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FOUNDATIONS IN
SOCIOLINGUISTICS

An Ethnographic Approach

DELL HYMES



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An Ethnographic Approach

Dell Hymes



Tavistock Publications

In memory of
Edward Sapir

First published in Great Britain in 1977
by Tavistock Publications Limited
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Introduction

“Sociolinguistics” could be taken to refer to use of linguistic data and analyses in other disciplines, concerned with social life, and, conversely, to use of social data and analyses in linguistics. The word could also be taken to refer to correlations between languages and societies, and between particular linguistic and social phenomena. These worthwhile activities would not really require a special name. They leave linguistics and the other disciplines as they are. They presuppose a science of mankind among whose departments human life has been accurately and completely apportioned. But sociolinguistics merits our attention just insofar as it signals an effort to change the practice of linguistics and other disciplines, because their present practice perpetuates a fragmented, incomplete understanding of humanity. Sociolinguistics, so conceived, is an attempt to rethink received categories and assumptions as to the bases of linguistic work, and as to the place of language in human life.

The chapters of this book come together in the expression of three themes that I take to be fundamental to sociolinguistics: *first*, that there is a mode of organization of language that is a part of the organization of communicative conduct in a community, whose understanding requires a corresponding, new mode of description of language; *second*, that recognition of this mode of organization leads one to recognize that the study of language is a multidisci-

plinary field, a field to which ordinary linguistics is indispensable, but to which other disciplines, such as sociology, social anthropology, education, folklore, and poetics, are indispensable as well; *third*, that study of this mode of organization leads one to reconsider the bases of linguistics itself. One might say that the three themes have to do with the scope, the dependencies, and, ultimately, the foundations of linguistics.

The three themes are closely connected, and appear interwoven throughout the book. Still, each of them in turn provides the focus for a section. The first section, "Toward ethnographies of communication," presents the general standpoint to which recognition of speaking as a topic of ethnography brings one. It depicts the scope and goals of a sociolinguistic mode of description, first in the context of cultural patterning of communicative conduct generally (ch. 1), then specifically in terms of speech (ch. 2). The second section, "The status of linguistics as a science," takes up the concern and title of an essay by Sapir (1929). Toward the end of that essay, Sapir remarked:

One can only hope that linguists will become increasingly aware of the significance of their subject in the general field of science and will not stand aloof behind a tradition that threatens to become scholastic when not vitalized by interests which lie beyond the formal interest in language itself. [SWES 16s]

In recent years the dominant vitalizing interest has linked linguistic inquiry with cognitive psychology, and has tended to reinforce, rather than transcend, a purely formal interest. The chapters in this second section show a running debate with that outlook, and stress the significance of several social and humanistic disciplines to the vitalization of linguistic inquiry. The third section of the book, "Linguistics as sociolinguistics," takes up technical questions within linguistics, in order to show that the perspective of the preceding chapters is not external to linguistics, but arises out of its own practice. The linguistic commandment, "capture generalizations," is applied to hitherto "marginal" aspects of language, and is shown to lead linguistics to new foundations. The final chapter takes up the major themes of the book in an overview, and addresses the social concerns of linguists directly. The scientific and social concerns of linguists are held to lead to a reconstruction of linguistics as sociolinguistics, that is, as a discipline which accepts the social constitution of its subject matter, and the social bases of its practice and theory.

In these chapters I sometimes speak of future directions for linguistics, as if the perspective set forth here should be considered the next stage in the development of the subject. Let me emphasize that I consider this perspective a desirable next stage,

but do not think any particular development inevitable. Nor do I think that the construction of what seem to me necessary new foundations for linguistic theory and practice must eclipse all current lines of work, let alone entail scorn for such long-standing traditions as those of philology, comparative reconstruction, and the like. I continue to practice some of that sort of work myself, in connection with American Indian languages. It would be a healthy thing for linguistics if it could come to accept an advance in one direction without forgetting what it has learned and could still learn in others.

