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20

The Ethnography of Communication

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In the 1960s Dell Hymes, John Gumperz and their students launched an innovative program for researching language called the ethnography of speaking, later broadened to the ethnography of communication (see Gumperz and Hymes, 1964). The project was initiated and named with the publication of a 1962 paper by Hymes called 'The Ethnography of Speaking', in which Hymes proposed combining ethnography, the description and analysis of culture, with linguistics, the description and analysis of language. His idea was that such a synthesis would elucidate important relationships between language and culture. The program was innovative for a number of reasons. For the first time a non-linguistic unit, the speech event, was used as the basis for the analysis and interpretation of language. Actual language use was to be the focus of research and particular importance was paid to matters of context of use. Culturally defined categories or native taxonomies of ways of speaking were acknowledged as important tools in the analysis of talk, and the approach was cross-disciplinary.

Hymes' and Gumperz's conception of an ethnography of speaking was in part a response to Chomskian linguistics, which had shifted linguistics radically from its anthropologically oriented antecedents.[1] In the 1960s linguists began to organize departments of linguistics in American universities, a development linked both to the view that syntax should be at the core of any study of language as well as a demand for the autonomy of linguistics from its previous academic environments – humanistic literary traditions and behaviorist psychology (Ochs et al., 1996: 2). The study of language in the new linguistics departments was conceived as a completely homogeneous speech-community' (Chomsky, 1965). Hymes encouraged linguists to expand on Chomsky's introspective methodology and 'move outward into the exploration of speech behavior and use' (1962: 193), but linguistics departments and anthropology departments continued on separate paths. Within anthropology, linguistics lost its former authority (Boas had shaped American anthropology as a study of culture through language, and linguistics had provided influential structuralist paradigms) and became the least represented among the four American sub-fields (physical, cultural, archaeology and linguistics).[2] Hymes sought to re-synthesize the two fields.

Hymes' ethnography of speaking framework promoted the description of the 'many different ways of speaking which exist in the community' (Sherzer and Darnell, 1972). The term 'speaking' in ethnography of speaking was used to differentiate his project from the static notion of 'language' as it had been conceived by structural linguistics. Later broadened to the ethnography of communication, this approach included a reinvisioning of the nature of meaning from an emphasis on the truth value[3] of utterances, a focus of linguists, to a conception of meaning dependent on shared beliefs and values of a community and dependent on social and cultural context. The study of language to Hymes was the 'use of the linguistic code(s) in the conduct of social life' (Duranti, 1988: 212). Chomsky had also moved towards the study of meaning (which had not been a focus of Bloomfield, his influential predecessor), but from an entirely different vantage point.[4]

The ethnography of communication was thus

and American. It was highly influenced by the anthropological tradition of ethnography and cross-cultural comparison, for example, Malinowski's notion of context as fundamental in understanding speech. Firth's situational approach to language and call for linguistically centered social analysis (1957) is also relevant here. Emerging at the same time as the ideas of Gumperz and Hymes (to study communication ethnographically) were a number of other influential frameworks for studying the nature of meaning and culture, for example Turner's ideas about communitas and ritual and Geertz's ideas about ethnographic practice, also other work in symbolic and cognitive anthropology. Hymes' program of comparative language ethnography aimed to claim a place in anthropology and to redress a lack – the fact that there were no books devoted to the cross-cultural study of speaking 'to put beside those on comparative religion, comparative politics and the like' (Hymes, 1972b: 50). The ethnography of speaking was influenced by what Hymes called anthropology's 'traditional scientific role' (Hymes, 1972b) – the testing of universality and empirical adequacy, actually 'a blend of scientific and humanistic approaches' (Saville-Troike, 1982: 177). Hymes' call for cross-cultural comparative work on communicative practices was also influenced by traditional anthropological concerns with the evolution of society: 'mankind cannot be understood apart form the evolution and maintenance of its ethnographic diversity' (Hymes, 1972b: 41).

In addition to anthropology, the ethnography of speaking was influenced by linguistics, not only as a response to Chomsky but because of an interest in language forms as well as a strong precedence for links between anthropological and linguistic enquiry in the American tradition. Boas had made linguistics essential to anthropological investigation, a necessary part of understanding human cognitive strategies as well as social life (Boas, 1911). His student Sapir closely investigated the principle that grammatical categories both reflect and construct local ways of thinking about and acting in the world. Labov's (1972c) work demonstrated innovative ways to study differences in language use. Gumperz and Hymes and their students continued these trajectories but also introduced the ethnography of speaking as a new form of linguistic enquiry: turning from an investigation of language as a referential[5] code, to an investigation into social meaning, diversity of practices, and actual language use in context. Emphasis was on exchanges of talk between speakers rather than the elicitation of grammatical structures by interviewing native speakers, or the structural analysis of myth. Hymes was as interested as linguists in identifying universal patterns, but he characterized his approach as essentially different from the leading linguistic thought of the time: 'Chomsky's type of explana-

languages, to relationships possibly universal to all languages, and possibly inherent in human nature. The complementary type of explanatory adequacy leads from what is common to all human beings and all languages toward what particular communities and persons have made of their means of speech' (Hymes, 1974: 203). This characterization of moving from the general to the particular accurately characterizes the majority of the work done in the ethnography of communication approach.

