W	HM	ma ‘mother’	addressee	speaker’s spouse
(d) W	HF/HeB	--		
(e) W	HyB/HZ	thakur po /jhi ‘grandpa’s son/ daughter’	addressee	speaker’s child

(Source: Das, 1968) All four cases employ consanguineal terms for affinal address, and transpose origo to a kinposition other than speaker. Das reports that the entire range of genealogical tropes in (a)-(e) occur normatively in ‘traditional’ or ‘rural’ Bengali usage; departures from the norm (e.g., deploying some or none) are indexical of various modern-urban identities.

Consider the Bengali examples of recentered affinal address in Table 4. In (a)-(b), a husband addresses his wife’s relatives using the forms that she would use for them. Since the wife is related to these individuals by consanguineal bonds the husband’s usage treats consanguineal relations (between his wife and her kin) as a model for affinal relations (between himself and his in-laws).

In (c), the wife employs a similar consanguineal trope in addressing her husband’s mother; she addresses her as *ma*, just as her husband would. The case in (d) illustrates a pattern of avoidance. In traditional families the wife has strict avoidance relations with husband’s father and elder brother; she does not normatively address them at all. Since consanguineal tropes are not symmetric along the axis of gender [cf. (a)-(b) vs. (c)-(e)], differences in the range of affines to which they apply is itself an index of speaker gender.

The case in (e) is a more laminated trope. In addressing husband’s sister or younger brother (particularly if they are senior in age to her) the forms employed by the wife are descriptive appellations that anchor denotation to the standpoint of her child. Thus, in referring to her husband’s younger brother as *thakur po* ‘grandpa’s son,’ or to husband’s sister as *thakur jhi* ‘grandpa’s daughter’ a woman voices the act of referring from the standpoint of her child, the individual for whom these persons are indeed the son and daughter of a grandparent. However the woman’s stance is also partially preserved as distinct from the child’s. The actual kinterms that her child would use for these individuals are *kaka* ‘uncle’ and *pisi* ‘aunt’. Since the use by a woman of these forms for same-generational affines would make her child-like, the woman employs denotationally equivalent descriptive appellations (‘grandpa’s son,’ ‘grandpa’s daughter’). The usage centers origo to child at the level of denotational content but not at the level of lexical form. The partial centering to child origo highlights the fact that the speaker is a child-giver to the affinal group (and thus has status entitlements within the group) without rendering her childlike in relation to the affines addressed in the instance.

Observe that in all these cases a person addresses an affine by employing kinterms *other than* those denoting true genealogical relations between speaker and addressee. Yet actual genealogical relations are neither forgotten nor obscured. Rather, true genealogical relations between speaker and addressee are known by all concerned, and *such knowledge is one of the conditions of the construability of the trope*. The utterance formulates a

framework of kinreckoning which is tropic in relation to its readable context (one which treats affinal bonds in consanguineal terms), whether by inhabiting the standpoint of a spouse (a kincategory having consanguineal links to the affine addressed) or by invoking entitlements deriving from having borne a child (a kincategory having consanguineal links to both the affine addressed and to speaker).

Recentered address occurs in Japanese as well though it involves a different norm of transposition: here the origo of reference is transposed not to an affine but to the juniormost kinposition within the family. In example (a) in Table 5 a wife addresses her husband as ‘father,’ thus centering reference with respect to their son. In (b) a speaker addresses his father as ‘grandfather’ by centering address to his son (addressee’s grandson). In (c) a mother addresses her son as ‘big brother’ thus centering address to addressee’s younger brother.

Table 5. Address recentering in Japanese

Role inhabitance		Utterance	Referential effects	
	S A	kinterm used	referent	origo of reference
(a)	W H	Otō-san ‘father-HON’	addressee	speaker’s son [=addressee’s son]
(b)	F FF	Ojī-san ‘grandfather-HON’	addressee	speaker’s son [=addressee’s grandson]
(c)	M S	Onī-chan ‘big brother-DIM’	addressee	speaker’s youngest son [=addressee’s younger brother]

(Source: Suzuki, 1984)

