

EXPLORATIONS IN THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING

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INTRODUCTION

Since at least the time of Descartes and Leibniz, there has been current in western thought a conception of language which holds that insofar as language is governed by laws, they are 'the specifically linguistic laws of connection between linguistic signs, within a given, closed linguistic system . . . Individual acts of speaking are, from the viewpoint of language, merely fortuitous refractions and variations or plain and simple distortions of normatively identical forms' (Vološinov 1973:57; see also Hymes 1970a). The prominence, or predominance, of this view in our own century and our own time, makes it especially important to state at the outset of this book our commitment to a contrary view. This work is built on, and intended as a contribution to, a conception which holds that the patterning of language goes far beyond laws of grammar to comprehend the use of language in social life, that such organization inescapably involves the radical linking of the verbal and the sociocultural in the conduct of speaking. The field of inquiry devoted to the discovery of this organization is the ethnography of speaking.

Consistent with current views of the nature and purpose of ethnography, the ethnography of speaking may be conceived of as research directed toward the formulation of descriptive theories of speaking as a cultural system or as part of cultural systems. In order to construct such theories, we need to formulate, heuristically for the present, theoretically later, the range of things that might enable us to comprehend the organization of speaking in social life, the relevant aspects of speaking as a cultural system.¹

The point of departure in such a formulation is the speech community, defined in terms of the shared or mutually complementary knowledge and ability (competence) of its members for the production and interpretation of socially appropriate speech.² Such a community is an organization of diversity,³ insofar as this knowledge and ability (i.e., access to and command of resources for speaking) are differentially distributed among its members; the production and interpretation of speech are thus variable and complementary, rather than homogeneous and constant throughout the community.

Within the overall context of the speech community, the ethnographer of speaking seeks to determine, among other factors, the means of speaking available to its members.⁴ The means include, first of all, the linguistic varieties and other codes and subcodes, the use of which counts as speech within the community, and the distribution of which constitutes the linguistic repertoires of its members (Gumperz 1964). Also constituting means of speaking are the conventional speech acts and genres available to the members for the conduct of speaking.

An additional aspect of the system is the set of community norms, operating principles, strategies, and values which guide the production and interpretation of speech, the community ground rules for speaking. The interest here, for example, is in the nature and distribution of norms of interaction to be found within the community, insofar as these organize spoken interaction. To the extent that these norms of interaction are goal-directed, they may be viewed as strategies, to be studied with reference to the goals of the participants. Goals, in turn, are closely related to values, hierarchies of preference for the judgment and evaluation of speaking. Finally, there are norms of interpretation, conventional understandings brought to bear on the interpretation of speech by the receivers of spoken communication.

All of the foregoing may be seen as resources available to the members of a speech community for the conduct of speaking. This speaking is situated within and seen as meaningful in terms of native contexts of speech activity, i.e., culture-specific settings, scenes, and institutions in which speaking is done. Moreover, this speaking is carried on by the members of the community as incumbents of speaking (and listening) roles, socially defined and situated in relevant contexts.

The nexus of all the factors we have outlined is performance. We conceive of performance in terms of the interplay between resources and individual competence, within the context of particular situations. Performances thus have an emergent quality, structured by the situated and creative exercise of competence.⁵

The task of the ethnographer of speaking, then, is to identify and analyze the dynamic interrelationships among the elements which go to make up performance, toward the construction of a descriptive theory of speaking as a cultural system in a particular society. The studies in this volume represent just such analyses, in the form of case studies. None of the contributions purports to be a complete ethnography of speaking; each is, rather, an exploration in the ethnography of speaking, focusing on particular and salient aspects of individual cultural systems. Not all the aspects of the framework we have outlined have received equal attention, but all are at least touched upon in the papers that follow. The sections of the book are

consistent with the framework and reflect the major concerns of the ethnography of speaking at this stage of its development.

Although the ethnography of speaking was first proposed as 'a special opportunity, and responsibility, of anthropology' (Hymes 1962), it has become increasingly clear in the intervening years that its commitments are substantially shared by a number of disciplines concerned with speaking as an instrument of social life. The ethnography of speaking offers a perspective which cuts across these various disciplines, drawing theoretical and methodological insights from all of them, and contributing in its own right to the development of each. Most centrally involved in this common venture are anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and folklore, all of which are represented in this volume through the identifications and interests of the contributors.

From anthropology, besides the ethnographic method and the traditional anthropological commitment to the importance of language, the ethnography of speaking draws the basic relativism of its perspective (Hymes 1961, 1966), the understanding that speaking, like other systems of behavior – religious, economic, political, etc. – is organized in each society in culture-specific ways, which are to be discovered. This is not to deny the existence of universals, but to assert that they, like other generalizations, must emerge through comparison of individual systems, investigated first in their own terms.

In its turn, the ethnography of speaking fills the gap in the anthropological record created by the neglect by anthropological linguists of the social use of language and by the lack of interest of ethnographers in patterns and functions of speaking. The importance of the ethnography of speaking to anthropology cuts far deeper than this, however, for a careful focus on speaking as an instrument for the conduct of social life brings to the fore the emergent nature of social structures, not rigidly determined by the institutional structure of the society, but rather largely created in performance by the strategic and goal-directed manipulation of resources for speaking. It is for this reason that we have stressed the theme of performance in the organization of this volume.

While it is clearly possible – at times even necessary – to account for certain aspects of the patterns and functions of speaking in a community without immediate reference to linguistic detail, a complete ethnography of speaking must incorporate the linguistic means available to the members of the community. To be consistent with the ethnographic perspective, however, those modes of linguistic description based upon a 'linguistic theory . . . concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a com-

pletely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance' (Chomsky 1965:3) are patently inadequate. Recently, however, an increasing number of linguists have begun to argue for an expansion of linguistic theory, recognizing that it is impossible to describe language adequately without taking into consideration aspects of language use that have previously been considered extraneous to linguistic theory such as speech acts, presuppositions, politeness, and conversational rules.⁶ It is important to stress the strong philosophical bent of much of this research, however, and the fact that it represents a gradual development out of generative-transformational linguistics.⁷

The papers in this volume approach language from a wider ethnographic and social perspective. In this sense, they contribute toward what Hymes has called a socially constituted linguistics, concerned fundamentally with socially based modes of organization of linguistic means rather than the abstract grammar of a single language (Hymes 1973:316). The locus of description is not limited to single individuals, but includes social networks, groups, or communities. The speech community is viewed as inherently heterogeneous; the structure of the heterogeneity must be described. Language use does not occur in isolated sentences, but in natural units of speaking; stated abstractly: speech acts, events, and situations; stated more concretely: greetings, leave-takings, narratives, conversations, jokes, curing chants, or periods of silence. It should be noted that certain concepts and techniques of formal description provided by linguistics, i.e., phrase-structure and transformational rules, have proven useful for the formalization of the structure of such units.

Linguistic anthropologists and folklorists have long come together on the common ground provided by their shared interest in folklore texts, though each discipline has pursued its own particular lines of analysis in the study of these texts, once collected. With the development of the ethnography of speaking, however, paralleled by the development of interest among folklorists in the socially situated performance of folklore, the community of interest has shifted and developed beyond simply the exploitation of common materials, to the pursuit of certain shared analytical goals.⁸ To the ethnography of speaking, folklorists bring a particular sensitivity to genre as an organizing factor of verbal performance, which goes beyond the sentence and directs attention to matters of form, content, performance role, performance situation, and function. By studying the most highly marked, artistic verbal genres in these terms, folklorists contribute not only toward

the filling in of the ethnographic record, but also give prominence to a notion of performance as creative in a sense which goes beyond simply novelty to encompass transcendent artistic achievement.

Awareness of the broader goals of the ethnography of speaking can allow folklorists to view the performance of artistic verbal forms in terms of the overall structure of verbal performance as a whole, establishing both the continuities and discontinuities between verbal art and other modes of speaking within a single unified system. The perspectives and methods of the ethnography of speaking are also indispensable in the determination of native categories of genres and scenes, as well as the elucidation of culture-specific esthetics of spoken language and functions of verbal art forms. All of these represent a crucial counter to the *a priori* taxonomies, esthetic principles, and functionalist assumptions with which folklorists have operated since the emergence of the discipline.

Within the discipline of sociology, there has been a convergence with the ethnography of speaking on the part of a group of scholars who have arrived at an interest in the socially situated use of language through a concern with the commonsense understandings that enable participants to enter into and sustain social interaction. Since speech is the principal instrument of social interaction, this effort has led to investigations of the situated meanings carried by verbal messages in the conduct of an interaction.⁹ These microfunctional analyses of the implicit intentions and understandings which attend participation in conversation carry the analysis of the social use of speech to a finer level than anthropologists have reached, but in terms quite consistent with the conceptual framework of the ethnography of speaking, in its concern with native understandings and rules for the production and interpretation of speech. A closer convergence between the two approaches sees ethnographers looking more closely at the structure of conversation in interaction, while the sociologists enlarge their scope to include other cultures and the organization of contexts of speaking beyond the conversation, as well as careful attention to the features of language itself as integrated with its use.

We have attempted thus far to locate the ethnography of speaking in terms of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary relations among its practitioners, theoretical commitments, and substantive foci of interest. Allowing this general introduction and the essays and introductions which follow to stand as a composite indication of the present state of the ethnography of speaking, what might be suggested concerning the future? How might the field advance during the next decade?

The development which seems to be most immediately in prospect is the publication of more complete ethnographies of speaking, devoted to partic-

ular societies. Many of the contributions to this volume, in fact, are segments of more comprehensive works in progress. These works, when available, will constitute the first full-scale analyses of the patterns and functions of speaking as they ramify throughout the sociocultural life of whole communities, standing as, or approaching, the comprehensive theories of speaking as a cultural system which represent the first major goal of the ethnography of speaking.

A further prospect, as the ethnography of speaking exploits the momentum it has gained during the past decade, is an increase in the number of available case studies of speaking in particular societies. Although the areal coverage of this volume, for example, spans many of the major culture areas of the world, the studies reported on are in many instances the first and only direct explorations in the ethnography of speaking for those areas. Moreover, in this early stage of the development of the field, the tendency has been for ethnographers to study societies or activities in which speaking is a cultural focus and a positively valued activity. Consequently, a reliable base for comparative generalization is yet to be developed since societies differ as to the importance of speaking, both absolutely and relative to particular contexts. As the record expands, however, a more confident ethnology of speaking will be possible. And, as more research is done within geographical areas already represented in the literature, areal patterns and influences will become amenable to investigation.¹⁰

Areal studies, in turn, introduce the dimension of historical process and change. There have as yet been few attempts to utilize perspectives from the ethnography of speaking in elucidating areal distributions and linguistic change (e.g., Gumperz 1967; Weinreich, Labov & Herzog 1968; Sherzer & Bauman 1972), but it is only in the study of pidgins and creoles that such perspectives can be said to be at all prominent, largely through the contribution of the recent *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (Hymes 1971b). The full potential of an ethnographic framework for the analysis of linguistic change remains to be reached.