The ethnography of communication has roots not only in the practice of linguistics in America, but in Europe as well. Drawing on ideas developed by the Prague school of linguistics, particularly some of Jakobson's formalizations of enquiry (Jakobson, 1960), ethnographers of communication focus on relationships between form and content as consequential to meaning, for example, how poetic patterns can create semantic relations (see, for example, Fox, 1974; Sherzer, 1983; Sherzer and Urban, 1986; Tedlock, 1972, 1983).

Other important influences on the development of the ethnography of speaking include sociolinguistic methods of inferring patterns of variation on the basis of controlled sampling (see, for example, Labov, 1972b, 1972c; Sankoff, 1974), and Austin's ideas about speech as action (Austin, 1962). Developments in folklore studies have influenced and been influenced by the ethnography of speaking, especially in theorizing cultural practices as emergent performances (see Paredes and Bauman, 1972).[6] Concurrent developments in sociology complemented Hymes' focus on the description of language in real situations. Goffman (1961, 1963, 1971) had begun to study the organization of conduct, including talk,[7] in face-to-face interaction with methods that were both anthropological and influenced by social psychology. Garfinkel introduced the concept of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), the study of the 'mundane' knowledge and reasoning procedures used by ordinary members of society, which then made possible the field of conversation analysis, the study of structures of talk (see, for example, Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 1968). These concurrent developments in sociology were represented in the 1964 special issue of the *American Anthropologist* in which the Ethnography of Communication was introduced to a wide anthropological audience, and the influential 1972 volume by Gumperz and Hymes, *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*. The inclusion of these papers indicates the strong affinity between these various approaches (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975: 101).

Hymes' and Gumperz's basic aim then was to merge ethnographic and linguistic approaches as fully as possible and to describe language in its social settings (Hanks, 1996: 188). Hymes felt that

human communicative practice. His goal, however, was to inspire anthropologists to theorize about the interaction of language with social life, to define 'some universal dimensions of speaking' and propose 'explanation within social theory of certain constellations of them' (Hymes, 1972b: 49). Language was defined broadly to include all forms of speech, writing, song, speech-derived whistling, drumming, horn calling, gesturing, etc. A general theory of the interaction of language and social life would encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning (Hymes, 1972b: 39). Adequate theory-building could only be accomplished by drawing on extant theoretical contributions from 'all the fields that deal with speech', including such fields as rhetoric and literary criticism (1972b: 51). In addition, descriptive analyses from a variety of communities utilizing a mode jointly ethnographic and linguistic were needed before such a general theory of the interaction of language and social life could be developed. The understanding of ways of speaking necessitated a complete inventory of a community's speech practices. The first steps toward an ethnography of speaking were classificatory: 'we need taxonomies of speaking and descriptions adequate to support and test them' (Hymes, 1972b: 43).[8] The call for descriptive studies in the new research paradigm was answered by a number of scholars and led to a profusion of new and stimulating research to be discussed further below.

New methodologies to study the social uses of speech were devised when it was recognized that those developed to study the referential uses of speech would not be appropriate. Neither linguists nor anthropologists had generated adequate units of description for speech use and an outline of a new methodology was formulated in an important paper by Sherzer and Darnell (1972). Hymes advocated the use of Jakobson's framework of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations (Jakobson and Halle, 1956), as well as Jakobson's notion of the speech event as primary tools necessary to do an ethnography of speaking in various societies.

Communicative Competence

An ethnography of speaking is centrally concerned with 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972c), what speakers need to know to communicate appropriately in a particular speech community, and how this competence is acquired. Competence includes rules pertaining to language structure and language use as well as cultural knowledge – for example, which participants may or may not speak in certain settings, which contexts are appropriate for speech norms for requesting and giving information (of particular concern to ethnographers), for making other requests, offers, declinations, commands, the use of non-verbal behaviors in various contexts, practices for alternating between speakers, for constructing authority, etc. This focus on the skills members of a community display when communicating with each other entails a broader notion of competence than linguists advocated. Hymes included communicative as well as grammatical competence in conditions of appropriate speech use, embracing aspects of communication such as gestures and eye-gaze, whereas Chomsky cautioned that to incorporate aspects such as beliefs and attitudes into a study of language would mean that 'language is chaos that is not worth studying' (Chomsky, 1977: 153).

> We have ... to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language, with the other codes of communicative conduct. (Hymes, 1972c: 277–8)

The study of communicative competence includes describing and analysing contexts and situations where it is appropriate to sound incompetent in a language. Examples of this are in Burundi, where people are expected to speak in a hesitating and inept manner to those of higher rank, but to speak fluently to peers or those of lower rank (Albert, 1972). In Wolof, conversely, certain incorrectness in speech is expected of the high nobles (Irvine, 1974). Describing what is 'appropriate' communication in certain contexts in particular societies can contribute legitimacy to power relations which are expressed through such organization of linguistic forms and the ethnographer must be aware of his or her role in this process (Fairclough, 1989: 8). More recent work by those looking at situated language addresses not only local ideas of appropriate language use but how these ideas can be used as means to legitimate or delegitimate language practices of certain members of society.

Units of Analysis

One of the most important contributions of the ethnography of speaking approach involved the

enquiry to units such as speech event, speech situation and speech community, and looked at the relation of these units to other components of speech use (Sherzer and Darnell, 1972: 550) as well as aspects of culture.