The norm of transposing origo to junior kinposition entails that the referent is raised to a kinposition higher than his/her actual relation to speaker along dimensions such as relative age and generation. Insofar as the usage performs both speaker-lowering and referent-raising the trope is understood as a trope of deference. Yet the type of deference here takes the invocation of status hierarchies within the family as the model of performed relative status, a type of deference quite distinct from the kind implemented by an honorific register of lexemes. Moreover the two systems of deference marking can be realized in the kinterm in a formally segmentable way. Thus in the case of mother speaking to son in (c), where the addressee is of lower kin status than speaker, the trope of addressee-raising consists of the mother referring to her son as his younger brother would (i.e., as *Onī*- ‘big brother’) thus marking his higher status relative to a younger sibling; but by using the diminutive *-chan*, which marks endearment rather than respect (and which contrasts with the honorific *-san*, the form that a younger sibling would use), the mother partially preserves a centering of stance to her own standpoint.

Both the pattern of recentering to junior kinposition and the use of diminutive suffixes which partially preserve centering to speaker origo are extended in Japanese to other person-referring forms as well. In modern-urban usage, the pattern extends to the use of the so-called first-person pronoun *boku* ‘I’. Thus a parent may address a son as ‘I’:

- (2) ...young couples in Japan these days often call their only son or their youngest son by the first-person pronoun *boku* ‘I’. They sometimes even call him *boku-chan*, adding the diminutive suffix *-chan* as though *boku* were a given name. For example, a mother might say to her son, *Boku, hayaku irasshai*, lit., ‘Me, come here quickly’ or *Boku-chan kore hoshii n deshō*, lit. ‘Me+dim. wants this, I suppose?’ When she speaks in this way, she is

thinking of the boy as he would be called if viewed from the position of the youngest member of the family, in this case the boy himself. (Suzuki, 1984: 146)

In this type of case, the origo of reference is transposed to the juniormost kinposition, which coincides with the referent himself (since he is the youngest or only child). The mother addresses the boy as he would refer to self (i.e., *boku* 'I'). However, the mother's stance is partially superimposed on the boy's since the diminutive *-chan* indexes the mother's affective stance towards her son. Thus cases of recentering may themselves involve subtle composite effects as before, such as the preservation of more than one speech-event origo, here the concurrent expression of addressee-origo reference (*boku*) and speaker-origo intimacy (*-chan*) towards addressee/referent.

Let us now consider cases of kinterm address where current interlocutors are known to have no kinrelations to each other.

Metaphoric kinship

I use the term **metaphoric kinship** to describe cases where the persons performatively related to each other through the use of kinterms are known to be non-kin. The term **fictive kinship** is also used to describe this type of case, though the latter term is sometimes used more inclusively to cover tropes involving kin as well (such as cases of inversion and recentering). I use the term metaphoric kinship only for tropes involving genealogical non-kin.

Acts of establishing metaphoric kinship occur in every known society though there are important cross-cultural differences in their ubiquity and institutionalization, as well as in the range of kinterms for which, and in the settings in which, such usages are judged appropriate. Cases of this kind differ from mistakes or confusions about genealogical ties in the following way: In cases of metaphoric kinterm usage, the lack of genealogical relations between origo and referent is contextually known and acknowledged by all concerned at the time of utterance. Such usages reset the parameters of the interaction by tropically likening relations between non-kin to those between kin. Acts establishing metaphoric kinship, or fictive kinship among non-kin, are quite diverse in kind, varying from the occasional use of terms like *father* to address an elderly stranger encountered on the street, to more institution-specific cases, as in the use of the same term for a priest.

In some cases, particular forms of kinterm address to non-kin are relatively routinized, whether in relations of **ritual kinship** with specific, known individuals, or in the more generalized treatment of entire classes of non-kin as ritual kin. In the case of the ritual kinship complex called *Compadrazgo* in Latin America, some type of ceremonial 'baptismal' event is generally necessary as a causal pre-requisite on the establishment of the ritual tie; the tie connects specific, known individuals all of whom are generally co-present at the baptismal event. Once effectively established, the ritual tie connects persons in three social positions (the child, the child's parents, a sponsor or sponsors who act as co-parents) to each other, and thus involves three sets of social relations, each normatively linked to distinct types of rights and duties, some reciprocal, some not.