I say this with some feeling, and I hope, understanding, because some years ago I found myself with a mixed and troublesome intellectual and professional heritage—from anthropological philology, into which I had been willy nilly cast as a graduate student; from socialist aspirations, chosen in undergraduate years; from precedents and patterns in the development of anthropology, folklore, and Amerindian linguistics, for whose historiography I felt a steadily deepening affinity. With such a heritage the past decade or so has seemed one in which a generation of linguists talked of the same goals as those of the traditions I knew, if in sometimes different words, yet enthusiastically pursued a practice that appeared to deny them.

All these chapters share, then, the problem of coming to terms with an ostensible profession (my doctorate being in linguistics, although with a great deal of work in anthropology and folklore). Linguistics was veering from its roots in anthropology, and, as I felt, in human realities, already when I first encountered it; in a few years that direction was being pursued pell mell. Yet unresolved problems of the older traditions persisted, even came newly to awareness, and a certain logic, as to the bases of past advances, a certain pattern of advances, calling for completion, appeared as well. In a sense I could not help working out the ideas dealt with in these chapters. None of the original papers, in fact, represents a task set by an immediate research problem or technical issue; there have always been other things that might have been, perhaps should have been, worked on, or poems that might have got written. Thoughts on these problems have almost seemed to have taken up residence in my brain for meetings and purposes of their own, not asking my permission, but unpredictably popping up perhaps while I was drifting into sleep, or shaving, or listening to music. Often enough a bit of ethnographic data has turned out to conceal something problematic that had to be inspected, and fitted into something larger than itself.

It seems now that linguistics itself is moving into areas to which these ideas are pertinent, areas with which linguistics

would be much better prepared to deal, had so much of earlier lines of work not been lost in the bliss of a revolutionary dawn and an atmosphere of contempt for all else. If these explorations in a border country prove central now, I shall be very glad indeed.

All these chapters were first written in response to an invitation or opportunity afforded by colleagues, and I want to thank them collectively here; most of this book might otherwise not have reached paper. In preparing this book, I have changed every paper to some degree, and most papers substantially. A good many bits of overlap and repetition have been excised, and I hope that those that remain are mutually clarifying and reinforcing, rather than tiring. In the most extended statements of approach (chs. 2, 4, and 8), the presentation of some essential terms and notions has been significantly revised. Thus this book is not an accurate source for the development of ideas, if any wish to trace that; and other versions of these papers are not an adequate portrait of what I take my ideas now to be.

This book does deal with ideas, more than with data; I hope that there is room in the study of language for both. The ideas I have most wrestled with, most kept coming back to, have been in work of Kenneth Burke, Ernst Cassirer, Noam Chomsky, Roman Jakobson, Karl Marx, and Edward Sapir. What I say here is not in strict agreement with any of them, indeed is critical or a crucial departure in one or another respect, but the saying has grown out of the wrestling. Linguists, I hope, will see in this book a contribution especially to the tradition of Sapir, whose work and whose family have touched on mine over the years in so many ways.

I owe a special debt to Erving Goffman; sociolinguistics is discovering that at its core lie concerns that have long been his, and this book would not exist without his intervention. The Center for Urban Ethnography, and its director, John Szwed, have been an ever present help these past few years; and it is no coincidence that the writing of the chapters in the book largely coincides with my participation in the Committee on Sociolinguistics of the Social Science Research Council. Let me also thank Al Romano and Iles Minoff for indispensable help in preparation of the manuscript. Iles Minoff prepared, and Sally Yerkovich typed, the index. Fred Wieck, Joel Sherzer, and Michael Silverstein objected successively to tentative titles; Virginia Hymes proposed the form and nouns of the third.

Dell Hymes
Mt. Hood National Forest
June 7, 1973

Part One

Toward Ethnographies of Communication

To make a start
out of particulars
and make them general, rolling
up the sum, by defective means—
William Carlos Williams,
Paterson: Book I

Chapter 1

Toward Ethnographies of Communication

The term “ethnography of communication” is intended to indicate the necessary scope, and to encourage the doing, of studies ethnographic in basis, and communicative in the range and kind of patterned complexity with which they deal.¹ That is, the term implies two characteristics that an adequate approach to language must have.