> People who enact different cultures do to some extent experience distinct communicative systems, not merely the same natural communicative condition with different customs affixed. Cultural values and benefits are in part constitutive of linguistic relativity. (Hymes, 1966: 116)

The ethnography of speaking as conceptualized by Hymes utilizes Pike's paradigm[9] of etic and emic analysis (Pike, 1954) as a way of talking about the general and particular goals of an ethnography of communication. An emic account is the ultimate goal, that is, the identification of categories which are meaningful to members of the community. The etic perspective, categories meaningful to the analyst, is considered useful for initial data gathering as well as for cross-cultural comparison. The two perspectives, etic and emic, are seen as interrelated. A sensitivity to native speaker categories is held to be congruent with the categories organized in Hymes' research model, which he introduced with the mnemonically ordered term 'SPEAKING', where each letter represents a component of the paradigm (to be discussed below).

Isolating taxonomic categories and the dimensions and features underlying them is an essential part of the methodology. Hymes thought categories would be found to be universal and 'hence elementary to descriptive and comparative frames of reference' (1972b: 49). He gave examples of ways taxonomies could be used in cross-cultural comparison, for example speech settings could be compared (Blom and Gumperz, 1972), or languages could be compared in terms of features like quantity of talk considered ideal. Ways of speaking could be characterized and contrasted using terms like voluble or reserved. An example is J. Fischer's (1972) study of two related Micronesian languages, Pohnpeian (formerly Ponapean) and Chuukese (formerly Trukese). Fischer posits a relationship between linguistic form and social structure, characterizing Pohnpeians as valuing conciseness and emotional restraint and Chuukese in contrast valuing loquacity and a greater show of emotion. He argues that this dichotomy extends to speech styles, leading to less 'forceful' consonant clusters in Pohnpeian, as opposed to Chuukese. Hymes justified dichotomies as necessary for the establishment of elementary categories. However, some of the difficulties of cross-culturally relevant classification, comparison and generalization can be seen in the Pohnpeian example. For instance, discourses about the nature of emotion in Micronesia have been shown to be saliently different from Western ideas about emo- value conciseness in the transmission of information, but often engage in strategies of concealment (Keating, 1998; Peterson, 1993). The taxonomic enterprise within the ethnography of communication has clear roots in linguistics as well as aspects of anthropology, but together with the notion of cross-cultural comparison and generalization has recently been the subject of extensive criticism within anthropology (see, for example, Marcus and Fischer, 1986). Indeed, the ways of speaking about and constructing 'difference' between groups of people and between investigator and investigated have altered dramatically. The relationship between the researcher's norms and the norms of the system they are analysing is now considered a subject worthy of study by anthropologists (see, for example, Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984) and can add a new level of understanding of the relationships between discourses and culture.

Speech Communities

Hymes used the term speech community as an important beginning unit of analysis in an ethnography of communication, and considered this a social rather than a linguistic entity. Few other terms in linguistic anthropology or sociolinguistics have undergone such a sustained critique, pointing both to the complexity of characterizing everyday speech practice and to the pitfalls of generalizations about 'shared' communicative competence. Most criticisms of the term 'speech community' stem not from the initial formulation of the idea, but rather from the realization of the idea in ethnographic and sociolinguistic work. Even though the definition of speech community Hymes assumes is one based on the premise that all speech communities are linguistically and socially diverse, the actual realization of the notion in ethnographies of speaking has more often than not amplified what is shared and neglected what is not[10] (a notable exception is some gender and language studies). Descriptions have focused, for example, on the common aspects of a speech community through the notions of communicative repertoire, speech event, speech act, shared language attitudes etc. The speech community is analytically more imagined than real, more unified than diverse (see Pratt, 1987; Romaine, 1982; Walters, 1996a for an extended discussion of the criticisms of the notion of speech community).

Without necessarily addressing some of the problems within the taxonomy of the ethnography of speaking itself, Hymes is clear that a speech community is not homogeneous. Not only is no community limited to a single way of speaking, but sharing the same language does not necessarily mean sharing the same understandings of its use and mean-

Ervin-Tripp shows in her work on sociolinguistic rules (1972: 223), having a language in common does not necessarily entail a common set of sociolinguistic rules (see, for example, Mitchell-Kernan, 1972; Morgan, 1996, 1998, for examples in African American English). In spite of the tendency to reify the idea of conformity, the notion of the speech community, constructed through frequency of social interaction and communication patterns (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975: 113), is felt by many to be indispensable as a starting point for analysis (see for example, Romaine, 1982).

Communicative Repertoire

Each speech community is recognized to have a repertoire (Gumperz, 1964) of language codes and ways of speaking, including 'all varieties, dialects, or styles used in a particular socially defined population, and the constraints which govern the choice among them' (Gumperz, 1977). An ethnography of communication is concerned with the totality of this linguistic repertoire or patterned ways of speaking, and an explication of relationships between speech systems and other aspects of culture. Identifying and recording this repertoire through observation of communicative behaviors and consultation with members of the community is an important part of an ethnography of speaking, as well as documenting contexts and appropriateness of use. Strategies of communication are recognized to index certain social features such as status, setting and relationships between members. Non-verbal behavior, for example, is an important communicative resource for indicating status as well as affect and stance. It is recognized that individuals' command of the communicative repertoire varies.