A more generalized pattern occurs in Bengali village society, a case where virtually every co-resident may have ritual kinrelations to every other (e.g., a father's friend addressed as *uncle*, a friend's daughter as *neice*). Frequently a distinctive metapragmatic terminology is employed in introducing such relations; in the Bengali case the

metapragmatic descriptor *gram samparke* ‘by the relation in the village’ is used to introduce ritual but not genealogical kin. In such cases persons are linked together by two kinds of social networks, one consisting of genealogical kinrelations, the other involving generalized but relatively routinized relations of ritual kinship, with membership in the latter networks involving some of the duties, rights and obligations accruing to membership in the former.

Summary of tropes discussed

The patterns of kinterm reference discussed so far are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Tropes of kinterm address and self-reference

<i>I. Presupposed role configuration</i>	<i>II. Utterance characteristics</i>	<i>III. Textualized interactional effect</i>	<i>IV. Type of address</i>
(a) S & A non-kin	denotes kinrelation	likens non-kin to kin	metaphoric
(b) S & A kin	denotes a kinrelation other than S's relation to A	transposes origo of reference to non-speaker	recentered
(c) S & A kin	denotes A's kinrelation to S	transposes KIN (x, y) relation to A-origo, S-referent	‘inverted’; refers to self from A's standpoint
(d) S & A kin	denotes S's kinrelation to A	anchors KIN (x, y) relation to S-origo and A-referent	‘literal’

It should be clear that in all four cases the interactional effects listed in the table (column III) can be recognized only if the actual kinrelations between persons currently in role speaker and addressee (column I) are independently known (i.e., semiotically readable in context) and the characteristics of utterance (column II) can be evaluated in relation to these indexical presuppositions. The occurrence of the utterance itself indexically formulates a sketch of kinrelations superimposed upon these independently known facts and evaluated in relation to them. In case (a), the utterance denotes a kinrelation even though S and A are non-kin; the act metaphorically imposes a social relationship not otherwise holding between them, likening the two to kin. In (b), the act denotes a kinrelation other than speaker's relation to addressee, exhibiting recentered address. In (c), the relation is centered with addressee as zero-point of reckoning. In one important sense this is not a case of address at all: the referent is speaker not addressee. But the act of self-reference depends upon an implicit trope of voiced address since it uses precisely the form which interlocutor would use in addressing speaker.

The case of ‘literal’ address in (d) is the special case where the entailments of utterance are congruent with contextually known facts. The traditional approach to this special case has treated such emergent facts of co-textual congruence as a ‘coding’ relation between lexeme and social reality. The so-called ‘literal’ use is amenable to this

simplification only because the entailments of the utterance are congruent with independently given co-textual presuppositions. Hence the irony of the ‘coding’ view is that it misrecognizes the congruence of co-occurring semiotic cues as a relationship of decontextualized denotation between lexemes and social ‘reality,’ and treats the latter as an order of social relations existing independently of events of semiosis even though it is only revealed through them. In contrast, in all the other cases shown in the table the effects projected by the utterance are, by degrees, inconsistent with co-textually readable facts of role configuration so that features of the utterance reset the parameters of the social occasion independently given in systematic ways.

5. Renormalization and standards

The above considerations show that to speak of kinterms as markers of social relations requires that we move beyond a lexeme-based perspective on language use (and the static conception of social reality that it implies) to a consideration of dynamic, multi-modal patterns of semiotic activity involving both linguistic and non-linguistic signs. It will be evident that the choice and construal of a kinterm usage *always* depends on the readability of the co(n)text of utterance by interlocutors. Any particular usage employs some semiotically readable and hence indexically presupposable facts of role inhabitation as the basis for an act of referring; the question of whether the act is literal or tropic depends on the congruence, or lack thereof, of the effects indexed by the utterance and the relations given independently of it. In the absence of such a perspective on usage we cannot distinguish the cases shown in Table 6 from each other.

Any of the patterns in Table 6 can, moreover, be re-analyzed reflexively in a variety of ways. For example, the range of kinterms used for fictive address—cases (a), (b) and (c)—can become expanded or narrowed relative to further cultural processes; the pattern may be extended from acts of address to third-person reference, or vice versa; or extended from the use of kinterms to that of other expressions (such as titles), or vice versa; or normalized to patterns of interactional text where a single turn-contribution must normatively be followed by a reciprocal trope from interlocutor (see Agha, in press).