Far less developed, even, than an ethnographic view of linguistic change, is a historical view of patterns and functions of speaking. Like most ethnography, the ethnography of speaking has been synchronic in scope, and studies of change in patterns and functions of speaking within particular communities are conspicuously lacking in the literature (for exceptions cf. Abrahams 1967; Bauman 1974; Rosaldo 1973). We expect that this situation will change as ethnographic base lines are established from which processes of change may be analyzed either forward or backward in time, and as ethnographers of speaking turn more to the investigation of historical cases through the use of historical materials.

Many more prospects for the ethnography of speaking might be sug-

gested, but perhaps the most important lies in its potential for the clarification and solution of practical social problems. Through awareness of and sensitivity to the socioexpressive dimension of speaking, and to intergroup differences in ways of speaking within heterogeneous communities, ethnographic investigators are particularly well equipped to clarify those problem situations which stem from covert conflicts between different ways of speaking, conflicts which may be obscured to others by a failure to see beyond the referential functions of speaking and abstract grammatical patterns. Understanding of such problem situations is a major step toward their solution, laying the groundwork for planning and change. Some work in this branch of applied sociolinguistics has already been proposed and carried out (e.g., Abrahams 1972; Bauman 1971; Cazden, John & Hymes 1972; Gumperz & Herasimchuk 1973; Kochman 1969; Philips 1970; Shuy MS.); and we are convinced that the next decade will see more and more ethnographic studies of speaking in schools, hospitals, and other institutions of contemporary culture in heterogeneous societies, toward the solution of practical social problems. If our work leads us to understand speaking in social life as adaptive and creative practice, and as a means for the creation of emergent structures, it is only appropriate that we endow the ethnography of speaking with a similar role.

II

COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCES
FOR PERFORMANCE

VI

TOWARD AN ETHNOLOGY OF
SPEAKING

INTRODUCTION

The papers in the four preceding sections represent detailed analyses of particular problems relevant to the ethnography of speaking. Although the papers are closely focused and deal with specific societies, they also raise general methodological and theoretical questions, with wider implications. By contrast, the papers in this final section address themselves primarily to broader issues of method and theory.

The first paper, by Allen Grimshaw, discusses a range of relationships between method and theory in the ethnography of speaking, with particular reference to some of the papers in this volume. Consistent with contemporary linguistics, sociology, and anthropology, Grimshaw stresses the importance of accounting for native intuitions in an ethnography of speaking. But he also warns that the notion of native intuitions cannot be used uncritically; in fact the ethnography of speaking, by its insistence on the interrelation of language and social life, provides new ways of investigating intuitions which avoid the circularity of arbitrarily dealing with linguistic, social, or cultural intuitions as separate systems. Grimshaw also notes the necessary progression from descriptions of particular aspects of speaking to coherent ethnographies of speaking to theory.

During the past decade and even at times in this volume, 'the ethnography of speaking' and 'the ethnography of communication' have been used almost interchangeably.¹ One of the contributions of this field has been the understanding that various communicative modes (verbal, proxemic, kinesic) are not absolutely independent of one another but are rather interrelated in various ways in various societies. Nevertheless, the papers in this volume do focus on speech as a central concern. None of the authors purposely avoids dealing with other communicative modes; indeed, such factors as paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics, silence, and music are dealt with in many of the papers, in their interrelationship with speaking (see papers by Abrahams, Bauman, Darnell, Gossen, Irvine, Philips, Reisman, Sacks, Salmond, Sherzer, and Stross).

Similarly, although the contributors clearly recognize that there are various communicative channels in use in the societies with which they deal, they tend to focus on the spoken. In this regard, Keith Basso, in a programmatic essay which develops from his very meticulous work with the Western Apache, reminds ethnographers of speaking of the importance of writing as a mode of language use. The point he makes is basic to the ethnography of speaking. It is theoretically and methodologically incorrect to arbitrarily exclude writing from a description, since its functions and uses are not universally predictable, but vary from society to

society. What some people do by means of spoken language, others do by means of writing, and still others by means of silence. It is the total system which must ultimately be described.

Dell Hymes has been the most energetic and productive advocate of the ethnography of speaking since he first called the field into being in 1962. Largely through his contribution, the ethnography of speaking has influenced anthropology, linguistics, folklore, sociology, education, and literary criticism, though in various ways and to varying degrees.

The breadth of scope that has characterized his work is evident once again in his contribution to this section. In 'Ways of Speaking,' Hymes argues, ultimately, that grammar is but one way of looking at language. It is only by recognizing the multiplicity of potential ways of speaking and the ways these are selected and organized in particular societies that we can ever hope to account adequately for linguistic creativity or to develop a truly universal theory of language. It is from the perspective that Hymes develops here that we can best see that language and speech, from the everyday colloquial to the most verbally artistic, are not deviations from grammar but creative exploitations of the incredible diversity of linguistic resources available for speaking.

DATA AND DATA USE IN AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS

ALLEN D. GRIMSHAW

The papers in this volume present a wide range and impressive quantity of new empirical data on how people talk and on the rules which govern that talk and its interpretation. Authors have used their data in several different ways, variously (1) organizing descriptive frames from which testable propositions can be derived; (2) creating theoretical frames which facilitate the search for new data sets; (3) actually testing theories. In this connection I would like to elaborate somewhat on the theme of the interaction of data and theory – or more specifically, the uses of societally or culturally specific social behaviors in moving toward identification of behaviors (and structural features constraining those behaviors) characteristic of men in all societies. I will do this by remarking on: (1) sources of data (and their dangers); (2) some modes of organizing data in our search for descriptive adequacy, and (3) reasons for formalization and possibilities for theory which has explanatory adequacy. While I will not always make it explicit, all of what I say should be seen against a comparative backdrop – the 'theys' of specific ethnographic reports and the 'us' of our own society combined into a global 'us' – social man wherever he is found.

Data

Concern about the validity of informant reports is central to the ethnographic enterprise. Labov (1972b) recently chastised a group of linguists about the dangers of circularity and reflexivity in the theory-informed intuition-theory confirmation cycle. He cited a study by Spencer (1972) to demonstrate that while linguists' intuitions about the acceptability of utterances may be acclaimed by other linguists, people in the 'real' world may have quite different intuitions about acceptability – and talk quite differently.¹ Ethnographers working in cultures other than their own are characteristically careful to distrust their *own* intuitions – but may be quite willing to trust the intuitions which their informants have about *their* languages – and to accept uncritically questions and answers about their informants' behaviors from the informants themselves. Surely we should

be at least as skeptical of the reports of unsophisticated native informants as we are of those of trained linguists.²

At least four types of data have been used in papers published in this volume – each of the types of data *may* imply different perspectives on theoretical interpretation. I would like to suggest the possibility that the different types of data are more or less critical at varying points in the process of theoretical development – in the movement from observational to descriptive to explanatory adequacies.

While Chomsky in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) refers only to descriptive and explanatory levels of adequacy, he earlier included a level of observational adequacy and wrote:

we can sketch various levels of success that might be attained by a grammatical description associated with a particular linguistic theory. The lowest level of success is achieved if the grammar presents the observed data correctly. A second and higher level of success is achieved when the grammar gives a correct account of the linguistic intuition of the native speaker, and specifies the observed data (in particular) in terms of significant generalizations that express underlying regularities in the language. A third and still higher level of success is achieved when the associated linguistic theory provides a general basis for selecting a grammar that achieves the second level of success over other grammars consistent with the relevant observed data that do not achieve this level of success. In this case, we can say that the linguistic theory in question suggests an explanation for the linguistic intuition of the native speaker, and specifies the observed data (Hymes for directing me to this discussion.)

My conception of levels of adequacy differs somewhat from that of Chomsky; reflecting differences in the methodological and theoretical problems confronting sociolinguistics and 'autonomous linguistics.'³ I intend the concept of observational adequacy to reflect the great richness of social interaction and of the contexts in which it occurs and I mean to imply that this level of adequacy may be harder to attain for grammars of strategies of verbal interaction than for grammars of languages (see note 3). Observational adequacy implies that all relevant data needed for adequate structural descriptions and for the discovery of rules are collected, whether those data be speech utterances, kinesic accompaniment to speech, knowledge of social relationships, intended ends of speech events, or whatever (Hymes 1967, 1972). In my view this appears to be a task of greater magnitude than 'enumeration of the class . . . of possible sentences' (Chomsky 1965:31),⁴ particularly since ethnographers of communication must select from a behaviorally rich universe of social interaction with only minimally developed theoretical cues as to what data are most needed.⁵

In summary, to Chomsky's criterion that data be reported accurately I want to add the criterion that all *relevant* data be collected if observational

adequacy is to be achieved. Chomsky would not, I believe, disagree. It is simply that a smaller corpus will serve for linguistic analysis than for adequate ethnographies of speaking.

I find Chomsky's specification of requirements for a linguistic theory heuristically useful in suggesting necessary dimensions for descriptive adequacy of grammars of social interaction, *viz.*, the enumeration of possible behaviors (*viz.*, observational adequacy); of possible structural descriptions of those behaviors; of possible generative grammars of interpretive procedures (Cicourel 1969, 1970); and specification of functions relating the behaviors to the structural descriptions and the latter to grammars (Chomsky 1965:31). Also following Chomsky, I would suggest that the next step is one of specifying evaluative procedures for the determination of explanatory adequacy. The procedure for evaluation I want to invoke at this time, however, is simply that of the introduction of experimental variables and controls to test the power of different grammars – the search for universals and *their* explanation must wait until we have specified intrasystemic invariance and variability through an examination of categorical, semi-categorical, and variable rules and violations within societies (or cultures). At some point, however, we must attend directly to universals in communicative acts.⁶

While acknowledging that reality is actually considerably more complex, it can be argued for my purposes here that four types of data are used in the papers above. They include:

1. 'natural' speech (and other communicative behavior) observed in natural settings;
2. 'natural' speech (and other communicative behavior) observed in contrived settings (which *can* become natural), *viz.*, in gatherings convened by the ethnographer or in experimental groups, etc.;
3. elicited speech (and/or other communicative behavior) and/or rules about that speech or other behavior reported by informants to ethnographers in response to direct inquiry;
4. historical and/or literary materials.⁷

There is obviously considerable overlap amongst these categories as they appear in the papers in this volume; nonetheless I think it can be claimed that different criteria of adequacy particularly apply to the several types of data as outlined. Criteria of observational adequacy (as defined above) are clearly most relevant in natural settings. However, the other types of data are also produced in contexted situations and researchers should not ignore, for example, the purposes for which historical materials were originally produced (Gottschalk 1945), or the presence of audiences when elicitation is being done.

Following the definition of descriptive adequacy I am using here, *viz.*,

the enumeration of all possible behaviors and grammars, it would seem that criteria might best be approximated with data observed in constructed settings and in straight elicitation; in both such instances the investigator has greater control over the information which may be available. (The necessary *caveats* about imposition of the investigator's own etic frames are assumed.) Finally, using explanatory adequacy as I have, it would seem that constructed settings, which permit the introduction of experimental variables and controls, would be most likely to meet criteria. There will also be instances, however, where direct elicitation procedures can be used to *identify* critical variables and there will be other fortunate happenstances in which natural settings provide the full range of occasions needed for testing theories (or the relative power of specific grammatical formulations). I find it difficult to assign the data obtained from examination of historical and literary materials to any of the three levels of adequacy; I simply don't know enough about such materials.