Some of the most interesting work on the analysis of repertoire has been on code-switching and style-shifting, for example, Gumperz's work (e.g. 1982; see also Auer, 1998). Code-switching refers to speakers' shifts in languages or language varieties within a single speech event. Style-shifting refers to shifts in features associated with social attributes such as age, gender, class and contextual aspects such as formality or informality. Code-switching has been shown to co-occur with changes in topic, participants, a redefinition of the situation, and can be used to mark features of identity between participants (Blom and Gumperz, 1972).

Studying the communicative repertoire involves looking through a framework of three other units of analysis suggested by Hymes (1972b): speech situation, speech event and speech act. Originally Hymes formulated a difference between 'events' [illegible] impossible to conduct without speech and where speech does not define the event (for example, fishing or making clothes, hunts, meals). Speech events are governed by rules and norms for the use of speech, but speech situations are not governed by one set of rules. This dichotomy between event and situation has not proved to be a useful one, and speech event has emerged as a more general term (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975: 109) for characterizing the point of interest for ethnographers of speaking. Work in conversation analysis (e.g. Sacks et al., 1974) has shown that so-called ordinary conversation is in fact highly structured (event-like) and aspects of conversation are highly ritualized (for example, greetings and leave-takings), making the original distinction less justifiable. Most of the work in the ethnography of speaking framework has focused on formal or ritual speech (speech events according to Hymes' definition).

Speech Events or Communicative Events

The focus on speech event has emerged as one of the most important contributions of ethnographers of speaking in the analysis of speech habits of communities. It is to the analysis of verbal interaction 'what the sentence is to grammar' (Gumperz, 1972: 16–17). An expansion of the analytical unit to the speech event actually goes beyond the sentence and is a shift from an emphasis on text or an individual speaker to an emphasis on interaction, and this is a significant departure from traditional analyses of language.

The analysis of speech events largely focuses on sequences that are conceived of as distinct from 'everyday' talk. Speech events are categorized as the type of sequences members of societies recognize as routines, are usually named, and are shaped by special rules of language and non-verbal behaviors. Examples are ceremonial events, such as those surrounding marriages or births, and the telling of jokes. Switching languages or language varieties or styles sometimes distinguishes between types of speech events. For example, as part of the constitution of a marriage ceremony certain words are spoken by certain participants. This is in addition to other components which construct the ceremony, such as spatial relationships among participants. What is of interest to ethnographers of speaking is how speakers use various linguistic resources and how others make sense of or interpret these choices.

Speech events are recognized to be embedded within other speech events and can be discontinuous, for example if someone is interrupted during a meeting by a telephone call. An important part of any ethnography of speaking is discovering not

there existed almost no systematic information on attitudes toward speech (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972: 36). The Ashanti of Nigeria consider infants' vocalizations to be a special language, interpretable only by men with certain guardian spirits. Thus according to local language ideology adult language is each person's second language (Hymes, 1972b: 39). Speakers of Malagasy do not believe speech should necessarily meet the informational needs of the listener (Keenan, 1974). Similarly, Pohnpeian speakers execute a disclaimer before or after telling historical narratives; the formulaic phrase attests that they have purposely 'twisted' the narrative, and it is up to each listener to set it straight (Keating, 1998).

Local taxonomies of speech events are important, though not all types of talk are named. For the Yakan of the Philippines, for example, native categories include *mitin* 'discussion', *qisun* 'conference', *mawpakkat* 'negotiation' and *hukum* 'litigation' (Frake, 1969). Melpa speakers in New Guinea categorize types of oratory as *el-ik* 'arrow talk' or 'war talk', *ik ek* 'veiled speech' or 'talk which is bent over and folded', and *ik kwun* 'talk which is straight' (Strathern, 1975), the Kuna of Panama recognize three basic patterns in speech events *namakke* (chanting), *sunmakke* (speaking) and *kormakke* (shouting) (Sherzer, 1974).

Speech Act or Communicative Act

Speech events are composed of speech acts, which mediate between grammar and the rest of a speech event or situation. Communicative acts are embedded in larger units such as genres and discourse structures. The notion of speech act, the theory that words perform actions in the world, was borrowed from Austin (1962), but expanded. An ethnography of communication entails a broader notion of context than Speech Act Theory, and a broader range of acts than speech, including gesture and paralinguistic communication. A communicative act in the ethnography of communication tradition is usually taken to have one interactional function, for example, a request or a command (but see Schegloff, 1984 on the many 'jobs' questions can do interactionally).

Research in the ethnography of speaking framework has resulted in important discussions of the relationship between the notion of speech act as first proposed by Austin and culturally diverse theories of communication and interpretation. Local notions of self, strategies of interpretation, speakers' ability to control interpretation, the relevance of 'sincerity', intentionality and the organization of responsibility for interpretation all have implications for the nature of speech acts cross-culturally acts in an ethnography of speaking see Duranti, 1997: 227–44; Foster, 1974; Rosaldo, 1973.)