In some cases a series of tropic extensions and reanalyses result in the establishment of an institutionalized form of social relations having many local variants whose interconnectedness only becomes clear if we consider the historical processes that connects them to each other. For instance, the *Compadrazgo* ritual complex in Latin America is historically linked to earlier traditions in Medieval European Catholicism by processes of circulation and reflexive reanalysis on a large sociohistorical scale, elements of which can be reconstructed as a historical series of kinship tropes variously institutionalized in systems of European feudalism, property ownership, inheritance, clan affiliation, relations between serfs and kings, and others (Mintz and Wolf, 1967).

Standardizing social realities

Practices of literal reference (whether to addressee or an absent third party) can also be institutionalized in a variety of ways. Acts of third person reference can be **standardized**, or linked to social standards, so that actual instances of referring must conform to specific facts of biological, genealogical or classificatory kinship and the congruence between the act and the standard treated as a normative criterion of ‘literal’ reference.

Arrangements of this type are frequently important to social occasions in which person give pedigrees, state marriage restrictions, rules of inheritance, and the like. The states of affairs denoted in such accounts are sometimes reified as 'social structure.' Yet all we have is a reflexive practice that employs patterns of third person kinterm usage to describe norms of social conduct (marriage, inheritance, etc.). It is not just that these norms can be broken. The larger point is that the third person use of kinterms is of no special interest—presents no privileged entry into—the range of social relations mediated through the use of kinterms. We might say that the traditional approach makes a fetish of a narrow swatch of data. But it also fails to grasp the social character of practices in which such discourses are produced and become available as data.

Once we begin to pay attention to the event-structure of acts that seek to standardize social realities it becomes evident that some among these events formulate authoritative reflexive models of *other* social events, even *all* events of a certain type, such as marrying or inheriting. In some cases discourses of this type employ nomic statements to formulate universal standards, that is, employ utterance-types in which the absence of deictic selectivity formulates regulative norms as law-like principles applying to all social persons in all times and places. Such discourses formulate 'jural' or legal standards of kinship behavior. The articulation of such reflexive frameworks subserves a highly specific type of social function, the so-called 'official function of kinship' (Bourdieu 1990). Such acts tend to take an exemplary form in specific scenarios of interaction, such as ritual occasions which reproduce normative social arrangements; or family practices that socialize children to what 'our culture' really is; or the habitual practices of those (whether individuals or institutions) who by virtue of their higher standing within the system of extant normative arrangements appear entitled to propose that normative standards of this type are, in fact, features of social reality itself, as it now actually exists, or always has existed, or is predestined by cosmological arrangements always so to remain.

In other cases, such discourse seek to describe remote regions of space and time in order to transform the here-and-now; such discourses are more vividly 'rhetorical' in perceived effect. Thus a genealogical reconstruction of the past may serve many present-day purposes for its users; for example, to mobilize certain people to act together as a group, as in contexts of feudal conflict; or to lay a present-day claim to property which is rooted in the past, as in disputes about inheritance. Genealogical metadiscourses involving kinterms are not neutral representations of a social reality that exists independently of them but performative constructions of the past that frequently seek to naturalize present-day relationships. Their jural aspect is unavoidably rhetorical in consequence, even when (perhaps especially when) events of their telling and re-telling become sufficiently alike that the behaviors they model are no longer contested, and the discourses themselves no longer perceived as rhetorical by those grouped by them.

Explicitly codified standards—whether they are standards of literal or fictive usage—tend to furnish a particularly rigid sense of norms of conduct. But a more pervasive type of baseline consists merely of facts of routinization or social habit.

Habitual vs. occasional use

I have been arguing that tropic uses of kinterms are cases where performed effects are partly non-congruent with presupposed facts of role inhabitation and with norms that furnish default modes of engagement among these roles. Such non-congruence resets the

parameters of the current interaction by formulating an utterance-mediated sketch of social relations that effectively transforms social relations independently known to exist among the relevant roles. Of course, particular varieties of tropic usage may themselves become highly routinized and even normatively appropriate to particular frameworks of role inhabitation (even though the forms that implement them are denotationally ‘incorrect’); one type of tropic usage may employ another type as a model; or a usage may be recognizably inappropriate to the current interaction, but used nonetheless for occasion-dependent special effects.