The papers above also presented data on different varieties of speech (or other communicative acts) in a range of different speech communities. A partial listing of types of speech acts would include: greetings, insults, requests, gossip, story-telling, silence, speech-making, and discussing. These and other types of communicative behavior simultaneously vary along two dimensions: (1) conscious awareness (by participants) of engaging in a special kind of behavior and concomitant awareness of rules; and (2) amenability to experimental manipulation and/or accessibility to elicitation.⁸

Analysis: Formal and otherwise

While I do not mean to imply a hierarchy of virtue — some kinds of analyses do seem logically to precede others — and as analyses become more formalized and complex different kinds of questions come to be implied. Generally, it seems to me that fine-grained anecdotal description may be a first step (and a very critical one) in which identification of *pattern and variation* are undertaken. In brief, an interesting phenomenon is identified. Once pattern and variation begin to emerge, taxonomies seem naturally to follow — at least if you will accept my claim that an ordered universe is axiomatic for social scientists. Such taxonomies have been generated through use of distinctive feature analysis (or perhaps validated in that manner); through componential analysis; or simply by the sorting of data into sets or classes of events.

It seems to me that a next analytic step for many ethnographers of communication will be in the direction of the adoption (or adaptation) of notation systems and the writing of grammars or proto-grammars. I

have observed elsewhere that Goffman may be moving in precisely such a direction as he gets deeper and deeper into the analysis of microinteraction — that I would not be surprised at all if he would soon need a formal notation and rule-discovery procedures for social interactional transformations (Grimshaw 1973b). I find a number of the papers in this volume convincing and exciting precisely because they have moved toward the writing of grammars or proto-grammars without the loss of the 'juice,' or 'drama' of real-life interaction.

Once we have grammars, of course, it is imperative that we move back to the real world in which there are (for each linguistic, sociological, or sociolinguistic system) semi-categorical and variable rules as well as categorical rules (on these rules see the discussion of Labov's work, including citations, in Grimshaw 1973a) and extrasystemic universals. It is particularly important, it seems to me, to pay attention to rule violations and to variable rules (which are *not* the same as optional rules). Most contributors who based their papers on the analysis of contemporary speech acts and events (as well as those who used historical or literary materials) attended to violations. Sankoff's paper is particularly valuable in this regard because she has taken the next step and moved to the systematic analysis of violation . . . what seems to me to be a critically important and still largely neglected area of sociolinguistic inquiry.

In defense of formalism

It will be evident from what I have already said that I favor movement in the direction of rule-specification and what has been labeled, frequently negatively, formalism. In closing my remarks I would like to suggest some reasons for my aesthetic inclination towards formalism (which I think is not incompatible with the richness of ethnographic description which none of us wants to lose). I have reviewed some of them elsewhere in an attempt to explain our collective tropism for universals (Grimshaw 1973a).

Briefly, the reasons for formalizing statements on speech — whether that formalization is essayed through taxonomies, feature analysis, statement of grammars, heuristic paradigms such as Hymes' SPEAKING (1967, 1972), or whatever — are as follows (this is not an exhaustive catalogue; those I list here seem particularly germane to the current discussion):

1. Patterned uniformities are 'there' (in the same sense that mountain peaks are 'there' for climbers). We axiomatically hold that there is order in the universe — and we want to know what that order is.
2. Research is facilitated through the narrowing of problems (we know what and what not to look for).
3. Codification highlights parallels with other domains (as in Gary

Gossen's identification of the mutually implicative metaphor of heat in the speaking and cosmological systems of the Chamula).

4. Formalization reveals parallels across systems, *viz.*, the possibility that similar types of rules operate in linguistic, sociological, and socio-linguistic systems. There are possibilities for a unified theory of human behavior.

I might add, though it will for some readers overlap with the first reason given, *viz.*, that they're there, that it's simply fun to look for patterns and to try to capture them in formal statements.

Unasked – and unanswered – questions

I have left unasked many questions about conceptual frames used in the collection and analysis of those data by ethnographers of speaking. In particular, I am concerned about the precise nature of the impact of our etic presuppositions on research design and elicitation procedures. I have also left unresolved the implicit questions I have raised about reliability and validity of data, the usefulness of informants' intuitions, different modes of analysis, the usefulness of formalization (and its possible costs), and so on.

I submit that progression from 'ethnographies of speaking' to an 'ethnology of speaking' is both scientifically and aesthetically desirable. If contributors to this volume and other 'ethnographers of speaking' share that goal they will have to attend to both my unasked and my unanswered questions.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF WRITING

KEITH H. BASSO

The study of writing systems has had a long history within the discipline of anthropology and opinions concerning its importance, as well as the kinds of theoretical problems to which it should properly address itself, have exhibited considerable diversity. Nineteenth-century evolutionists seized upon the presence or absence of writing as typological criteria which, when used to define different levels of cultural development, served handily to distinguish 'civilization' from its antecedent stages (cf. Bastian 1860; Maine 1873; McClennan 1876; Tylor 1865). Shortly before 1900, interest shifted to the history of writing itself, and in the years that followed a number of unilinear schemes were propounded which purported to trace the evolution of graphic communication from its simplest forms to the appearance of full-blown alphabets (e.g., Cohen 1958; Diringer 1949, 1962; Fevrier 1948; Gelb 1963; Mallory 1886, 1893; Moorhouse 1953). In the 1930s and 40s, by which time American anthropologists had turned their attention to other issues, writing systems figured prominently in discussions of stimulus diffusion, independent invention, internal patterning, and the acceptance, rejection, and modification of diffused cultural traits (cf. Kroeber 1948). During the same period, however, the study of writing began to suffer at the hands of linguists. Depicted by members of the emergent structural school as a pale and impoverished reflection of language, writing was consigned to a position of decidedly minor importance. Textbooks continued to include brief chapters on the subject, but this was to emphasize that writing and language were entirely distinct and that the former had no place within the domain of modern linguistics (cf. Bloomfield 1933; Bolinger 1968; Gleason 1961; Hockett 1958; Langacker 1968; Lyons 1968). As a consequence of these views, and the uncompromising way in which they were expressed, interest in writing systems declined abruptly. It has continued at a low ebb ever since, neither transformational linguistics nor fresh approaches to cultural evolution having had salutary effects, and it is my impression that with some notable exceptions (e.g., Chao 1968; Conklin 1949a, 1949b, 1953; Ferguson 1971; Goody 1968; Goody & Watt 1962; Gelb 1963; Greenberg 1957; Hymes 1961,

1962, 1964b) contemporary anthropologists and linguists are of the opinion that the study of writing, though certainly not without intrinsic value, has little relevance to broader problems in either field.

In this paper I want to suggest that the study of writing systems can be profitably aroused from its current slumber by placing it squarely in the context of the ethnography of communication. In contrast to earlier approaches, which have dealt almost exclusively with the internal structure of written codes, the one proposed here focuses upon writing as a form of communicative *activity* and takes as a major objective the analysis of the structure and function of this activity in a broad range of human societies. Such a perspective does not obviate the need for adequate code descriptions — on the contrary, studies of this kind remain essential — but it intentionally goes beyond them to place primary emphasis upon an understanding of the social and cultural factors that influence the ways written codes are actually used. In this way, attention is directed to the construction of models of performance as well as to models of competence, to the external variables that shape the activity of writing as well as to the conceptual grammars that make this activity possible.

Above all, the present approach takes into full account the fact that writing, wherever it exists, is always only one of several communication channels available to the members of a society. Consequently, the conditions under which it is selected and the purposes to which it is put must be described in relation to those of other channels. This requirement suggests that the ethnographic study of writing should not be conceived of as an autonomous enterprise, divorced and separate from linguistics, kinesics, proxemics, and the like, but as one element in a more encompassing field of inquiry which embraces the totality of human communication skills and seeks to generalize about their operation *vis-à-vis* one another in different sociocultural settings. Viewed in this light, the study of writing takes on new life, added substance, and broader scope. Simultaneously, I believe, it finds a comfortable but non-trivial place in modern linguistic anthropology.

The ethnography of a writing system necessarily begins with a description of the code itself. The adequacy of such a description should be judged by its ability to permit someone who is unfamiliar with the code — but who is competent in the spoken language of which it is an isomorph and familiar with the process of reading in general — to produce and decipher legible written messages. In other words, it should provide him with the knowledge necessary to become literate in this language. This means, of course, that the phonetic, prosodic, and (in some cases) kinesic values of graphic symbols must be identified and defined in strict accordance with distinctions persons

already literate in the language recognize as valid, necessary, and appropriate. If these distinctions are not disclosed, or if they are arbitrarily replaced with distinctions derived from some other system of writing, the knowledge necessary to use the code correctly will almost certainly remain hidden.¹

In addition, an adequate description of a written code should include a formulation of rules governing the following kinds of phenomena:

1. The forms and meanings of alternate representations. Capitalization and italicization in contemporary alphabetic scripts such as English serve as useful illustrations.

2. The combination of discrete symbols into larger constructions that are functionally equivalent to words. Here, of course, one confronts the rules of spelling, certainly the most critical component in any system of writing.

3. The combination of words into still larger units such as sentences, as well as the arrangement of these units into rows, columns, circles, or whatever other models may be appropriate. Although rules determining these arrangements are usually quite simple, they cannot be ignored because besides specifying the order in which messages are inscribed they indicate the order in which they are read — right to left, top to bottom in Chinese; left to right, top to bottom in French; boustrophedon in certain ancient scripts, etc.

4. All graphic devices implied by the term punctuation. To take some familiar examples from written English, 'spaces' separate words, 'question marks' and 'exclamation points' may signal the completion of sentences, and 'indented lines' mark the beginning of paragraphs.

It should be obvious that just as cultures may contain lexically labelled categories denoting units of language so may they include categories denoting units of writing. In our own culture, for example, every written symbol is named (e.g., 'a,' 'b,' 'one,' 'two,' 'period,' 'comma,' 'semicolon,' etc.), and a number of lexemes are available to classify higher-level constructions as well (e.g., 'number,' 'line,' 'stanza,' 'page,' etc.). In a native American Indian script still in use among Western Apaches living in east central Arizona, none of the symbols have specific names, but each is classified according to whether it 'tells what to say' (i.e., denotes some unit of speech) or 'tells what to do' (i.e., denotes some set of ritual gestures) (Basso and Anderson 1973). Other folk taxonomies of writing need to be studied because, surprising though it may seem, we do not yet possess an exhaustive inventory of the dimensions of contrast used by the world's peoples to partition graphic symbols into functionally significant classes. This kind of information is basic to the modification and improvement of existing comparative typologies which, though apparently adequate for alphabetic and

syllabic scripts (Voegelin & Voegelin 1961), are deficient with respect to systems composed of logographic, phraseographic, and mnemonic signs (Basso and Anderson 1973).