Components of Speech: The SPEAKING Model

In order to organize the collection of data about speech events and speech acts in numerous societies with an eye towards cross-cultural comparison, Hymes formulated a preliminary list of features or components of these events to be described. The list was intended to be a 'useful guide' (Hymes, 1964) towards identifying components of speech considered to be universal. Eight particular components of events were chosen based on Hymes' study of ethnographic material. The model is also based on Jakobson's (1960) paradigm of six factors or components in any speech event: addresser, addressee, message, contact, context and code, each of which corresponds to a different function of language: emotive, conative, poetic, phatic, referential and metalingual.[11] Hymes' model includes the following dimensions, which he formulated as the 'mnemonically convenient' (Hymes, 1972b: 59) title 'SPEAKING', where each letter in the word 'speaking' represents one or more important components of an ethnography of speaking. The features of the list can be grouped generally into a concern with describing setting (time and place, physical circumstances) and scene (psychological setting), purposes (functions and goals), speech styles and genres, and participants (including speaker, addressor, hearer, addressee), as well as the interrelationships among them. The SPEAKING model is an etic scheme but meant to be made relevant to individual societies and eventually result in an emic description that prioritizes what is relevant to the local participants. The goal of this descriptive tool is to force attention to structure and reveal similarities and differences between events and between ways of organizing speaking. From the investigative categories represented in the model, Hymes proposed ethnographers would develop a universal set of features that could easily be compared in order to learn about differences such as important relationships between rules of speaking and setting, participants and topic, and begin to define the relationships between language and sociocultural contexts.

The components of the SPEAKING model – **s**etting, **p**articipants, **e**nds, **a**ct sequences, **k**ey, **i**nstrumentalities, **n**orms and **g**enres – are discussed in turn.

Setting Aspects of setting to be described in an ethnography of communication include temporal

valuing of these aspects of setting. An ethnographer asks: how do individuals organize themselves temporally and spatially in an event? Frake's discussion of the Yakan house in the Philippines is emblematic of some of the culture-specific complexities of spatial and temporal arrangements. He shows that a house, even a one-roomed Yakan house, is not just a space, but a structured sequence of settings where social events are differentiated not only by the position in which they occur but also by the positions the actors move through and the manner in which they have made those moves (1975: 37). In some cultures it is common to find different settings for many kinds of speech events – rooms for classes, structures for religious observances, buildings for litigation, entertainment, etc.

Participants The composition of the social group participating in different speech events is part of an ethnography of speaking. Aspects to be described include, for example, age, ethnicity, gender, relationships of persons to each other. Hymes expands the traditional speaker–hearer dyad to four categories of participants: speaker, addressor, hearer and addressee.

Ends An ethnography of communication includes descriptions of the purposes of the speech event, such as outcomes and goals. As Hymes states: 'communication itself must be differentiated from interaction as a whole in terms of purposiveness' (1972b: 62). Ends are differentiated from personal motivations of social actors in a speech event, which can be quite varied. What Hymes has in mind are the 'conventionally expected or ascribed' outcomes, important because rules for participants and settings can vary according to these aspects (see also Levinson, 1979 on goals and social activities).

Act sequences According to Hymes (1972b) this term refers to the way message form and content interdependently contribute to meaning, or '*how* something is said is part of *what* is said' (1972b: 59, emphasis in original). Act sequences can include silence, co-participants' collaborative or supportive talk, laughter, gesture, as well as restrictions on co-occurrence of speech elements (Ervin-Tripp, 1969: 72). Irvine (1974) and Salmond (1974) discuss how act sequences are related and negotiated among participants. Saville-Troike (1982) and Duranti (1985) interpret act sequences to refer to sequential aspects of communicative events, and as separate from form and content.

Key This refers to the tone, manner or spirit in which a speech act is performed, or the emotional cues such as intonation, laughter, crying. Acts which are similar in terms of setting, participants and message form can differ in terms of key, for example mock vs. serious (Hymes, 1972b: 62). Key signals can be simple or complex; complex types tend to occur at the boundaries of events (Duranti, 1985: 216).

Instrumentalities This term also relates to message form, but on a larger scale than act sequences. It refers to form in terms of language varieties, codes, or registers. Instrumentalities includes 'channels' (Hymes, 1972b: 62), media of transmission, such as oral, written, or gestural. Two important goals of recording instrumentalities, according to Hymes, are descriptions of their interdependence and the 'relative hierarchy among them' (1972b: 63).

Norms This aspect is divided into norms of interaction and norms of interpretation and concerns shared understandings. Examples of community norms are whether it is appropriate to interrupt or not, the allocation of speaking turns, etc. The full description of norms necessitates an analysis of social structure and social relationships (Hymes, 1972b: 64). The question of 'norms' has proven to be problematic in sociolinguistic studies (particularly studies of 'gendered' language behavior), where one group is posited as the norm and others are evaluated against this framework.

Genres Genre refers to categories such as poem, tale, riddle, letter, as well as attitudes about these genres. Although genres often coincide with speech events, Hymes conceives them as analytically independent.

Hymes felt a great deal of empirical work was needed to clarify interrelations between these eight components. Attention to the emergent and unique properties of individual speech events is also important (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975: 111). Sherzer (1983), in what has been called the first full-scale ethnography of speaking (Urban, 1991), describes the complex set of sociolinguistic resources of the Kuna of Panama, including not only grammar, but styles, terms of reference and address, lexical relationships, the musical patterns and shapes of chanted speech, and the gestures accompanying speech. He discusses the unique set of speech acts and events associated with three forms of ritual: politics, curing and magic, and puberty rites. Everyday forms of talk are also described, for example, greetings, conversation, gossip. Ways of speaking are related to larger issues such as the nature of verbal art and performance in non-literate societies, the search for universal features of language use, the role of speech among

relationships between speech and other sociocultural patterns found in a society.