For example Suzuki (1984) observes that literal kinterm address in Japanese is generally appropriate only when addressee is of higher age or generational status; to persons of younger or lower generation, pronouns or personal names are the preferred address forms. However, kinterms may be used for a young stranger with affectively charged force:

- (3) Suppose one Sunday a little girl in a park is found lost and crying, unable to find her parents. If an adult happens to pass by, what will he or she say to the girl? It would be quite natural for the passerby to say, ‘Don’t cry. What’s *Onēchan*’s [‘Big Sister’s’] name? Who was *Onēchan* with? If the child is a boy, *Onēchan* will be replaced by *Onīchan* ‘Big Brother.’ This same adult, referring to himself or herself, will use *Obasan* ‘Aunt,’ *Oni’san* ‘Older Brother’ etc., depending on his or her own age and sex, as in ‘*Obasan* will find *Onēchan*’s papa’. (1984, p. 136)

The use of *Onēchan* ‘Big Sister’ for the little girl is an instance of metaphoric recentered address; it is metaphoric because she is non-kin to speaker, recentered because it’s origo is a hypothetical younger brother (and not speaker). The use of *Obasan* ‘Aunt’ for self is an instance of metaphoric address inversion, a usage which employs a kinterm for self-reference which would be used by a niece-addressee; hence the current usage likens the (non-kin) addressed to a niece. Both tropes are affectively charged. The recentering of address to a younger brother formulates the girl found lost and crying within a family structure; and the act of address inversion affectively formulates the girl as a niece to speaker, as belonging to speaker’s family in particular, performing speaker’s affective concern in the here-and-now of speaking. The construal of such indexically creative usages depends on familiarity with the normalized values of address recentering and inversion; and the affective meaning depends on the superposition of the sketch of fictive relations on a scenario of role inhabitation in which the fact that the addressee is a lost child plays a critical role.

In addressing kin in Hindi, some relatively non-routinized usages also occur in performing relatively stark affective displays. For example, although tropes that raise children by one or more generation are normatively avoided, they readily occur in acts of scolding:

- (4) ...a parent may show displeasure with a child who is behaving too independently or is bossing others about by addressing him or her as *tāū* (FeB), *bābbā* (FF), *dāddī* (FM). Such usages are occasional and situationally determined...They are unlikely to be used on a regular basis for ordinary address. (Vatuk, 1982, p. 77)

Observe that Vatuk’s description of these cases employs metapragmatic descriptions of the readable surround (‘behaving too independently,’ ‘bossing others’) in the very course of characterizing patterns of use. But even from the point of view of interlocutors,

the intelligibility, felicity and ratifiability of a usage depends on the readability of the co(n)text of usage.

It is worth emphasizing finally that we are not talking about the ‘meaning’ of the kinterm in any of the above cases. We are concerned rather with the felicity or success with which the semantic properties of a kinterm may be superimposed on the semiotically readable features of its co(n)text of occurrence, with some particular performed consequence.

7. Society-internal variation

We have seen that norms of many kinds can co-exist with each other even within the same society. Hence to speak of such norms as comprising the ‘Bengali system’ or the ‘Japanese system’ is a vast and wholly unnecessary simplification.

Norms of appropriate use themselves have an asymmetric social distribution and such variation is culturally significant. In saying that such norms exist in a society we are observing merely that such patterns of address are attested for some social domain of users, that they are recognized as patterns and, in the more elaborate cases, that certain stereotypic values are assigned to them. But even when such values are conceptualized in normative terms and described as standards of ‘correct’ behavior, actual behavior may depart from these patterns. Moreover, what counts as a departure-from-norm for one social group may be reanalyzed as a contrastive norm for another social groups.

In cases of recentered address an important dimension of society-internal variation concerns the type of kinposition to which the origo of reference is normally transposed. The cases of Japanese recentering noted above involve transposition to a junior kinposition, prototypically youngest son. However, social differences in the type of origo performed, and address term used, have also been reported in the literature; these appear to be linked to schemas of group differentiation. The tendency to anchor origo to a junior kinposition is reportedly widespread in urban middle class address. Fischer observes that transposition to senior origo was reported to occur in rural settings but was already regarded as ‘old fashioned’ at the time of writing (Fischer, 1964, p. 122). In the Bengali examples, transposition to speaker’s spouse (or, in the relevant case, speaker’s child) has long been attested as a routinized norm in rural usage. But the wife’s avoidance of father-in-law and brother-in-law (Table 4) was already a pattern increasingly under pressure from the growth of female education, movements for social reform and the influence of city life at the time it was recorded by Das (1968, p. 23).