Armed with an adequate code description, the ethnographer of writing may turn his attention to a more complex set of problems involving the code's manipulation in concrete situations. What is called for, essentially, is a grammar of rules for code use together with a description of the types of social contexts in which particular rules (or rule subsets) are selected and deemed appropriate. As Hymes (1962, 1964b, 1972) has suggested, a useful way to begin such a task is to discover the classes of communication acts – in our case, acts of writing or writing events – which are recognized as distinct by members of the society under study. Having determined the dimensions on which these classes are conceived to contrast, instances of each class may be analyzed in terms of relationships that obtain among a set of heuristically isolable components which compose the act itself. As identified by Jakobson (1960) and Hymes (1962, 1964a, 1964b, 1972), these components include the status and role attributes of participants, the form of the message, the code in which it is communicated, a channel of transmission, and the physical setting in which the message is encoded and decoded. The aim of analyses framed in these terms is to demonstrate covariation among components, thus revealing structure in the performance of communication events and paving the way for an examination of their functions.

By way of illustration, I would now like to consider selected aspects of 'letter writing' as this activity is conceptualized and performed by faculty members and graduate students at an American university. I shall assume that the code in use is a written version of standard American English, that transmission is accomplished through services provided by the United States Postal Service, and that a portion of the messages identified as 'letters' may be classified more specifically in accordance with categories presented in the folk taxonomy which appears in Table 15. I shall concentrate on the distinction between 'formal' and 'personal' letters and, holding constant the variable of setting, focus on the interrelationships that exist between participants, form, topic, and function. Although my discussion is intentionally brief and by no means thorough, it should serve to demonstrate the applicability of Hymes' strategy to the study of writing, and, in addition, convey some idea of the kinds of questions such a strategy requires us to ask.

Participants. Every act of 'letter writing' involves at least one sender and one receiver, and it is only to remark upon the obvious that the nature of their social relationship exerts a powerful influence on the decision to exchange 'formal' or 'personal' letters. My informants receive 'personal

TABLE 15. *Partial taxonomy of 'personal' and 'formal' letters*

1.0	letters	1.1	personal letters	1.1.1	thank-you letters
				1.1.2	bread-and-butter letters
				1.1.3	gag letters
				1.1.4	letters from home
				1.1.5	love letters
				1.1.6	Dear John letters
				1.1.7	Dear Jane letters
				1.1.8	poison pen letters
				1.1.9	pen pal letters
		1.2	formal letters	1.2.1	business letters
				1.2.2	credit letters
				1.2.3	letters of application
				1.2.4	letters of introduction
				1.2.5	letters of recommendation
				1.2.6	letters of transmittal
				1.2.7	letters of resignation
				1.2.8	letters to the editor
				1.2.9	letters to the manager/ management
2.0	notes				
3.0	cards				

letters' from 'parents,' 'relatives,' and 'friends,' the latter being described as persons with whom one has engaged in sustained face-to-face interaction and shared feelings of 'closeness,' 'affection,' 'sorrow,' 'trust,' 'sympathy,' 'anger,' 'love,' and 'generosity.' 'Formal letters,' on the other hand, are exchanged by parties whose relationship is characterized by the absence of social proximity. On some occasions, the sender and receiver are completely unknown to each other, but even in those instances where some prior relationship exists it is by definition less affective, less intense, and less firmly grounded in bonds of genuine mutual concern. As one informant put it, 'You send personal letters to people who count as *people*. Formal letters go to people – sure – but not because you care about them as individuals.'

Form. According to my informants, 'formal letters' should be typewritten on 'good quality paper,' which is 'white' or 'off-white' in color and of a 'standard size'; they are composed with an eye to neatness, proper grammar and punctuation, well constructed sentences, and the careful avoidance of words or lengthier constructions that are 'obscene.' 'Formal letters' also

begin with 'headings' giving the name and address of the receiver, regularly contain honorifics and stock phrases (e.g., 'Dear Sir'; 'Please let me know if I may be of further assistance'), and should not be decorated with 'doodles,' 'designs,' or 'cartoons.' In contrast, 'personal letters,' though sometimes typed, are usually handwritten, and may be penned or pencilled on paper of any quality, any color, and any size, including 'notebook paper,' 'paper napkins,' or 'anything you can write on, fold, and put in an envelope.' Letters in the 'personal' category lack 'headings,' and may incorporate 'sloppy grammar,' 'weird punctuation' (e.g., omission of all commas and periods), 'obscenities,' and a variety of non-orthographic representations depicting objects such as flowers, animals, landscapes, people, or 'anything you feel like drawing.'

Topic. As indicated by the various subtypes of 'formal' and 'personal' letters, these two classes of message pertain to distinct spheres of social experience. 'Formal letters' deal primarily with topics that arise in the course of relationships with public institutions (or persons representing such institutions), particularly those which provide goods and services in exchange for money or which figure prominently in one's occupation or profession. Only 'letters to the editor' and 'letters to the manager,' which my informants claim can address themselves to a wide variety of topics, do not have a direct bearing on commercial activities, professional matters, or employment. 'Personal letters,' on the other hand, focus on more 'intimate' topics which are related to aspects of the exclusive relationship that exists between sender and receiver. 'Personal letters' may contain discussions of the sender's innermost wishes and desires, his emotional ups and downs, his attitudes toward other people (including the receiver), or simply — and very frequently — his own reactions to recent events. Letters of this kind convey more of the sender's 'inner self' and 'private world,' and therefore can be expected to include topics of immediate relevance to his need for self-expression which may appear 'trivial' or 'insignificant' to anyone except the receiver.

Function. Although some of the subtypes of 'personal' and 'formal' letters are categorized according to topic (e.g., 'love letters,' 'business letters') and the social identities of sender and/or receiver (e.g., 'letters from home,' 'pen pal letters,' 'letters to the editor'), the majority are classified on the basis of their intended purpose or function. Thus, 'gag letters' are meant to provoke humor, 'Dear John' and 'Dear Jane' letters to terminate a relationship based on heterosexual love, and 'thank-you letters' to express gratitude for the receipt of a gift or service. 'Letters of resignation' sever an occupational relationship, 'letters of application' request the establishment of one, and 'letters of introduction' clear the way for an encounter between some person known to the sender but unknown to the receiver. With respect to

the general distinction between 'formal' and 'personal' letters, my informants agreed that the former are more likely to be directive or pragmatic in function ('aimed at getting things done,' as one individual put it), while the latter can be expected to be more expressive. The greatest area of overlap, it was noted, occurs with respect to referential functions, since there is an equal probability that both 'formal' and 'personal' letters will contain requests for information on particular topics (e.g., 'When does Jones intend to sell the Amco stock?' 'How long has Pam been preggers?').

Obviously, much more could be said about 'letter writing' in America, but the material presented to this point should be sufficient to suggest that the distinction between 'formal' and 'personal' letters is matched by variation in the form and content of these types of messages, their immediate functions, and the kinds of social relationships that obtain among individuals who exchange them. 'Formal letters' are commensurate with social distance, conform to a number of stylistic requirements, dwell upon topics of an impersonal nature, and serve primarily pragmatic functions. In comparison, 'personal letters' reinforce social solidarity, permit a greater degree of stylistic freedom, focus on more individualized topics, and function expressively. Unremarkable though these findings may seem to persons already familiar with American culture they illustrate the premise that the components of writing events can be described and analyzed in systemic terms. Simultaneously, and even more important, they demonstrate the feasibility of investigating the activity of writing as a dynamic component in the conduct and organization of social relations.

As I have implied earlier, the most conspicuous shortcoming of traditional studies of writing is that they reveal very little about the social patterning of this activity or the contributions it makes to the maintenance of social systems. Fully aware that the past cannot be held responsible for what the present deems important, I have also implied that these topics should be of vital concern to the ethnography of writing.

How, for example, is the ability to write distributed among the members of a community, and how does the incidence of this ability vary with factors such as age, sex, socioeconomic class and the like? With what types of activities is writing associated, and in what types of settings do these activities customarily take place? What kinds of information are considered appropriate for transmission through written channels, and how, if at all, does this information differ from that which is passed through alternate channels such as speech? Who sends written messages to whom, when, and for what reasons? Is the ability to write a prerequisite for achieving certain social statuses, and, if so, how are these statuses evaluated by other members of the community? How do individuals acquire written codes in the first

place — from whom, at what age, under what circumstances, and, again, for what reasons? What are the accepted methods of instruction and of learning? And what kinds of cognitive operations are involved? Is writing considered a source of pleasure and fulfillment? Is excellence in writing valued as a form of graphic and literary art? In short, what position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is the range of its cultural meanings?

These and a host of related questions are rarely asked by ethnographers and linguists, but answers to them are essential if we are to gain a full appreciation of the varied roles played by graphic communication systems in human societies. As stated previously, the realization of this aim depends upon our willingness to augment analyses of the structure of written codes with analyses of their manifest and latent functions in particular socio-cultural settings. For it is only on the basis of a comparative study of writing that we can begin to generalize about its effects on the development and organization of cultural systems (and vice versa) as well as its influence upon the lives of individuals.

By now I hope it is evident that studies of the kind proposed here have relevance beyond the subject of writing per se to broader issues of theoretical and applied interest in linguistics and anthropology. For example, grammars of cultural rules that guide the use of written codes can contribute directly to a more general definition of communicative competence and a fuller understanding of the conceptual skills it may entail. On the other hand, rigorous functional analyses are indispensable to modern evolutionary studies that attempt to explain the emergence, survival, or disappearance of cultural forms in terms of their role in promoting or inhibiting adaptation to particular cultural environments. Finally, it is easy to see how a knowledge of the values and attitudes that illiterate peoples bring to graphic communication would be of significant value in the formulation and implementation of effective literacy programs.

Adequate ethnographies of writing do not yet exist because linguists and anthropologists alike have grown accustomed to investigating written codes with only passing reference to the social systems in which they are embedded. In this essay, I have suggested that the time has come for this strategy to be reversed. When all is said and done, we shall find that the activity of writing, like the activity of speaking, is a supremely social act. Simultaneously, I believe, we shall find that it is far more complex — and therefore more intriguing — than we have suspected heretofore.

WAYS OF SPEAKING

DELL HYMES

We start from the speech community conceived as an 'organization of diversity'; we require concepts and methods that enable us to deal with that diversity, that organization. The great stumbling block is that the kinds of organization most developed by linguists presuppose the grammar as their frame of reference. (By grammar is meant here the genre of grammars.) Since its invention in classical antiquity, the grammar has been dominated by association with analysis of a single, more or less homogeneous, norm. In earlier periods the choice of norm was determined by social constraints. Linguistics, as grammar, came into existence to dissect and teach just that language, or language-variety, that embodied valued cultural tradition (Homeric Greek, the Sanskrit of the Vedas, the Chinese of the Confucian classics), not just any language; indeed, not any other language at all. The grammar, like the language, was an instrument of hegemony. In recent times the choice of norm has been determined often enough by factors intrinsic to the linguistic task. Although the class background of linguists favors the 'standard' of the schools, considerations of simplicity, clarity, fullness, of whatever is advantageous to the linguistic task itself, have also entered. Linguists have often been as decisive as schoolmasters in excluding things. With the schoolmaster, exclusion may have been for reasons of prestige and pedantry; with the linguist, it may most often have been for the sake of a model or an elegant result; but the consequence in relation to the speech patterns of a community as a whole has not been too different. Much of those patterns, when not ignored, can be accommodated only in terms of deviations from the privileged account. It is not revealed in its own right.