Field Research

Tasks for ethnographers of speaking include working with an increasingly complex notion of what a speech community is, identifying recurrent communicative events and their components, including everyday events across a range of speakers, as well as relationships between such events and other aspects of the society, describing attitudes and ideas about language use, the acquisition of competence in communicative events, and linking the use of language with the constitution of society. Fieldwork involves observing and participating in speech events and other activities, asking questions, interviewing, as well as more recently video and audio recording speech events.[12] Videotaping and audiotaping are important strategies in describing contexts of use of varieties of communicative behaviors, since speakers often have a limited awareness (Silverstein, 1981) of their language habits. At the same time, consulting with native speakers about the recorded speech data can clarify important points about what features of context are salient for understanding the repertoire (see Goodwin, 1993 for an excellent guide to videotaping interaction).

A precise and focused guide on exactly how to proceed in the ethnographic study of speech use is provided in Sherzer and Darnell (1972). The guide lists questions to be asked by ethnographers interested in speech behavior and is designed with Hymes' idea in mind – to document the range of cross-cultural variability in the use of speech. The research questions were originally formulated on the basis of a study of seventy-five societies designed to serve both as a rough guideline and stimulus for fieldwork. Five areas are delineated: analysis of the social uses of speech, attitudes toward the use of speech, acquisition of speaking competence, the use of speech in education and social control, and typological generalizations. In the case of the acquisition of speaking competence, questions deal with issues such as native theories of language acquisition, interpretation of infant utterances and transmission of communicative skills. A field manual by Slobin (1967) also proposes relevant research questions for the study of language use.

Saville Troike (1982: 117) considers the following data part of a complete ethnography of communication: (a) background information on the speech community, including history, topographical and population features, patterns of movement, employment, religious practices, educational practices; informal organizations, association patterns, power relations, etc; (d) legal information, that is, practices of social control, particularly about language use; (e) common knowledge or unstated presuppositions about the interpretation of language and language habits; (f) beliefs about language use, including attitudes towards speech the types of entities considered appropriate speech participants; and (g) data on the linguistic code, including paralinguistic and non-verbal features. Hymes (1970) recommends a pretest before attempting a large-scale data collection, including an exploration of who can be interviewed, how people within a community exchange information, and what forms of questions are appropriate.

Data collection methods such as participant observation, interviewing, videotaping and audiotaping are not without shortcomings. Briggs (1986) has focused on some problems with the speech event of interviewing which is not considered an appropriate way to communicate information in many cultures. (See also Duranti, 1997 for a discussion of videotaping as one of the technologies for capturing aspects of communicative encounters that are often ignored or misinterpreted.)

Ethnographies of Speaking

It is impossible to describe here all the important and ground-breaking work done in the ethnography of communication, so I will mention some representative studies and direct the reader to collections by Gumperz and Hymes (1964, 1972), Bauman and Sherzer (1974, 1975), Baugh and Sherzer (1984), Giglioli (1972), Blount (1974), as well as work described in Saville-Troike (1982). Philipsen and Carbaugh (1986) have compiled a bibliography of over 200 studies conducted within the paradigm. Many descriptions and analyses of individual communicative events in diverse communities have appeared.

Some of the most important early work using the ethnography of communication framework looked at classroom interactions between teachers and students. The approach was used productively to address educators' concern with the failure of minority children to achieve in school settings (Cazden et al., 1972; Green and Wallat, 1981; Gumperz, 1981). Ethnographic investigations were conducted of various groups of school children in interactions with teachers who had been trained in the EuroAmerican tradition of schooling, with its attendant culture-specific patterns for organizing knowledge and measuring learning. Classrooms were studied in order to understand how children with different culturally acquired language patterns for

middle-class framework. Ethnographers examined classrooms of African American children (Heath, 1983; Kochman, 1972; Labov, 1972c; Michaels, 1981), Native American children (e.g. Cazden and John, 1972; Philips, 1983), Hawaiian children (Au, 1980; Boggs, 1972), rural Appalachian white children (Heath, 1983) and working-class British children (Bernstein, 1964). Some studies combined the ethnography of speaking methods with those developed by conversation analysts (e.g. Gumperz and Herasimchuck, 1973). In an important study Heath (1982) analyses correlations between the organization of language events at home and children's performance in 'literacy events' at school. More recently Street (1995) builds on this work but broadens the notion of literacy as a situated social practice and discusses the multiple character of literacy practices (see also Besnier, 1988; Schieffelin and Gilmore, 1986).

Scholars working in the ethnography of speaking framework have focused on the description of linguistic resources, the analysis of particular speech events and the role of speech in specific areas of social and cultural life (Sherzer, 1983: 12). There have been a number of key concerns: systems and functions of communication, the nature and definition of speech community, aspects of communicative competence, relationships of language to world-view and social relations, language attitudes, and linguistic and social universals. The following list is by no means comprehensive, but shows the range of studies and topics. Work in this tradition includes, for example, Basso's investigation of patterns of language and attitudes towards language use among the Western Apache, encompassing the importance of silence in situations where social relations are uncertain (K. Basso, 1970: 227, 1988) as well as Philips' (1983) description of speech patterns and attitudes at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon. In other work, Gossen comprehensively describes a rich array of Chamula ways of speaking and identifies a central metaphor used to organize concepts of speech (1972, 1974), Stross discusses some 416 terms for speaking in Tzeltal (1974), Reisman (1974) describes speech routines in Antigua. Jackson critically engages the notion of speech community with a description of language and identity among the Vaupes in Columbia (1974). Friedrich describes important implications of historical Russian pronoun shifts used to index social meanings (1972, 1979), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett links narrative and social relations in specific contexts (1975), Blom and Gumperz (1972) look at the interrelationship of cultural values and language rules in Norway, Albert among the Burundi (1972), and Hill and Hill (1978) investigate the use of honorifics in Nuahtl. Bauman