We also find that distinct patterns of tropic use are sometimes routinized in different families in ways that index differences in family circumstances. Sylvia Vatuk’s study of Hindi kinterm address records a number of patterns of recentering in address to senior kin within extended families (Table 7). The major pattern—the pattern common to all cases—is that the origo of reference is raised one generation above speaker, and the referent thereby downshifted in generational terms. Thus grandparents are addressed with parental terms and actual parents with terms appropriate for more junior kin. However, both the choice of kinterm and the pattern of downshifting reflect sensitivity to additional contextual variables, such as patterns of co-residence, composition of the household, and urban vs. small town locale. The three cases summarized in the table involve three actual families. In all cases the speaker is a child. In cases 1 and 3 the child resides in an agnatic

extended family household; in case 2, in an extended family household headed by mother's father. In case 1 the residential locale a small town, in case 2 a city.

Table 7. Address recentering in Hindi

<i>Speaker's genealogical relation to addressee</i>	<i>Form used for address</i>	<i>Transposition of origo to:</i>
Case 1: residence in extended agnatic household (small town)		
(1a) grandfather (FF)	pitāji 'father'	speaker's F/FB/FZ
(1b) grandmother (FM)	mā 'mother'	
(1c) father	bhāisahab 'elder brother'	speaker's FyB/FZ
(1d) mother	bhābi 'brother's wife'	
Case 2: uxorilocal residence (urban)		
(2a) grandfather (MF)	pitāji 'father'	speaker's MB/MZ
(2b) grandmother (MM)	ammāji 'mother'	
(2c) father	pāppāji 'papa' [<i>< Eng.</i>]	speaker (anglicized)
(2d) mother	mammī 'mummy' [<i>< Eng.</i>]	
Case 3: residence in agnatic household including FeB's family		
(3a) grandfather (FF)	pitāji 'father'	speaker's F/FB/FZ
(3b) grandmother (FM)	mā 'mother'	
(3c) mother	cācī 'aunt (FyBW)'	speaker's FeBS/FeBD
(3d) aunt (FeBW)	mammī 'mummy' [<i>< Eng.</i>]	
(3e) father	bāpūjī 'father'	speaker
(3f) uncle (FeB)	tāūjī 'uncle (FeB)'	
(Source: Vatuk, 1982)		

(Source: Vatuk, 1982)

Paternal kinterms are used to address grandparents in all three cases. Yet the genealogical trope is cross-cut by, and thus given further structure by, tropes sensitive to patterns of co-residence: paternal kinterms are used to address *father's* parents when residence is patrilocal as in (1a-b) and (3a-b), and *mother's* parents when residence is uxorilocal as in (2a-b). In both cases a trope of parental address is laminated upon a trope of deference to the highest ranked members of the extended residential family.

The choice of address terms for the parents themselves varies considerably across these cases, involving a number of secondary tropes. In some cases parents are addressed with terms derived from English, (2c-d), a usage characteristic of urban/modern identities (and independent of patterns of co-residence). In some of the other cases the kinterm used for parental address denotes the 'wrong' genealogical category, i.e., not a parent, but a sibling, (1c), a sibling's spouse, (1d), or a junior aunt, (3c). All of these are tropes of re-centering to non-speaker origo, but the choice of origo is sensitive to further contextual factors.

In case 1, ego is a young Brahmin girl who has been raised in an extended family headed by paternal grandfather; the residential group includes several of her father's unmarried brothers and sisters. Thus when the girl addresses her parents as 'elder brother' and 'brother's wife', (1c-d), the pattern of recentered address treats her paternal uncles and aunts as origo of reference.

In case 3 ego is a young boy living in an extended family household which includes his father's elder brother's family. Paternal grandparents are addressed as in case 1 by

parental terms, thus transposing origo of reference to father or father's siblings; but in addressing women in the first ascending generation, the boy centers address to his FeB's children. The two usages are not wholly inconsistent since the fact that FeB is higher in rank than F entails that FeB's children are higher in rank than ego; both cases therefore involve shifting to a higher status zero-point of reckoning. Since the household is agnatic and kin relations are reckoned through the male line, the child emphasizes true genealogical relations with father and paternal uncle (here preserving agnatic reckoning as the basis of literal usage); but in addressing mother and aunt, both of whom have entered the agnatic household through marriage, the child employs kinterms which his older paternal cousins would use for them (here preserving agnatic reckoning as the basis of tropes), addressing his mother as 'aunt' and aunt as 'mother.'