Now, if members of a community themselves class certain patterns of speech as deviant, mixtures, marginal, or the like, that is a significant fact; but we do not want to be trapped into having to treat phenomena that way, merely because of the limitations of the model with which we start. Where community members find patterns natural, we do not want to have to make them out to be unnatural.

The available term for an alternative starting point is style. We propose to

consider a speech community initially as comprising a set of *styles*. By 'style,' we do not in the first instance mean one or another of the specific uses to which this protean term has been put, but just the root sense of a way or mode of doing something. We need to use the term neutrally, generally, for any way or mode, all ways and modes.

Recently a way of dealing with speech styles has been made explicit by Ervin-Tripp (1972), building on work of Gumperz (cf. Gumperz 1972:21). Their achievement fits into the history of achievements with descriptive concepts in linguistics. That history can be seen as one of the successive discovery of concrete universals, such that language could be described in terms relevant to a specific system, yet applicable to all; terms, that is, free of bias due to a particular context, and mediating between given systems and general theory, doing justice to both. In phonology, the concepts of the phoneme, and then of distinctive features, have been such. In morphology, the generalizations of the morpheme as a concept for all formatives of a language, and of terms for grammatical categories, processes, and types, were also such. Much of this work was accomplished by Boas, Sapir, Bloomfield, and their students, and depended upon universalizing the range of languages to be described. Recent efforts in syntactic and semantic analysis have had a related aim, pushing the search for universal aspects of grammar to new depths, although sometimes at the expense of specific systems. We have reached a point at which the concept of grammar itself is that which needs to be transcended.

In recent years a number of linguists have recognized this possibility (e.g., Whorf, Firth, Harris, Joos), but their insights have not been systematically followed up. (On this point, and others in this section, cf. Hymes 1970.) Styles have been noted with regard to a variety of bases (authors, settings, groups), but not style itself as the general basis of description. Often enough the notion of style has been invoked ad hoc, simply to save the ordinary grammatical analysis (as often with role and status differences (see Hymes 1970)). Ervin-Tripp has now generalized two principles of modern linguistics, the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic relations, and freed them from dependence on a particular sector of grammar, or on a formal grammatical model. She develops two notions, *rules of co-occurrence*, and *rules of alternation*. The point, obvious after the event, yet novel and liberating, is that one can characterize whatever features go together to identify a style of speech in terms of rules of co-occurrence among them, and can characterize choice among styles in terms of rules of alternation. The first concept gives systematic status to the ways of selecting and grouping together of linguistic means that actually obtain in a community. The second concept frees the resulting styles from mechanical connection with a particular defining situation. Persons are recognized to choose among styles them-

selves, and the choices to have social meaning. (This is the vantage point from which a variety of phenomena treated separately under headings such as bilingualism, diglossia, standard and non-standard speech, and the like, can be integrated.)

These notions are well exemplified in Ervin-Tripp's study (1972). Here I want to build upon them in the three sections that follow, by considering further their relationship to the description of a speech community: (a) more enters into speech styles than is usually identified linguistically, and (b) the concept of speech styles requires specification and supplementation in an ethnography of speaking. Finally, (c) the notion of style is not just an alternative to the notion of grammar, but has application to grammar itself, as something socially constituted.

The two elementary functions

For nearly half a century American linguists have taken as fundamental to their science the assumption that in a speech community some utterances are the same in form and meaning (Bloomfield 1933:144; Swadesh 1948:257 note 11; Postal 1968:7, 12, 217). The assumption has enabled them to identify relevant differences, as opposed to irrelevant differences, and thus to identify the elementary units in terms of whose relationships a grammar is defined. Built into the assumption has been the corollary that relevant differences were of just one kind. As Bloomfield once put it, when a beggar says 'I'm hungry' and a child says 'I'm hungry,' to avoid going to bed, the linguist is interested just in what is the same in the two utterances, not in what is different. From his standpoint, the utterances count as repetitions. 'You're hungry,' 'he's hungry,' 'she's hungry,' 'it's hungry,' etc., would count as structurally revealing contrasts, as to grammatical forms. 'It's dungaree' (pronounced to rhyme with 'hungry') would be a revealing contrast, as to features of sound. 'I'm hungary' (pronounced to rhyme with 'hungry'), said perhaps by a representative of an east European country, would be an instance of homophony between distinct forms (as in 'pair,' 'pear') and perhaps open up consideration of contextual differentiation, differences between written and spoken forms of the language, and the like. None of this would broach the possibility that utterances of the same forms, in the same order, might be, not repetition, but contrast. Yet there are two standpoints from which utterances may be the same or different in form and meaning.

The second kind of repetition and contrast in language has been demonstrated especially well in the work of Labov in New York City (1966). One line of evidence for his study consisted precisely of the respect in which successive utterances of the same forms, in the same order (from the one

point of view) were not repetitions, but in contrast. The presence or absence of *r*-constriction after a vowel in a word, indeed, the degree of *r*-constriction, is variable in New York City speech. The variation is associated with social status, on the one hand, and with context, on the other. In situations of the same degree of self-consciousness persons of different social status will differ in the proportion of *r*-constriction in their speech. Persons of the same social status, indeed, the same person, will differ as between situations of less self-consciousness and more (as between situations of lesser and greater formality in a sense). Labov went to the third floors of department stores, chosen for differences in the social status of their customers and employees, and asked the location of something that he knew was located on the floor above. The clerk would respond with an utterance including 'on the fourth floor.' Labov would say, 'Huh?' or the equivalent, and the clerk would repeat. The proportions of *r*-constriction differed among stores, as anticipated, and also as between first utterance and repetition. There was more *r*-constriction in the second, presumably somewhat more self-conscious, utterance.

There is an import, a meaningfulness, to the differences in *r*-constriction. Persons are judged, and judge themselves, in terms of this among other features of speech. It is not, of course, that such a feature is simply an automatic manifestation of identity. As indicated above, one and the same person will vary. The feature does have a social meaning, such that presence of *r*-constriction is positively valued, and its absence disvalued, in assigning social standing. But the 'creative' aspect of language use enters here as well. The *r*-ness of an utterance may spontaneously express the identity of the speaker; and it may express the speaker's attitude toward topic, hearer, or situation. The more *r*-less style may be consciously adopted by a politician to convey solidarity with voters as a 'regular' guy.

This is a general fact about such features. Not all babytalk is used by, or to, babies. We have to do with features in terms of which utterances may contrast, features subject to meaningful choice as much as the kinds of features usually described in grammars.

In short, the speech styles of communities are not composed only of the features and elements of ordinary grammar, differently related. Speech styles are composed of another kind of feature and element as well. The competence of members of a community has to do with both kinds.

The two kinds of repetition and contrast, the two kinds of features, could be distinguished as 'referential' and 'stylistic,' and I shall frequently make use of these two terms as shorthand labels. We must be careful not to overinterpret these terms, or any other pair of terms. Both kinds of features are to be understood as elementary *diacritic* features, and as based on two complementary elementary diacritic functions, constitutive of linguistic means.

The relevant 'referential' difference that makes syllabically identical pronunciations of 'hungry' and 'dung(a)ree' initially different does no more than differentiate; it does not express any part of the meaning of a state of the stomach (or soul), or of the material of a pair of trousers. Just so the relevant 'stylistic' difference between 'I'm hungry' with light aspiration, and 'I'm hungry' with heavy aspiration of the *h*-, does not of itself express the particular meaning of the contrast. Difference in aspiration is available as a stylistic feature in English, just because it is not employed as a referential feature. (Unlike Hindi, in which /pil/ and /phil/ would be different forms in the lexicon, they are the same form in the English lexicon, differently expressed.) But difference in aspiration, like vowel length, and other elementary English stylistic features, is just that: elementary. It is available for use, just as the differences between /h/ : /d/, /p/ : /b/, etc., are available for use, diacritically. In one instance its use may be metalinguistic, to clarify a meaning: 'I said "phill," not "bill."' In other instance, it may be used to express attitude – emphasis being employed for the sake of insistence, hostility, admiration, etc. In yet another kind of case, it may be used to qualify the attributes of something talked about, as to just how big, or intense, or the like, something was; such uses verge on the referential meanings of utterances ('It was big, I mean, bi:::g').

This last kind of case should be paired with another. The kinds of meaning we often think of as stylistic, expressive, attitudinal, and the like, are of course frequently encoded in languages in lexicon and grammar. There are words for emotions and tones of voice, and 'expressive' elaborations in morphology and morphophonemics proper (cf. Ullman 1953; Stankiewicz 1954, 1964; Van Holk 1962). When one considers linguistic means from the standpoint of the communication of a given kind of meaning, one finds features of both the 'referential' and 'stylistic' kind involved. To a very great extent, features of the type here called 'referential' are involved in what may be said to be *designative* and *predicative* roles: naming things talked about and stating things about them. Yet what is talked about may be conveyed with aid of stylistic features ('No, not that one, the bi:::g one'), and the logical standing and truth value of sentences may depend crucially on stylistic features (e.g., features which define the sentence as mocking rather than sincere). To a very great extent, features of the type here called 'stylistic' are involved in what may be said to be *characterizing* and *qualifying* roles: modifying things talked about and saying how what is said about them is to be taken. Yet, as observed just above, lexical and grammatical ways of accomplishing these purposes exist.

The situation is parallel to that of lexicon in relation to grammar. De Saussure observed that a general theory of language could not be confined to either, because what was done in one language by lexical means was done

in another grammatically and conversely. It is the same at a deeper level with the 'referential' and 'stylistic' vectors of language. Within a given system the features and structures of the two are intertwined, *imbricated*, one might say. From the standpoint of a comparison of systems in terms of functions served by them, both must be considered, or part of the verbal means of a community will be missed, and with it, essential aspects of a general theory.

Consider aspiration, for example. On a referential basis alone, it is not a phonological universal: some languages have it, some do not. On a referential and stylistic basis, quite possibly all languages employ it as a conventional means of expression. Indeed, I venture to speculate that a number of features, not now recognized as universal, will prove to be so, when the stylistic vector of language is taken into account. The initial question about features, then, is whether or not they are conventional means in all communities. It is a *second* question to ask if they serve referential function (as distinct from stylistic). Just because the referential and stylistic use of features is interdependent within individual systems, and because stylistic function is itself universal, the number of features that have stylistic use, when they do not have referential, and that hence are truly universal, is likely to be substantial.

Other candidates for status as linguistic universals include vowel length, reduplication, pitch accent, syllabification, word order, and properties such as a minimal vowel system. In Wasco, for example, a purely phonological analysis, seeking to eliminate redundancy, might arrive at a system of three vowels (i, u, a). Yet one can hardly use Wasco appropriately without employing a vowel primarily serving rhetorical emphasis, low front *ae* (as in English 'hat'). Generally phonological analysis, seeking to eliminate redundancy, and to find in languages only systems of differences, discard essential features of communication. A phonological feature, redundant from the standpoint of economically distinguishing words, may yet identify normal or native speech, and contrast with its absence. (Try speaking English without the redundant voicing of nasals [m, n, ng]; a telling case is analyzed in Hymes 1970.) The loan-words with phonological particularities set aside in some 'economical' analyses are still in use in the community. The fewer 'phonemic' (referentially based) vowels a language has, the more likely it is to make use of other vowels for stylistic purposes. In sum, the phonological analyses we need, that will be adequate to the actual phonological competence of persons, will include more than the phonology we usually get.