As to scope: one cannot simply take separate results from linguistics, psychology, sociology, ethnology, as given, and seek to correlate them, however partially useful such work may be, if one is to have a theory of language (not just a theory of grammar). One needs fresh kinds of data, one needs to investigate directly the use of language in contexts of situation, so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity, patterns that escape separate studies of

1. This chapter is based upon “Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication,” in *The Ethnography of Communication*, ed. by John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1964), pp. 1–34, issued as Part 2 of the *American Anthropologist* 66(6) (December). It comprises mainly sections VI and VII of that essay. To Susan Ervin-Tripp, John Gumperz, Michael Halliday, Sydney Lamb, Sheldon Sacks, and Dan Slobin, I am indebted for warm discussions of language and its social study; to Bob Scholte and Erving Goffman for pointed argument about the notion of communication; and to Harold C. Conklin, Charles Frake, Ward Goodenough, Floyd Lounsbury, and William C. Sturtevant, for discussion through several years of the nature of ethnography. To all much thanks and no blame.

grammar, of personality, of social structure, religion, and the like, each abstracting from the patterning of speech activity into some other frame of reference.

As to basis: one cannot take linguistic form, a given code, or even speech itself, as a limiting frame of reference. One must take as context a community, or network of persons, investigating its communicative activities as a whole, so that any use of channel and code takes its place as part of the resources upon which the members draw.

It is not that linguistics does not have a vital role. Analyzed linguistic materials are indispensable, and the logic of linguistic methodology is an influence in the ethnographic perspective. It is rather that it is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed. The boundaries of the community within which communication is possible; the boundaries of the situations within which communication occurs; the means and purposes and patterns of selection, their structure and hierarchy—all elements that constitute the communicative economy of a group, are conditioned, to be sure, by properties of the linguistic codes within the group, but are not controlled by them. The same linguistic means may be made to serve various ends; the same communicative ends may be served, linguistically, by various means. Facets of the cultural values and beliefs, social institutions and forms, roles and personalities, history and ecology of a community may have to be examined in their bearing on communicative events and patterns (just as any aspect of a community's life may come to bear selectively on the study of kinship, sex, or role conflict).

It will be found that much that has impinged upon linguistics as variation and deviation has an organization of its own. What seem variation and deviation from the standpoint of a linguist's analysis may emerge as structure and pattern from the standpoint of the communicative economy of the group among whom the analyzed form of speech exists. The structures and patterns that emerge will force reconsideration, moreover, of the analysis of linguistic codes themselves. Just as elements and relations of phonology appear partly in a new light when viewed from the organization of grammar, and just as elements and relations of the grammar appear in a new light when viewed from the organization of semantics (Lamb 1964), so elements and relations of the linguistic code as a whole will appear partly in a new light, viewed from the organization of the elements and relations of the speech act and speech event, themselves part of a system of communicative acts and events characteristic of a group.

To project the ethnography of communication in such a way

is tantamount to the belief that there awaits constitution a second descriptive science comprising language, in addition to, and ultimately comprehending, present linguistics—a science that would approach language neither as abstracted form nor as an abstract correlate of a community, but as situated in the flux and pattern of communicative events. It would study communicative form and function in integral relation to each other. In this it would contrast with long held views of linguistics and of what is within linguistics. Some divorce linguistic form from context and function. An old but apt illustration is found in Bloomfield's often cited remark that, if a beggar says "I'm hungry" to obtain food, and a child says "I'm hungry" to avoid going to bed, then linguistics is concerned just with what is the same in the two acts. It abstracts, in other words, from context. In contrast, an influential book has characterized pragmatics in a way exactly complementary as "all those aspects which serve to distinguish one communication event from any other where the sign types may be the same" (Cherry 1961: 225). It abstracts, in other words, from linguistic form.

Such views are not the only ones to be found, but they have been characteristic of linguistics, on the one hand, and social science, on the other, and most practice has exemplified one or the other. For ethnographies of communication, however, the aim must be not so to divide the communicative act or event, divorcing message-form (Cherry's sign-type) and context of use from one another. The aim must be to keep the multiple hierarchy of relations among messages and contexts in view (cf. Bateson, 1963). Studies of social contexts and functions of communication, if divorced from the means that serve them, are as little to the purpose as are studies of communicative means, if divorced from the contexts and functions they serve. Methodologically, of course, it is not a matter of limiting a structural perspective inspired by linguistics to a particular component of communication, but of extending it to the whole.