In all these cases, the origo of reference is transposed to a senior kinposition (e.g., ego's uncle, ego's older cousins). As a result the terms used in address appear to downshift the referent in genealogical terms (e.g., grandfather addressed as 'father,' father as 'brother'). However such tropes are performed only in acts of address, not in cases of third person reference. Thus events of addressing a person imply a different zero-point of reckoning than events of talking about that person. The net effect of this asymmetry is that in face-to-face address to referent, a person performs a diagram of social order centered not around the self but around an impersonal allocentric position. Although a single allocentric position may be invoked as a zero-point in address to several members of the family there is no necessity that the same allocentric zero-point be invoked in encounters with every member of the family. Indeed, different role alignments may be emphasized in performing address to different individuals.

The cases discussed above appear to be relatively routinized, habitual patterns for the individuals in question. It is readily seen however, that a much larger number of occasion-specific tropes can intelligibly be performed using the same underlying principles. Not all such tropes, while performable, may be ratified by interlocutors; and among those that are ratified in one interaction, not all may become normalized targets in other interactions, whether by the same or by other persons. It should be clear, nonetheless, that quite aside from questions of how and whether particular forms of kinterm-mediated footing become widely enregistered as tropes performable in subsequent activity, or even acquire a normativity for a large social domain of speakers, the fact remains that, for any such stabilized genre of interactional footing, further tropic possibilities are always available for interactants acquainted with its enregistered norm.

Finally, these considerations permit us to lay to rest the delusion that the comparative study of kinship must rest on some universal and foundational 'concept' of kinship (whether biological, genealogical, or some other) that must invariantly be realized in every society in which kinship and its analogues occur. The above discussion shows this supposition to be without utility. For even in societies where kinship is firmly grounded in genealogical or biological ideologies—or, more realistically, in societies in which genealogical or biological models of kinship prevail in certain institutional loci, dominate certain practices, and compete against each other society-internally—kinship behaviors cannot be reduced to their ideological underpinnings simply because they include behaviors that model social relations through tropes of kinship, through performable and construable analogues of kinship, which are straightforwardly intelligible through text-in-context evaluations to those acquainted with whatever local ideology prevails for the

moment in that locale, and are susceptible to a comparative analysis in the manner illustrated.

References

- Agha, A. (2003a). The social life of cultural value. *Language and Communication*, 23 (3/4), 231-273.
- Agha, A. (2003b). Registers of language. In A. Duranti (Ed.) *A Companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 23-45). New York and Oxford: Blackwell
- Agha, A. (in press). Norm and trope in kinship behavior. In A. Agha, *Language and Social Relations* (ch. 8). Cambridge University Press.
- Das, S. K. (1968). Forms of address and terms of reference in Bengali. *Anthropological Linguistics* 10(4), 19-31.
- Fischer, J. L. (1964). Words for self and other in some Japanese families. *American Anthropologist* 66(6), 115-126.
- Rivers, W. H. R. (1915). Kin, kinship. In J. Hastings (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of religion and ethics* (vol. 7, pp. 700-707). Edinburgh and New York: Scribner.
- Luong, H. V. (1990). *Discursive practices and linguistic meanings: The Vietnamese system of person reference*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Mintz, S. and Wolf, E. R. (1967). An analysis of ritual co-parenthood (Compadrazgo). In J. M. Potter, M. N. Diaz, G. M. Foster (Eds.), *Peasant society: A reader* (pp. 174-199). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Suzuki, T. (1984). Words for self and others. In T. Suzuki, *Words in context: A Japanese perspective on language and culture* (pp. 111-169). Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Vatuk, S. (1982). Forms of address in the North Indian family: An exploration of the cultural meaning of kin terms. In A. Oster. et. al. (Eds.), *Concepts of person: Kinship, caste and marriage in India* (pp. 56-98). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Department of Anthropology
University of Pennsylvania
323 University Museum, 3260 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
asifagha@sas.upenn.edu