Notice that the more general approach enables us to reach deeper generalizations in particular cases as well as universally. Linguists have debated for some time as to whether the syllable was necessary, or useful, in the analysis of particular languages. I would suggest that syllabification is an ability that is part of the competence of normal members of every speech community, that it is a universal. Communities will be found to differ, not as to the

presence or absence of syllabification, but as to the location of its role. In some communities the syllable will appear fundamental to the usual phonemic analysis; in others it will be found essential to the analysis of certain styles (styles of emphasis and metalinguistic clarity, for example, or of speech play, or verbal art). The debates as to the status of the syllable have been possible only because conceptions of structure, and competence, have been too narrow.

Again, once it is accepted that 'headline style' is part of English competence (e.g., 'Man bites dog'), it will be found artificial to postulate the presence of articles in underlying English syntax (e.g., 'A man bites a dog') as in current approaches derived from Chomsky. The elementary relations will be seen to be between 'man', 'bite,' and 'dog,' and the presence or absence of article to be a second matter, a matter of the style of the discourse in question. A good deal of trouble has been needlessly wasted, trying to account for the article in English on too narrow a basis.

It is thus in the interest of ordinary linguistics, as well as of sociolinguistics, to recognize the dual nature of the elementary diacritic functions in language.

Structures and uses

Speech styles, we have said, comprise features and constructions of both kinds (referential and stylistic). Let us now say more about the place of speech styles in the ethnography of speaking. Let us first make a further distinction among kinds of functions in speech. The two elementary diacritic functions are part of what may be generally called *structural functions*, as distinct from *use functions* (following here for convenience the common distinction between language structure and language use). 'Structural' functions have to do with the bases of verbal features and their organization, the relations among them, in short, with the verbal means of speech, and their conventional meanings, insofar as those are given by such relationships. 'Use' functions have to do with the organization and meaning of verbal features in terms of nonlinguistic contexts. The two are interdependent, but it is useful to discriminate them. It seems likely that rules of co-occurrence can be considered to have to do with structural functions, and rules of alternation with use functions. The analysis of rules of alternation, in other words, entails the analysis of components of use in context, such as the relevant features of the participants in a speech event, of the setting, the channel, and so forth. (See Hymes 1972 for a heuristic analysis of components of speech events.) The principle of contrast for identification of relevant features, as opposed to repetitions, applies here as well, but the features of the situation are not verbal.

RELATIONS AMONG STRUCTURES

Notice that rules of co-occurrence define speech styles in an entirely general, open fashion. The relevant speech styles of a community cannot be arrived at mechanically, for one could note an infinite number of differences and putative co-occurrences. One must discover relevant differences in relation to analysis of context. Doubtless communities differ in the relative importance, or 'functional load,' of particular contexts, and components of contexts, in the determination of styles. Persons, or personal roles, may be a predominant basis for such determination in one community, not so much in another. So also for contexts of activity, group membership, and institutional settings. There is a parallel here, of course, with the differences among languages in the relative significance of semantic categories as bases for grammatical organization (tense, aspect, mode, person, shape, etc. — cf. Hymes 1961b for a tentative scheme for comparison). Just as with referential, so with social meanings: one must start with a general framework, and expect that certain kinds of meaning will be expressed in every community, even if in different ways or to different degrees of elaboration. Men's and women's roles may be intrusive in ordinary grammar in one case, a dimension of consistently organized styles encompassing a variety of features in another, and but marginally visible in verbal means in yet another. Likewise, the functions of deixis, and of textual cohesion, may differentially involve referential and stylistic features in different communities, and even become the chief principle or dimension of one or another style.

In sum, communities differ in the number and variety of significant speech styles, and in the principal bases of their delimitation. This is one of the important and interesting things about communities, needing to be described and to be connected with its causes in their other characteristics and their histories.

Major speech styles associated with social groups can be termed *varieties*, and major speech styles associated with recurrent types of situations can be termed *registers*. Speech styles associated with persons, particular situations, and genres could be termed simply *personal*, *situational*, and *genre* styles. An adequate set of terms cannot be imposed in advance of case studies, however, but will grow interdependently with them. We can, however, and need to, say something more about the relations among kinds of style and stylistic features.

Let me reiterate that speech styles are not mechanical correlations of features of speech with each other and with contexts. The criterion of a *significant speech style* is that it can be recognized, and used, outside its defining context, that is, by persons or in places other than those with which its typical meaning is associated, or contrasted with relation to the persons and places with one or more other styles. Thus one may determine styles

associated with castes, classes, ethnic groups, regions, formality, oratory, sermons, and the like, but one must also notice the use of these styles, or of quotations or selections, or stereotypes of them, to convey meanings by, to, and about other persons and situations. Likewise, one must not confine one's attention in church, say, to the style of the sermon, but also notice the style of the speech before, after, and perhaps during it. There probably are customary linkages in these respects, and they need to be determined. A style defined first of all in terms of a group may be also the style for certain situations, or the style, in fact or aspiration, of certain other persons, certain genres or parts of genres, and so on. Within its defining setting a style may be prominent or obscured in relation to what else goes on. There may be clashes within communities as to the admissibility of certain linkages, or as to prominence or lack of it. (The histories of religion, literature, and the stage have many examples.)

Let me say a little about the scale along which stylistic features must be considered, especially with regard to genres, since the disciplines that study verbal genres — folklore, literature, rhetoric, and stylistics — are major sources of insight for the general linguistics that will incorporate stylistic function. First, stylistic features may simply be present in discourse without defining a significant style. Their presence may simply convey a certain tinge or character, perhaps quite locally. We are likely to consider speech with a great many such effects 'colorful' (perhaps too colorful, distractingly or seemingly aimlessly so); relative richness of harmony, as it were, can distinguish verbal as well as musical styles, but it may be an incidental flavoring rather than an organizing principle.

Beyond the fact of the presence of stylistic features are kinds of groupings of such features that do constitute organized use, or define a conventional use of verbal means. Two principal kinds of grouping come to mind. There are the kinds which can be said to color or accompany the rest of what is done, and the kinds which can be said to define recurrent forms. For the first, one can speak of *stylistic modes*, and for the second, of *stylistic structures*.

A principal aspect of *stylistic modes* is a set of modifications entailed in consistent use of the voice in a certain way, as in singing, intoning, chanting, declaiming, etc. Modifications of the visual form of speech, in writing and printing, go here as well. Note well that what count as instances of these things are culturally defined. The modifications that are the basis for considering speech to be in a certain mode are on a continuum with the incidental use of features that has been called coloring just above. A basic problem is to discover the relation of such continua, or variables, to qualitative judgments, such that members of a community categorize speech as the presence of a mode or structure. A lilt in the voice may or may not count as singing; a pleonasm, pronunciation, or technical term may or may not

count as formal or learned discourse. Sometimes a single instance is enough to define or frame the rest of what is said. Sometimes the definition is negotiated, and shifting frequencies of features manifest the negotiation, as in a proffered move from formal to informal relationship; sometimes the ranging of features between stylistic poles manifests temporary appeals to the presuppositions of one or another of them.

The importance of these kinds of features, not usually included in grammars or well studied by most linguists, is patent when one confronts masterful oral narrative style, so rich in its use of such features. Until now the printed pages from which most of us know such styles have left such mastery in oblivion, but the experiments of Tedlock in the presentation of Zuni narrative (1972) open a new era. Such features may be essential ingredients of the 'levels' of speech central to the structure of a society. Among the Wolof of Senegal, there is a fundamental, pervasive contrast between 'restrained' and 'unrestrained' speech. It saliently distinguishes the caste of professional speakers, *griots* and nobles, as two poles, but applies as well to other contrasts of status, as between men and women, adults and children, and even applies to contrast in the conduct of the same person, as between a low and high, petitioner and patron, role. All aspects of verbal means enter into the contrast of modes, but the most striking involve use of the voice. Irvine (MS.) summarizes these dimensions in the accompanying table.

	High	Low
Pitch	Low	High
Quality	Breathy	Clear
Volume	Soft	Loud
Contour	Pitch nucleus last	Nucleus first
Tempo	Slow	Fast

Any aspect of verbal means may be the ingredient of a mode including aspects which a conception of competence as perfection would not lead one to notice at all. In the Senegal community of Kayor the pinnacle of the nobility, the *Damel*, must make mistakes in minor points of grammar. Correctness would be considered an emphasis on fluency of performance, or on performance for its own sake, that is not appropriate to the highest of nobles (Irvine MS.).

Stylistic structures comprise verbal forms organized in terms of one or more defining principles of recurrence and/or development. They have, so to speak, a beginning and an end, and a pattern to what comes between. What are often called 'minor genres' belong here: riddles, proverbs, prayers, but also minimal verse forms, such as the couplet, and such things as greet-

ings and farewells, where those have conventional organization. It seems best to designate such things as *elementary*, or *minimal*, *genres*. (They need not be minor in their importance.)

We must bear in mind that one may sing something that is not a song, and present a song without singing it; that is, *modes* and *structures* are indeed distinct, and their connections problematic, to be discovered in the given case. Moreover, it would be a mistake to assume that the essential principle of a form of speech is always structure, never mode. Most often it is structure, but to generalize would be equivalent to recognizing form in music only insofar as one can identify sonata pattern, rondo, twelve-tone scale, or the like. Delius is a case in point. He did turn to sonata-form works in consequences of the First World War (unfortunately, we never hear recitals or recordings to judge them ourselves), but the works of his in the standard performance repertoire are those in which the secret of organization is his own, and the development inextricable from the handling of harmony and orchestration, i.e., of 'color.' (Musical terminology will prove a great resource for exploration of speech styles, as a matter of fact.)

Both kinds of groupings of features, modes and structures, enter into more complex groupings, which may be designated *complex genres*. Thus Zuni *telapnanne* 'tale' can comprise formal speaking delivery, a mode of delivery called 'raised up speech,' a monotone chant with one auxiliary tone, and passages of conversational looseness (Tedlock, personal communication).

Genres, whether minimal or complex, are not in themselves the 'doing' of a genre, that is, are not in themselves acts, events, performances. They can occur as whole events, or in various relationships to whole events. The structure of an event may encompass preliminaries and aftermaths, may allow only for partial use of a genre, or even just allusion to it, and so forth. And I want to consider performances as relationships to genres, such that one can say of a performance that its materials (genres) were reported, described, run through, illustrated, quoted, enacted. Full performance I want to consider as involving the acceptance of responsibility to perform, to do the thing with acceptance of being evaluated.

Obviously genres may vary, from simple to complex, and from looseness to tightness in what they accommodate, incorporate, permit, as to modes and other genres. The 'novel' is an easy example; it may take the form of letters (Richardson's *Pamela*), verse (Pushkin's *Eugen Onegin*), and simulated journalism, among others.