The ethnography of communication is indebted to the methodological gains from recent studies of linguistic form for its own sake, and to a climate of opinion created by arguments for the significance of formal linguistics. Its roots, however, are deeper and more pervasive. On the one hand, there is the long-term trend away from the study of sociocultural form and content as product toward their study as process—away from study of abstracted categories, departments of culture, toward study of situations, exchanges, and events (cf. Sapir 1933b). On the other hand, there is the continuing trend in linguistics itself toward study of the full complexity of language in terms of what the Prague Circle as long ago as 1929 (the year of Sapir's "The status of linguistics as a

science") called "functional and structural analysis," and which Jakobson now designates as interwar efforts towards a "means-ends model" (Jakobson 1963); there are parallels in the perspectives of J. R. Firth (1935—cf. ch. 4 of this volume) and of Sapir (cf. chs. 3, 10 of this volume) in the same period. These traditions have had their vicissitudes, but it is fair to see in the ethnography of communication a renewal of them.

For many people, the place of the ethnography of communication will appear to be, not in relation to one or more traditions in linguistics, but in relation to some general perspective on human behavior. For many, the name of this perspective will be social anthropology, or sociology, or psychology, or some other disciplinary category. The work required does fall somewhere into place within the purview of each such discipline, and there can be no quarrel with any, except to say that the division of the study of man into departmentalized disciplines seems itself often arbitrary and an obstacle. What is essential, in any case, is that the distinctive focus of concern advanced here be recognized and cultivated, whatever the disciplinary label. One way to state the need is to remark that there are anthropological, sociological, and psychological studies of many kinds, but of ethnographic analyses of communicative conduct, and of comparative studies based upon them, there are still few to find. (Chs. 3 and 4 take up relationships with sociology and social anthropology further.)

These remarks apply as well to the field of interest under which others would subsume the concerns represented here, namely, semiotics. De Saussure had proposed semiology as a field more general than linguistics, and Levi-Strauss has characterized it as the study of the life of signs in the bosom of social life, subsuming both linguistics and social anthropology within it (1960). Despite the broad interpretation given the term, however, semiotics (semiology) has continued to suggest most readily logical analysis, and the study of systems of signs as codes alone. The empirical study of systems of signs within systems of use in actual communities seems secondary, when not lost from sight.

Here a division of semiotics in the tripartite formulation of Morris (1946) might serve. Pragmatics, concerned with the use of signs by an interpreter, might be the bridge between the present area of concern and linguistics proper, and stand as name for the cultivation of theory of the use of language (and other codes), alongside theory of their formal and semantic structure (Morris' syntagmatics and semantics). Such a usage of the term 'pragmatics' indeed seems to be gaining vogue in German-language research. Some characterizations of pragmatics, to be sure, would not be adequate, as has been noted above. A conception of pragmatics as

concerned with what varies in import, while message-form remains constant, allows for but one of the two relationships between structures of action and structures of communicative form. The relations between means and ends are multiple in both directions, the same means serving sometimes varied ends, and the ends being served by sometimes varied means.

In terms of the criteria systematized by Lamb (1964), we can indeed see a natural extension of grammar to features of action, a pragmemic level if one wishes to call it that. Lamb distinguishes linguistic strata by the twin criteria of "diversification" and "neutralization" (see further ch. 4). Diversification is illustrated by such facts as that one element of meaning can occur in diverse representations (as in *dog house : kennel*, or *cat house : whore house*); neutralization is illustrated by such facts as that the same representation may serve diverse elements of meaning (as *dog* in *dog house*, *dog fight*, *dognap*, or *cat* in *cat house*, *cat fight*, *catnap*). One might well recognize a stratum involving the "pragmeme" as an element or feature of action, since the same feature of action can occur in diverse semantic representations, and the same semantic representations can serve diverse features of action. To use an example from Susan Ervin-Tripp, the same feature of request may be encoded in "Would you get me my coat?" and "Don't you think it's getting cold?"; and conversely, to complete the example, "Don't you think it's getting cold?" may express (among other things) features of literal question or demand for action ("Get me my coat," "Take me inside").