context, as a form of practice, rather than as a continually recounted text (1977, 1986). Fox (1974) describes and analyses the role of oral poetry based on couplets in Roti in Indonesia; Bricker (1974) similarly discusses couplet poetry among the Maya, Tedlock (1972, 1983) analyses verbal art among the Zuni. Haviland (1977) looks at gossip in Zincantan, Gal (1978) at language change and its relationship to gender in Austria, the Scollons (1979) at linguistic convergence at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. Walters (1996a, 1996b) shows that shared and contested variables of language are important in Tunisia.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), Ferguson (1964) and Blount (1972) investigate the development of children's communicative competence (see also Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987); Boggs (1978) and M. Goodwin (1990) also analyse children's language use. Mitchell-Kernan (1972) discusses ways of speaking among the African-American community, as do Labov (1972a), Kochman (1972), Abrahams (1970, 1983) and Ward (1971). These studies show how sociolinguistic rules for interpretation differ from other English-speaking communities. Research on language use in legal, medical and educational settings includes work by Erickson and Schultz (1982) and Philips (1982).

The speech event unit has proved to be a useful tool and resulted in many important studies of political events (e.g. Brenneis and Myers, 1984; Duranti, 1984, 1994; Foster, 1974; Kuipers, 1984; Sherzer, 1974), child-rearing practices (e.g. Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Schieffelin, 1990), literacy activities (e.g. Anderson and Stokes, 1984; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Heath, 1982, 1983; Philips, 1974, 1983; Schieffelin and Gilmore, 1986; Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Street, 1993, 1995), counseling (e.g. Erickson and Schultz, 1982; Watson-Gegeo and White, 1990), and narrative (e.g. Darnell, 1974; Finnegan, 1967; Schuman, 1986).

Ethnographers of speaking have played a central role in studies of pidginization and creolization (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975; see, for example, Hymes, 1971). By looking at patterns of social uses of language, these studies provide ways of understanding linguistic borrowing and language change. The approach has also led to a number of important debates (Hanks, 1996: 188), for example, raising important questions about Native American discourse (Woodbury, 1985). Work in the ethnography of communication tradition has led to the development of a sophisticated framework for describing verbal performance (see Bauman, 1977, 1986, 1993; Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Briggs, 1988; Hanks, 1984; Hymes, 1975; Sherzer, 1983). Within this framework, certain aspects of language that are typically neglected in linguistic study become central, for example the cues that mark a shift into

attention is redirected from verbal art as an object to verbal art as performance.

A main tenet of ethnographers of communication is of course that language practices are not only culturally specific, but are a central locus for the creation and transmission of culture. In 1987 Sherzer introduced the idea of a 'discourse centered' approach to culture, with the idea of making language even more central and investigating the notion of culture from socially circulating discourse, especially 'verbally artistic and playful discourse' (Sherzer, 1987: 295), a view utilized and further developed by Urban in his study of South American discourse patterns (1991).

Criticisms of the Model and Current Directions

Despite its appeal to a variety of researchers around the world, the ethnography of communication has been criticized for a lack of theoretical unity, for its functionalist leanings, and for its underestimation of the difficulties of totally describing all the ways of speaking of any language (Hanks, 1996: 188). While Hymes envisioned cross-cultural comparison, most of the studies that use his methodology concentrate, not on building a theory of relationships between speech and context in societies in general, but on describing speech practices that are meaningful to a specific society (Duranti, 1988: 219). There are some exceptions in studies that have explicated some general areal patterns from local studies (e.g. Abrahams, 1983; Roberts and Forman, 1972; Sherzer and Urban, 1986), Brown and Levinson's (1978) cross-cultural study on politeness, Irvine's (1979) discussion of four universal aspects of formality, and Ochs and Schieffelin's work on language acquisition (1984, 1995). Of course, difficulties and questions inherent in cross-cultural comparison have become a recent focus across sub-disciplines in anthropology. While Hymes broadened the notion from 'speaking' to 'communication' in his articles, in most work the emphasis remained on speaking (Joel Sherzer, personal communication).

One of the original goals of the ethnography of speaking was to avoid reducing language to a series of fundamental precepts, to generalize but also to retain in descriptions the complexity of language and interpretation. This has proved to be an extremely challenging and difficult task. The approach has been criticized for transforming speech into 'another exotic object to be described by the ethnographer's metadiscursive procedures' (Maranhao, 1993). When Hymes spoke of generalizations, he seemed to be looking for common categories of speech events that were shared among

been critiqued as likely to ignore those interactions which are not recognized as units of some sort by members of the speech community (Duranti, 1988: 220). The distinction between speech situation and speech event was found to be difficult to operationalize. The emphasis on formal genres such as ritualized speech (Bloch, 1976), and the very dichotomy of speech into formal and informal has also been critiqued (Irvine, 1979).