It is tempting to generalize the categories of genre and performance, so that all verbal material is assignable to some genre, and all verbal conduct to some kind of performance. My own hunch is that communities differ in the extent to which this is true, at least in the sense of the prevalence of

tightly organized genres, and of evaluated performance (of 'being on stage' in speech). If the categories are needed as general descriptive concepts, then the differences can be registered by an additional distinction within each, perhaps *fixed genres*, and *full performance*.

RELATIONS AMONG USES

The connection between genres and performances is one aspect of the general connection between styles defined in terms of rules of co-occurrence and their uses in contexts in a community. First, recall the proposal that significant speech styles be considered those that can be contrasted in or beyond their initial defining context. The proposal has two complications. The degree to which this is possible may itself be a dimension on which communities differ. Just as speech communities, historical periods, and persons differ in the degree to which they consider appropriate use of words and phrases to be context-specific, so also with stylistic features and structures. A tightly context-bound style may be highly valued. On the other hand, unique structures, stylistic relationships, may emerge in a single event, and be remembered and valued for their qualities. Nevertheless, it would seem that evaluation of the emergent qualities of a single event, and recognition of the appropriateness of a context-specific style, would both presuppose comparison. The comparison may be implicit, rather than observable in the immediate situation, but it would be discoverable by inquiry outside the situation. (From such considerations we see the failure inherent in a conception of sociolinguistics as a method of obtaining 'real' data. Realistic, observational data are essential, if styles, many of whose features are unconscious or not producible on demand, are to be studied; but styles involve kinds of underlying competence and judgments based on competence as well.) We need to consider both context-bound styles and emergent properties, in order to deal with stylistic change. One aspect of stylistic change is narrowing or expansion of contextual constraints (rather like spread or contraction of the range of distribution of a phonological or grammatical feature), and another is the imitation or emulation, and consequent conventionalization, of emergent properties. But the central considerations here are that speech styles are not merely observed co-occurrences and correlations, but subject to contrast and choice, and that they are not merely appropriate or inappropriate, but meaningful.

The notion of rules of alternation carries us into the analysis of the contexts of speech styles, but, as noted before, such analysis is ethnographic and sociological as well as linguistic. When the meanings of speech styles are analyzed, we realize that they entail dimensions of participant, setting, channel, and the like, which partly govern their meanings. And analysis of the relevant features of these dimensions is found to implicate more than

alternation of speech styles. It subtends norms of verbal conduct, or interaction, in general — things such as rights to turns at talking, acceptable ways of getting the floor, whether more than one voice can be speaking at a time, and so on. (Here again musical terminology is a resource: *ripieno*, *concertante*, and *ritornello* catch features of some speech events.) And both speech styles and norms of verbal conduct have underlying meanings in common, meanings which involve community attitudes and beliefs with regard to language and speech. The Wolof styles cited above, for example, embody a notion and values fundamental to Wolof society, having to do with 'honor' (*herse*), and with 'one of the most fundamental Wolof cultural assumptions [namely] that speech, especially in quantity, is dangerous and demeaning' (Irvine MS.).

I cannot go into the analysis of norms of verbal conduct, attitudes, and beliefs here, but have sketched some of their dimensions, and some of the evidence of types of speech community in this regard elsewhere (Hymes 1972). Here I can only sketch the place of this part of the ethnography of speaking in relation to the whole, with reference to terminology for the parts.

If one accepts 'ethnography of speaking' as name for the enterprise, still the name refers to the approach, or the field, not to the subject matter itself. One can engage in an ethnography of speaking among the Zuni, but what one studies is not in any usual sense 'Zuni ethnography of speaking.' (What the Zuni consciously make of speaking is important, but part of the whole.) An ethnography of law among the Zuni studies Zuni law, and an ethnography of speaking studies Zuni speaking. I myself would say: Zuni *ways of speaking*. There are two reasons for this. First, terms derived from 'speak' and 'speech' in English suffer from a history of association with something marginal or redundant. While linguists have commonly distinguished 'speech' from 'language' in a way that might seem to serve our purpose, they have commonly taken back with the hand of usage what the hand of definition has offered. In practice, 'speech' has been treated as either elegant variation for 'language' (thus, Sapir's book *Language* was subtitled 'An introduction to the study of speech' and 'interaction by means of speech' has been equated with knowledge of a single language by Bloomfield, Bloch, Chomsky, and others), or as a second-class citizen, external to language, mere behavior. (Thus for many writers 'act of speech' does not mean a complex social act based on underlying competence extending beyond grammar, but mere physical manifestation.) Indeed, 'speech' has been used so much as interchangeable with 'language' that Sherzer and Darnell (1972) felt constrained to add 'use,' and to talk of the analysis of 'speech use.' I do not myself like 'speech use,' because I am disturbed by what should be a redundancy, that is, 'speech' should indicate use in a positive sense. Never-

theless, it does not, and adequate terms seem to require some joining of the key term that English provides with complements that make it free of the redundant or reductive connotations.

My second reason for favoring *ways of speaking* is that it has analogy with 'ways of life,' on the one hand, and Whorf's term 'fashions of speaking,' on the other. The first analogy helps remind anthropologists that the ways of mankind do include ways of speaking, and helps remind linguists that speaking does come in ways, that is, shows cultural patterning. And since Whorf was the first in the American linguistic and anthropological tradition, so far as I know, to name a mode of organization of linguistic means cutting across the compartments of grammar, it is good to honor his precedence, while letting the difference in terms reflect the difference in scope of reference. (Whorf had in mind the usual features of grammars, considered from the standpoint of active life as cognitive styles.)

Our analysis so far would point to ways of speaking as comprising two parts, speech styles and their contexts, or means of speech and their meanings. The limitation of these terms is that they do not readily suggest part of what enters into ways of speaking, namely, the norms of interaction that go beyond choice of style, and the attitudes and beliefs that underlie both. 'Contexts' and 'meanings' also both leave the focus on 'styles' and 'means,' and seem to deprive the second part of the equality, and relative autonomy, that must be recognized in it. The Ngoni of southern Africa, for example, have maintained their distinctive norms of verbal conduct, while losing their original, Ngoni language; they still consider maintenance of the norms of verbal conduct definitive of being a proper Ngoni. (I owe this example to Sheila Seitel.) It does not seem happy to talk of the maintenance of Ngoni 'contexts' or 'meanings of means of speech' in this connection. A positive term is wanted. Of the possibilities that have occurred to me, all but one have the defect that they might be taken to imply more than is intended. 'Ways of speaking' would serve on this level as well; but contexts are not always sure to differentiate the two senses, especially in the case of a novel terminology, and we need to be clear if we can be. 'Patterns of speech/speaking,' 'forms,' 'modes' seem to say too much or too little, or to conflict with other uses of the differentiating word. The expression that does not is: *speech economy* (cf. Hymes 1961a). We can then readily distinguish *means of speech* (comprising the features that enter into styles, as well as the styles themselves), and *speech economy*. The pair are parallel in utilizing 'speech,' which may be a mnemonic advantage. The two concepts are of course interrelated, even interdependent (as said, meanings lie in the relationships), and from a thoroughgoing standpoint, the speech economy of a community includes its means of speech as one of the components that enter into its pattern of relationships. The historical autonomy of the two, and the major

division of labor in our society between those who study verbal means and those who study conduct, makes the division appropriate.

Consideration of the stylistic component of language, then, has led us to a conception of the ethnography of speaking that can be expressed in the following form:

WAYS OF SPEAKING

Means of speech *Speech economy*

The direction of our discussion so far has been consistently away from grammar toward other things, but grammar itself is not exempt from becoming what those who use it make of it, and hence in some respects a style.

Languages as styles

It is not only in situations of heterogeneity that a constitutive role of social factors can be glimpsed. If we abstract from heterogeneity, and consider only a single language, indeed, only a single grammar, a radically social component still appears. Consider the California Indian language Yokuts, as described by Stanley Newman.¹

Newman reports that the words he recorded were short, composed of a stem and mostly but one or two suffixes, almost never more than that. Newman noticed, however, that the underlying patterning of the suffixes implied the formal possibility of longer sequences. He reports (1964 (1940): 374):

An instructive exercise . . . was to construct words having four or five suffixes and ask the informant for a translation. Although such words complied with the grammatical rules and could be translated by my informant without any difficulty, they seldom failed to provoke his amusement. It was obvious that these words were impossibly heavy and elaborate. To the Yokuts feeling for simplicity they were grammatical monstrosities.

From Newman's account it appears that the longer words were not deviant (not derivatively generated in the sense of Chomsky (1965:227 note 2). Their interpretation posed no problem at all. They were of the same degree of grammaticalness in a formal sense as shorter sequences, but they were not acceptable. At best they were marginally marked for humor or pomposity, but Newman notes no examples of such use, besides, inadvertently, his own. He goes on to report:

Although Yokuts words, with the notable exception of the 'do' verbs (regarded as the linguistic property of children), tend to sketch only the bare and generalized outlines of a reference, the language possesses syntactic resources for combining

words in such a way that its sentences could attain any degree of notional intricacy and richness. A passage of Macaulay's prose, with its long and involved periods, could be translated into grammatically correct Yokuts. But the result would be a grammarian's idle fancy, a distortion of the syntactic idiom of Yokuts. The language is as diffident in applying its means of elaboration in syntax as in suffixation. (p. 376)

The basis of the restraint is a general Yokuts demand for severe simplicity, a value that a colleague finds to underlie Yokuts narrative style as well. Newman contrasts the Yokuts value with an expressive value he finds implicit in English, arguing for the equal validity of each. To the English imagination the Yokuts style appears drab, 'but, by the same token, the stylistic features of English cannot appeal to the intuitions of a Yokuts native' (p. 377). He follows Sapir in regarding each language as 'like a particular art form in that it works with a limited range of materials and pursues the stylistic goals that have been and are constantly being discovered in a collective quest' (p. 377).

One can object to wording that personifies a language; it is the Yokuts-speaking community that works with a range of materials and pursues stylistic goals. Nevertheless, an important point is clear. If grammar is identified with what is structurally possible (as Newman identifies it in a paragraph summed up by the remark that 'It [grammar] tells what a language can do but not what it considers worthwhile doing' [p. 372]), or even with what is possible and transparent (as were Newman's four- and five-suffix words), then the community has drawn a line within the grammatical. On the basis of shared values, common to language and its uses in narrative, the community judges utterances that are formally possible as impossible in speech. This is a creative aspect of language use not taken into account in linguistic discussion, or overridden, the judgments of speakers being sacrificed to the requirements of formal statement. But notice that to get a native speaker to agree to the naturalness of one of Newman's monstrous words would not be to get him to see something he had not previously realized. He realized the grammatical possibility when Newman presented the forms to him. It would be to get him to change his native intuition. In a crucial sense, grammatical Yokuts is not what is possible to the grammar, as a device, but what is possible according to Yokuts norms. Here without intrusion of schools or pedants, we have a normative definition of possible Yokuts that is best described as aesthetic or stylistic in nature. For the Yokuts community, Yokuts is after all in that sense what they make of it.