Invaluable as a structural pragmemics would be, it would not suffice for the whole of the subject. Nor, as ordinarily conceived, would communication theory or cybernetics. What is sometimes specifically meant by each of the latter terms would seem to fit, quite importantly indeed, as parts of a general strategy for ethnographic research into communication.

In general, experience suggests that work contributing to study of communication in an ethnographic spirit is likely not to duplicate work under another aegis. Each of the other general notions seems in practice to lose sight of concrete communication, in the sense of actual communities of persons. Forms of formalization, the abstract possibilities of systems, hoped-for keys to mankind as a whole, seem to overshadow the dogged work of making sense of real communities and lives. I find in this a political as well as a scientific liability. In any case, the long-standing, close ties between ethnography and linguistic description; the ethnographic practice of participant observation; and the values placed on the specifics of cultural life and the viewpoint of the other participants in the communication that is ethnography—

such traits tend to ensure two characteristics. First, there is likely to be a more egalitarian distribution of detailed interest among the several components of communicative events. Not only the participants and the contents of messages, but also the structures, degrees of elaboration, distinctiveness, values and genres associated with channels, codes, message-forms and settings attract attention partly in their own right—the linguistic codes, of course, as most explicit, and as indispensable, if not wholly adequate, avenues of access to other codes, and to the meanings of other components—but also specialized subcodes and marginal systems, techniques of speech disguise, languages of concealment, drum-languages, ceremonial speech and oratory; the channels, especially when complexly elaborated as in West Africa, or distinctively specialized, as writing for lovers' messages among the Hanunoo of the Philippines; the forms of poetry, ritual speech, and dramatic enactment; and so forth. Such aspects of communication are less likely to receive full due in studies whose concern with communication is not so much with an activity of people, but with fodder for models, or not so much with realization of the purposes of others, as with a way of achieving purposes of one's own. The ethnographer is likely to have, or come to have, the view that models are for people, not people for models; and that there are no masses, only ways of regarding people as masses; that one man's mass is another's public, or community, and that to speak of mass communications is already to express a separateness from the portion of humanity concerned that prejudices the result (see Williams 1960: 315–58). The ethnographer is likely to look at communication from the standpoint and interests of a community itself, and to see its members as sources of shared knowledge and insight. I believe that the only worthwhile future for the sciences of man lies in the realization of such an approach (cf. Hymes 1972c).

The linguistics that can contribute to the ethnography of communication is now generally known as sociolinguistics, and it is here that my own training and experience lie. Such a sociolinguistics, however, is not identical with everything that currently comes under that name. The sociolinguistics with which we are concerned here contributes to the general study of communication through the study of the organization of verbal means and the ends they serve, while bearing in mind the ultimate integration of these means and ends with communicative means and ends generally. Such an approach within sociolinguistics can be called, in keeping with the general term, ethnography of communication, the study of the "ethnography of speaking." (Cf. Hymes 1962, and ch. 4). For the contribution of the ethnography of speaking to be

realized, there must be change with respect to a number of orientations toward language. Seven can be singled out as the Pleiades, pointing to the North Star, of this firmament. Primacy must go to (1) the structure, or system of speech (*la parole*); (2) function as prior to and warranting structure; (3) language as organized in terms of a plurality of functions, the different functions themselves warranting different perspectives and organizations; (4) the appropriateness of linguistic elements and messages; (5) diversity of the functions of diverse languages and other communicative means; (6) the community or other social context as starting point of analysis and understanding; (7) functions themselves to be warranted in context, and in general the place, boundaries, and organization of language and of other communicative means in a community to be taken as problematic. In short, primacy of speech to code, function to structure, context to message, the appropriate to the arbitrary or simply possible; but the interrelations always essential, so that one cannot only generalize the particularities, but also particularize the generalities.