While early studies in the ethnography of speaking tended to treat the speech event as an object rather than as something achieved by people in interactions over time (Ochs et al., 1996: 7), the notion of speech event has been recognized as an important way to approach the analysis of language. Duranti notes that using 'speech event' as a theoretical notion 'referring to a perspective of analysis rather than to an inherent property of events' (1985: 201) is a constructive way to look at interaction from the perspective of the speech used in it, and a useful way to make sense out of discourse patterns. At the same time, Gumperz and others have stressed the importance of looking at the larger sociopolitical contexts within which culturally situated communication takes place in an effort to understand communicative practice.

The ethnography of communication has been criticized for its lack of attention to integration with other branches of linguistics and anthropology (Leach, 1976) as well as other disciplines, a criticism perhaps based on Hymes' visionary goal to utilize insights from various academic fields in understanding the social aspects of language meaning, certainly an ambitious project. Recent studies by scholars who incorporate the ethnography of speaking among other approaches show a far greater integration of some of the fields cited as important to Hymes: anthropology, linguistics, sociology, folklore and psychology (for example Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Capps and Ochs, 1995; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Feld, 1982; Gumperz and Levinson, 1996; Hanks, 1990; Ochs, 1996; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1995; Sherzer and Urban, 1986).

It has been widely recognized that the ethnography of communication framework has had a great influence in the practice of linguistic anthropology. The approach is recognized for its potential to offer solutions for practical problems (Bauman and Sherzer, 1975), for its attention to the important relationship between language and culture, and for its emphasis on documenting and analysing actual speech in use. Work in the ethnography of communication framework has led to an increasing sophistication in both the recording of communicative events and the analysis of language in use. Recent studies of relationships between language and social life have focused on ethnopoetics (for

talk-in-interaction (e.g. Alvarez-Caccamo, 1996; Duranti, 1994; Goodwin, 1990; Hanks, 1990; Jacquemet, 1996; Keating, 1998; Moerman, 1988), and links with psychology (e.g. Capps and Ochs, 1995; Ferrara, 1994), analysis of discourse (e.g. Sherzer, 1987; Urban, 1991), cognition (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1993; Danziger, 1996), gesture (e.g. Farnell, 1995; Goodwin, 1994; Kendon, 1990) and combinations of these approaches (e.g. Besnier, 1995; Brown, 1993; Cicourel, 1992; Haviland, 1991; Hill and Irvine, 1993; Kulick, 1992; Philips, 1992; Street, 1995; Valentine, 1995; Walters, 1996b; Wilce, 1998). Currently linguistic anthropologists use a number of strategies for fieldwork and analysis, but many acknowledge the influence of the ethnography of communication approach in focusing their work and in orienting fieldwork and analysis towards actual language in use. The ethnography of communication tradition continues to be conducted in varied and diverse ways, and to serve as an inspiration for continued contributions to the formation of new ideas and directions of research.

Conclusions

Ethnographers of speaking focus on understanding the large range of resources speakers have for the production and interpretation of language. Part of the goal of those working in this tradition has been to address the lack of information on ways of speaking in different speech communities, as well as to design procedures for the collection of data. The comparative approach to fieldwork was advocated as the best way to isolate different groups' 'theories of speaking' (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972: 36). The approach entailed a major shift in the choice of units of analysis in language research (Duranti, 1992: 25), framing research in terms of social units rather than linguistic units. This ethnographically grounded research paradigm has influenced a wide range of research into relationships between language and culture, including identity, social stratification, ethnicity, ideology, multilingualism, acquisition of language and culture, power relationships, aesthetics, conflict, literacy, representation, cognition and gender. The ideas formulated by Hymes and Gumperz and developed as the ethnography of communication continue to be highly influential.

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Notes

1 Bloomfieldians had called linguistics an 'anthropological science' (Trager, 1968).

2 Part of the reason grammar lost its centrality among cultural anthropologists was a move away from a temporal structural analyses toward a focus on temporally and spatially situated practices (Ochs et al., 1996: 6).

3 Linguists use the idea of truth values to suggest that meaning can be defined in terms of the conditions in the 'real world' under which a person can use a sentence to make a true statement. This approach to meaning is different from other approaches such as Speech Act Theory, which defines meaning in terms of the use of sentences in communication.

4 Chomsky was interested in formulating a theory of mental structure or mind.

5 The term 'reference' is used in linguistics for the entity (object, state of affairs, etc.) in the external world to which a linguistic expression refers, for example, the referent of the word feasthouse is the physical object 'feasthouse'.

6 Although the field of pragmatics also studies language usage and choices speakers make, the ethnography of communication approach is different from pragmatic analysis in its stronger concern for the sociocultural context of language use, the relationship between language and local systems of knowledge and social order, and a lesser commitment to the relevance of logical notation in understanding the strategic use of speech in social interaction (Duranti, 1988: 213).

7 For an interesting discussion of Goffman's hesitancy to use linguistics see Ochs et al., 1996: 14.

8 Garfinkel has pointed out that classifying itself is a social act, meaningful within particular local contexts.

9 Pike distinguishes between emic and etic (from the terms phonemic and phonetic). His dichotomy has had a wide influence in American cultural anthropology.

10 Bloomfield remarks that ignoring differences within speech communities should only be done 'provisionally' (1933: 45) in order to employ a 'method of abstraction, a method essential to scientific investigation', but the results obtained from such abstraction have to be corrected 'before they can be used in most kinds of further work' (1933: 45).

11 See Lyons, 1977 for an account of Jakobson's introduction of these ideas into linguistics.

12 Initially many ethnographies of speaking were based on texts and notes written down in the field by ethnographers.

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