Notice that the same grammar, as a formal device, is consistent with a drawing of the stylistic line in different places. The place might change over time within the same community. Yokuts judgments of Yokuts utterances would change, but formal grammar would not record it. By the same token,

different communities of Yokuts speakers might draw the line in different places. Judgments of utterances would contrast, and again formal grammar not register the difference.

It would seem then that what Yokuts speakers know, their underlying competence, includes a dimension of style in the most essential way. Nothing about special speech styles and specific components of situations is involved; just plain Yokuts, showing that grammar is a matter of community 'should' as well as 'could,' is inherently normative.

The Yokuts case involves relations among given elements (although one can imagine that such restraint inhibits elaboration of affixes and other machinery, and favors its opposite, as Newman at one point suggests). The content of languages can itself be regarded from the standpoint of style, and again in terms of the exercise of an ability, a creative aspect of language use. Style is not only a matter of features other than referential, or of the selective use of features of both kinds; it also has to do with the selective creation of new materials and letting go of old. As languages change, they do not change wholly randomly, or lose structure in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics. They remain one relatively consistent set of realizations of the possibilities of language, rather than another. And they have the character they do in this regard partly because of choices by their users. It is possible to consider some kinds of change, including sound change, coming about in part because of social meaning associated with features, more prestigious variants replacing less prestigious ones. It is possible to consider some changes as coming about in response to internal imbalances and pressures, and to cumulative drifts which make some avenues of change far more tractable than others. But some changes cannot be understood except as changes over time in what users of the language find it most desirable or essential to say. Changes in the obligatory grammatical categories of a language, or in the relative elaboration of these, are such. Sometimes one can find a consistency (a 'conspiracy') in the semantic character of a variety of seemingly unrelated changes and trends. I have tried to show this to be the case for Wasco (Hymes 1961b, section 5), presenting evidence that in recently coined words, in recent changes in affixes marking tense-aspect and post-positions marking case relations, and in trends in the derivation of verb themes, there is common a certain cognitive orientation.

It is important to avoid two misunderstandings. First, to recognize the orientation, or style, is not to project an interpretation upon defenseless material. Not just any trait of the language is entered in evidence, but traits that have recently been brought into being, that represent choices, creative activity, on the part of the community. Second, no inference can be directly made to the minds of speakers. One's evidence is of the result of changes

that must have had some psychological reality for those that introduced and accepted them; but evidence independent of the language is needed to demonstrate their psychological reality for a later speaker. In point of fact, it is unlikely that surviving Wasco speakers, all multilingual, and using the language only rarely, would show much evidence. Linguistic relativity in Whorf's sense is dependent on a more fundamental type of relativity, that of the function of linguistic means. Speakers of different generations may provide evidence of a common grammar, but for one the grammar may be only something remembered, for the other the central verbal instrument for handling experience.

It is worth noting that linguistic inference of underlying grammatical knowledge is in the same boat as Whorf's inference of underlying cognitive outlook. Both argue to a capacity or characteristic of users of language from linguistic data alone. The linguistic data are both source and evidence for the claimed characteristics. The criticism of circularity lodged against Whorf attaches to work in grammar which identifies a formal analysis with psychological reality without independent test. (Newman's presentation of constructed words to speakers was informally such a test.)

I am saying that the import of cognitive styles in languages is problematic, needing to be established, not that there is no import (cf. Hymes 1966). The same holds for all speech styles, and means of speech in general. In other aspects of life we recognize that the means available condition what can be done with them. We recognize that the tools available affect what is made without reducing outcomes to tools alone. Somehow there has been a schizophrenic consciousness in our civilization with regard to verbal tools. Some have taken them as determinants of almost everything, others have denied that they determine anything. One suspects a reflection of a long-standing conflict between 'idealist' and 'materialist' assumptions, language being identified with the 'idealist' side, so that to argue for its determinative role was to seem to argue for one philosophical outlook and against another. (Something of this interpretation of matters seems current in the Soviet Union.) For others, it is all right to speak of the great role of language in general, but never of languages in particular. One suspects a resistance to a long-standing tendency to treat some linguistic particularities as inferior, or a reflection of a climate of opinion in which any explicit limitation on mental freedom is resented. Here a statement of position must suffice.

First, it seems inescapably true to me that the means available to persons do condition what they can verbally do, and that these means are in important part historically shaped. Second, such a view is not derogation of differences; what can be done may be admirable.

In this connection, it should be noted that fluent members of com-

munities often enough themselves evaluate their languages as not equivalent. It is not only that one language, or variety, often is preferred for some uses, another for others, but also that there is experience with what can in fact be best done with one or the other. This sort of differential ability has nothing to do with disadvantage or deficiency of some members of a community relative to others. All of them may find, say, Kurdish the medium in which most things can best be expressed, but Arabic the better medium for religious truth. Users of Berber may find Arabic superior to Berber for all purposes except intimate domestic conversation (Ferguson 1966).²

But, third, differences in available means and related abilities do exist in ways that pose problems. In some respects the problems are inherent in the human condition, insofar as each of us must be a definite person in a world changing unpredictably and without our consent or control. In other respects problems are inherent only in certain social orders and circumstances, and could in principle be solved. It is my conviction that the requisite social change requires knowledge of actual abilities and activities, and that a linguistics of the sort sketched above can contribute to such knowledge.³

4. Term used in Chiapas for people who are non-Indians from a cultural point of view.
5. My fieldwork in Chamula, state of Chiapas, Mexico, was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Evon Z. Vogt, whose Harvard Chiapas Project is now approaching its fifteenth continuous year. I am grateful to him and numerous fieldworkers in this project for providing background linguistic knowledge and field facilities, as well as intellectual stimulation and encouragement while I was in the field. In the summer of 1965, I was supported by a National Science Foundation Cooperative Fellowship; in 1968-9 - the major portion of my fieldwork - I was supported by a predoctoral fellowship and an attached research grant from N.I.M.H. This financial support is gratefully acknowledged.

SECTION VI. INTRODUCTION

1. Thus Hymes' 1962 article is called 'The ethnography of speaking,' while the Gumperz and Hymes collection (1964) is entitled *The ethnography of communication*. For further discussion of the relationship between the ethnography of speaking and the ethnography of communication, see the preface to 'Toward linguistic competence' (Hymes 1973).

CHAPTER 19. DATA AND DATA USE IN AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS

1. Spencer (1972, reported by Labov in 1972b) found that twenty graduate students in linguistics accepted exemplary sentences from 'classic' articles in linguistics which were not accepted by twenty graduate students in another field or by twenty non-academics. It may be that the injunction I suggest is redundant.
2. '... the rules of codification by which the deep structure of interpersonal relations is transformed into speech performances are independent of expressed attitudes and similar in nature to the grammatical rules operating on the level of intelligibility... By accepting the native's view of what is and what is not properly part of a dialect or language, linguists have tended to assume these co-occurrences rather than investigate them empirically.' (Gumperz 1971:305-6).
3. There is no place, in this brief note, to expand these differences in a satisfactory manner. It can be noted, however, that sentences usually function as statements, questions, or imperatives and that a relatively parsimonious set of elements is involved in (syntactic) characterization of sentences in a language. There are in the case of, e.g., verbal strategies, an as yet unknown number of functions (though that number may turn out to be smaller than now appears to be the case). An equally ill-specified set of elements (which hopefully will also turn out to be parsimonious) will be involved in as yet unwritten grammars of verbal strategies. It may be that native members learn a grammar for performing verbal strategies that permits them to produce an infinite number of such strategies from a small set of elements in a manner analogous to that in which competent native speakers can produce infinitely varied sentences. An ethnology of speaking, like a universal grammar, will require attention to a competence-performance distinction and to issues paralleling those involved in the current controversy over generative *vs.* interpretive semantics. The precise nature of the problems to be confronted is only dimly sensed at this time.
4. This is again no place for a detailed argument. If, however, it is true that

sentences have primarily three functions, *viz.*, as statements, questions, or imperatives; it will be seen that even those twelve minimum functional categories used in Bales' (1950) 'interaction process analysis' constrain us to augur major problems on the level of observational adequacy.

5. It is true that there are now available a fairly substantial number of theoretical frames for analyzing strategies of verbal interaction and that these frames provide some selectional criteria. Each of these perspectives has illuminated some aspect of this behavior; each of the several scholars doing this work has used available data and has evolved his/her theoretical frame by getting 'immersed' in those data. None, however, has specified what kinds of data would provide critical tests of his own perspective. Since many months can be spent in analysis of a single strategy (e.g., doing reprimands - or requests) or just one speech event (e.g., a ritual greeting) with only one frame of analysis - this is not surprising. We are a very long way from 'enumeration of the class... of possible verbal strategies or speech events.'

Some linguists are now increasingly attending to social contexts of speech performance. It is likely that they will also find themselves using wider ranges of data - and that they will also have to undertake their activity with only minimal theoretical cues as to what data are most relevant.

6. For a brief review of Labov's discussion of intrasystemic (categorical, semi-categorical, and variable) rules and a comment on universals, see Grimshaw 1973a.

7. After writing this I read Labov (1972a), which contains an excellent discussion of types of data used by linguists (and sociolinguists) and their advantages and disadvantages.

8. Limitations of space make impossible the elaboration of these dimensions.

CHAPTER 20. THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF WRITING

1. As a general methodological premise for modern ethnography, this point has been made repeatedly in recent years. However, its relevance to the study of writing systems has not been explicitly noted. I am inclined to attribute this oversight to two major factors. On the one hand, cultural anthropologists have not been accustomed to view the description of writing systems as an exercise in ethnographic theory construction. On the other, students of writing only rarely look to modern anthropology for theories and methods that might enhance their own investigations. For further discussion of this point see Basso & Anderson 1973.

CHAPTER 21. WAYS OF SPEAKING

1. Newman's fine grammar, which exemplifies the mature methods of Sapir, has become the material of a virtual industry since the Second World War, having been restated and restructured in a number of papers and at least one book. The information considered here, however, has not been treated as relevant to linguistic theory, so far as I know - commentary enough on the loss of richness to linguistics with the eclipse of the Sapir tradition, which we must seek to restore.

2. Cf. a European case representative of many: 'L'accession rapide de l'élite de la société polonaise à l'humanisme, dans la seconde moitié du 16e siècle, posa de façon aiguë le problème des moyens d'expression. Pour les nouvelles aspirations artistiques, seul le latin convenait avec ses ressources de vocabulaire, de syntaxe, de métrique et ses qualités d'abondance et de précision, tandis que le polonais

demeurait l'apanage d'un univers spirituel médiéval qui n'avait trouvé jusqu'alors qu'une expression fragmentaire et qui commençait tardivement à prendre un essor encore timide. L'auteur analyse les aspects de ce bilinguisme et son évolution jusqu'à la fin du 16e siècle, évolution au cours de laquelle un humanisme créateur a présidé à l'élaboration de la langue littéraire en Pologne' (Backvis 1958). Cf. Jones 1953 on English in the same period.

3. This paper forms the basis of a section in a book on the concept of language which I am preparing for the 'Key concepts in the social sciences' series published by Harper and Row.

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