It remains that sociolinguistics, conceived in terms of the ethnography of speaking, is ultimately part of the study of communication as a whole. To further establish this context, I shall sketch a general framework in terms of communication proper. The other chapters of this book should be read with the communicative framework in mind.

There are four aspects to the framework, concerned, respectively, with (1) the components of communicative events; (2) the relations among components; (3) the capacity and state of components; and (4) the activity of the whole so constituted. It is with respect to the third and fourth aspects that two topics prominently associated with the topic of communication, communication theory (in the sense of information theory), and cybernetics, find a place.

THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS

The starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communicative conduct of a community. One must determine what can count as a communicative event, and as a component of one, and admit no behavior as communicative that is not framed by some setting and implicit question. The communicative event thus is central. (In terms of language the speech event, and speech act, are correspondingly central; see ch. 2).

Some frame of reference is needed for consideration of the several kinds of components copresent in a communicative event. The logical or other superiority of one classification over another

is not at issue. What is at issue is the provision of a useful guide in terms of which relevant features can be discerned—a provisional phonetics, as it were, not an a priori phonemics, of the communicative event.

For what has to be inventoried and related in an ethnographic account, a somewhat elaborated version of factors identified in communications theory, and adapted to linguistics by Roman Jakobson (1953;1960), can serve. Briefly put, (1) the various kinds of *participants* in communicative events—senders and receivers, addressors and addressees, interpreters and spokesmen, and the like; (2) the various available *channels*, and their modes of use, speaking, writing, printing, drumming, blowing, whistling, singing, face and body motion as visually perceived, smelling, tasting, and tactile sensation; (3) the various *codes* shared by various participants, linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, musical, interpretative, interactional, and other; (4) the *settings* (including other communication) in which communication is permitted, enjoined, encouraged, abridged; (5) the *forms of messages*, and their *genres*, ranging verbally from single-morpheme sentences to the patterns and diacritics of sonnets, sermons, salesmen's pitches, and any other organized routines and styles; (6) the *attitudes and contents* that a message may convey and be about; (7) the *events* themselves, their kinds and characters as wholes—all these must be identified in an adequate way.

Ethnography here is conceived in reference to the various efforts of Conklin, Frake, Goodenough, Metzger, Romney, and others to advance the techniques of ethnographic work and to conceptualize its goal, such that the structural analysis of cultural behavior generally is viewed as the development of theories adequate to concrete cases, just as the structural analysis of behavior as manifestation of a linguistic code is so viewed. One way to phrase the underlying outlook is as a question of validity. Just as analysis of phonological capabilities must determine what set of phonological features is to be taken as relevant to identification and distinction of phonological sound on the part of the possessors of those capabilities, so analysis of cultural capabilities generally must determine what sets of features are to be taken as relevant to identification and contrast of cultural behavior on the part of the participants. (Sapir's "Sound Patterns in Language" [1925], seen as implying a general statement about the cultural aspect of behavior, remains classic and crucial to the development of anthropological thought in this regard, although it has taken a generation for its ethnographic import to become salient.) Another way to phrase the underlying outlook is as a question of the common element in the situation of ethnographer and person-in-the-

culture. Each must formulate from finite experience theories adequate to predict and judge as appropriate or inappropriate what is, in principle, an infinite amount of cultural behavior. (Judgments of grammaticality are a special case.)

Mere observation, however systematic and repeated, can obviously never suffice to meet such high standards of objectivity and validity. As Sapir once observed regarding a rule of avoidance among the Wishram Chinook:

Incidentally there is a lesson here for the theoretical ethnologist. If the avoidance of man and woman here were known only objectively it would present a situation resembling that, say, in Melanesia. One might suppose then the explanation to be that women were set apart from the man's social fabric because of the low esteem in which they were held, or that men avoided them because of their periodic impure state. Either guess would be a shot far wide of the mark. The moral is that it is as necessary to discover what the native sentiment is as well as to record the behavior.²

The point is essentially the same as that of "Sound Patterns in Language," from which stems the current distinction of "etic" and "emic." An "emic" account is one in terms of features relevant in the behavior in question; an etic account, however useful as a preliminary grid and input to an emic (structural) account, and as a framework for comparing different emic accounts, lacks the emic account's validity. The point is an old one in anthropology, only made more trenchant by the clarity with which the point can be made in terms of the contrast between phonetics and phonemics. (See Pike 1954 for coinage of the terms, and conscious development of the perspective from a linguistic basis beyond linguistics, under inspiration from Sapir.) Ethnographic objectivity is intersubjective objectivity, but in the first instance, the intersubjective objectivity in question is that of the participants in the culture. No amount of acoustic apparatus and sound spectrography can crack the phonemic code of a language, and a phonemic analysis, based on the intersubjective objectivity in the behavior of those who share the code, is the necessary basis for other studies, experimental and otherwise. (Cf. Hockett 1955:210-11; Lisker, Cooper, and Liberman 1962.) The same is true for the shared codes which constitute the mutual intelligibility of the rest of cultural behavior. The advantages of such an approach in providing a criterion against which to appraise participants' own explanations and con-

2. Spier and Sapir (1930: 217, n. 97). The point and the language indicate that the comment is due particularly to Sapir. The Wishram avoidance is due to the severe punishment, even death, visited for constructive adultery, which offense may be attributed in some circumstances even for private conversation or physical contact. Cf. the last section of Hymes (1966b).

ceptualizations of their behavior, their "homemade models," should be obvious, as should the advantages in providing a basis for controlled comparison, study of diffusion, and any other generalizing or analyzing approach that depends in the last analysis on the adequacy and precision of ethnographic records of cultural behavior. (Ethnographic records, of course, may be of other things: censuses, for example.)

In a discussion of genealogical method, Conklin (1964:25-26), observing that all kinship data derive from ethnographic contexts, makes explicit his assumptions regarding the nature and purpose of ethnography (citing also Goodenough 1956, and noting Frake 1962b, 1964, and a previous article of his own [1962]). The statement applies to communicative data as well as to kinship data, and can be adopted here:

An adequate ethnography is here considered to include the culturally significant arrangement of productive statements about the relevant relationships obtaining among locally defined categories and contexts (of objects and events) within a given social matrix. These nonarbitrarily ordered statements should comprise, essentially, a cultural grammar (Goodenough 1957a; Frake 1962a). In such an ethnography, the emphasis is placed on the interpretation, evaluation, and selection of alternative statements about a particular set of cultural activities within a given range of social contexts. This in turn leads to the critical examination of intracultural relations and ethnotheoretical models (Conklin 1955; Goodenough ms.). Demonstrable intracultural validity for statements of covert and abstracted relationships should be based on prior analysis of particular and generalized occurrences in the ethnographic record (Lounsbury 1955:163-164, 1956; cf. Morris 1946). Criteria for evaluating the adequacy of ethnographic statements with reference to the cultural phenomena described, include: (1) productivity (in terms of appropriate anticipation if not actual prediction); (2) replicability or testability; and (3) economy. In actual field situations, recording activities, analytic operations, and evaluative procedures (in short, the application of ethnographic technique, method, and theory) can, and I think should, be combined. The improvement and constant adjustment of field recording is, in fact, dependent upon simultaneous analysis and evaluation.

Notice that strict conception of ethnography constrains the conception of communication that is admissible. Just as what counts as phonemic feature or religious act cannot be identified in advance, so with what counts as a communicative event. There are, of course, general criteria for phonemic and for communicative status; it is a question of the phenomena by which they are satisfied in a given case. If one examines the writings of anthropologists and linguists, one finds that general conceptions of communicative status vary, sometimes in ways at variance with the conception of ethnography adopted here.

The concept of message would seem to suffice as starting point for any conception, if one grants two kinds of things. The first is that the concept of message implies the sharing (real or imputed) of (1) a code or codes in terms of which the message is intelligible to (2) participants, minimally an addressor and addressee (who may be the same person), in (3) an event constituted by its transmission and characterized by (4) a channel or channels, (5) a setting or context, (6) a definite form or shape to the message, and (7) a topic and comment, i.e., that it says something about something—in other words, that the concept of message implies the array of components previously given. The second is that what can count as instances of messages, and as instances of the components of the event constituted by the transmission of a message, must be determined in the given case along the lines of the ethnographic approach just discussed and just characterized by Conklin.

If one accepts the latter point, then some anthropological conceptions of communication must be judged to exclude too much, or to include too much, or, occasionally, both. To take first the problem of excluding too much, one cannot a priori define the sound of approaching footsteps (Sapir 1921:3) or the setting of the sun (Hockett 1958:574) as not communicative. Their status is entirely a question of their construal by a receiver. In general, no phenomenon can be defined in advance as never to be counted as constituting a message. Consider a case related by Hallowell:

An informant told me that many years before he was sitting in a tent one afternoon during a storm, together with an old man and his wife. There was one clap of thunder after another. Suddenly the old man turned to his wife and asked, "Did you hear what was said?" "No," she replied, "I didn't catch it." My informant, an acculturated Indian, told me he did not at first know what the old man and his wife referred to. It was, of course, the thunder. The old man thought that one of the Thunder Birds had said something to him. He was reacting to this sound in the same way as he would respond to a human being, whose words he did not understand. The casualness of the remark and even the trivial character of the anecdote demonstrate the psychological depth of the "social relations" with other-than-human beings that becomes explicit in the behavior of the Ojibwa as a consequence of the cognitive "set" induced by their culture. [1964:64]

There are manifold instances from cultures around the world, e.g., to take a recent report, the drinking, questioning and answering in which Amahuaca men are joined by the class of supernaturals known as *yoshi* associated interestingly enough with a specific form of chant and use of the vocal channel (vocal chords tightly constricted) (Carneiro 1964:8). Hallowell's account of the Ojibwa concept of person shows with particular depth the implications of

cultural values and world view for occurrences of communicative behavior. As indication of the contribution a conscious ethnography of communication, focused on occurrences of activity such as speech, might make to such anthropological concerns as world view, let me cite one other Ojibwa instance and Hallowell's interpolated regret: having discussed the fact that stones are classified grammatically as animate in gender, and are conceived as potentially capable of animate behavior, especially in ceremonially-linked circumstances, Hallowell records:

A white trader, digging in his potato patch, unearthed a large stone similar to the one just referred to. He sent for John Duck, an Indian who was the leader of the *wabano*, a contemporary ceremony that is held in a structure something like that used for the *Midewiwin* (a major ceremony during which stones occasionally had animate properties such as movement and opening of a mouth). The trader called his attention to the stone, saying that it must belong to his pavilion. John Duck did not seem pleased at this. He bent down and spoke to the boulder in a low voice, inquiring whether it had ever been in his pavilion. According to John the stone replied in the negative.

It is obvious that John Duck spontaneously structured the situation in terms that are intelligible within the context of Ojibwa language and culture. . . . I regret that my field notes contain no information about the use of direct verbal address in the other cases mentioned (movement of stone, opening of a mouth). But it may well have taken place. In the anecdote describing John Duck's behavior, however, his use of speech as a mode of communication raises the animate status of the boulder to the level of social interaction common to human beings. Simply as a matter of observation we can say that the stone was treated as if it were a "person," not a "thing," without inferring that objects of this class are, for the Ojibwa, necessarily conceptualized as persons. [1964:56]

Again, within the aboriginal culture of the Wishram and Wasco Chinook of the Columbia River, one must recognize not one but three communicative networks within a community, defined by distinct shared codes. One consisted of normal adults, and children past infancy; a second comprised babies, dogs, coyotes, and the guardian spirits Dog and Coyote, and, possibly old people possessing those guardian spirits; a third comprised those whose guardian spirit experience had granted them the power of being able to interpret the language of the spirits.³

If the strict ethnographic approach requires us to extend the concept of communication to the boundaries granted it by partici-

3. With regard to the first and second networks, babyhood lasted "until they could talk clearly" (Spier and Sapir 1930: 218)—in Wishram, of course. With regard to the second, "Such guardian spirits could understand the language of babies. They maintain that a dog, a coyote, and an infant can understand each other, but the baby loses his language when he grows old enough to speak and understand the tongue of his parents" (*ibid.*: 255). With regard