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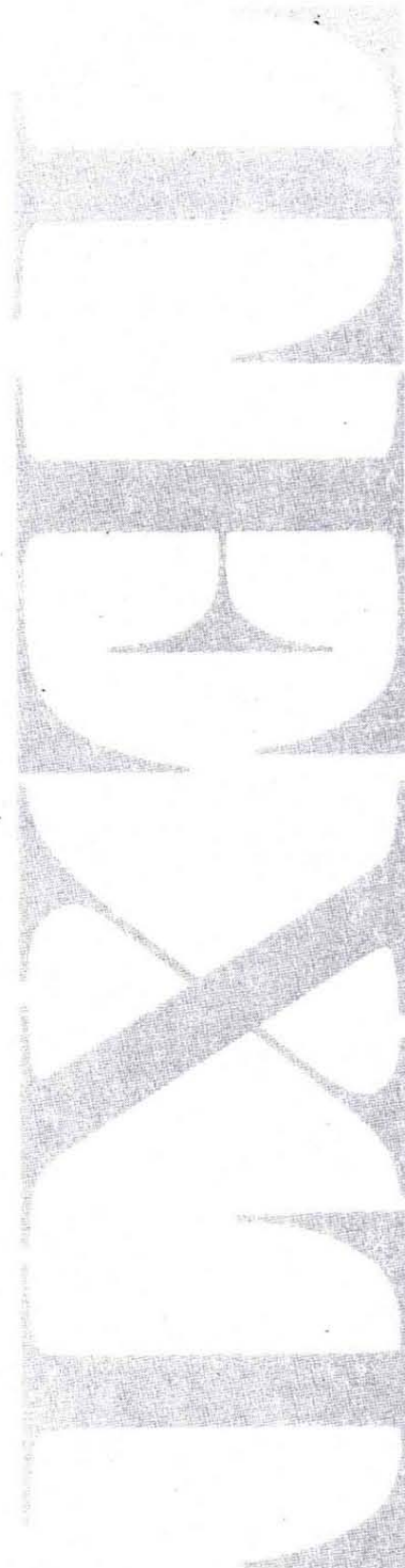
special issue

**the audience
as co-author**

edited by

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The audience as co-author: An introduction

ALESSANDRO DURANTI*

The papers in this issue all share a view of verbal communication as an achievement, that is, as the collective activity of individual social actors whose final product (viz. the resulting 'text' or speech event) is qualitatively different from the sum of its parts (viz. individual utterances by individual speakers).

Such a perspective can be traced back to such diverse scholars as J. L. Austin, Mikhail Bakhtin, Bronislaw Malinowski, Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others. What these scholars share is sensitivity to and analytical interest in the *activity of speaking*. In such a perspective, speech is a form of labor – to use Rossi-Landi's (1983) term – which requires the coordination of several actors around a task (cf. Leont'ev, 1981). Speech is *public*, intersubjective by nature. Such a position is consistent with a psychology in which higher psychological processes in the individual have their origin in social interaction (cf. Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985) and with the instrumental view of linguistic signs advocated by Buehler, Malinowski and Vygotsky in the late 1920's. It was only a few years later that Wittgenstein started to raise, in his Cambridge lectures, a series of fundamental objections to the study of language outside specific activities (or 'language games') and eventually arrived at the formulation of the so-called 'private language argument' (cf. Wittgenstein, 1953/1958; Kripke, 1982). The idea was that a code (or a grammar) cannot be contained in someone's mind, or, to paraphrase Michael Holquist (1983), 'no one owns it'. A system of signs or what appears as rule-governed behavior does not belong to the individual but to the community.

* I would like to thank Jim Bogen, Don Brenneis, Mike Cole, Chuck Goodwin, John Haviland, Peg Griffin, and Elinor Ochs for many lengthy discussions on most of the points mentioned in this paper.

There are some far-reaching consequences of this position. Methodologically, it implies that a thorough knowledge of what constitutes the linguistic system cannot be attained by investigating individual competences, as suggested by Chomsky (1986), but must be studied by documenting particular acts of speaking (*actes de parole*) (cf. Labov's, 1972: 185-186, discussion of the Saussurean paradox). If it is others who ratify our 'grammar' and our communicative code (what something can mean, given a certain context), the system cannot be defined as an *a priori* set of rules or relationships (or conditions on rules) to be discovered. It is something that is partly constituted, that is, made real, possible, and meaningful, through its use by particular actors at particular times and places. The shared nature of the communicative system is two-sided: it is assumed, and at the same time must be realized, in concrete acts of verbal communication.

As shown by the papers in this issue, when we carefully examine the details of everyday talk, we realize that Wittgenstein's 'private language argument' finds the strongest support in the doings of everyday life – in someone's backyard, in a church service, during a picnic, while singing a song – rather than in eloquent philosophical debates.

Wittgenstein's call for the community's testing and approval is best answered by looking at how speakers' acts are met by their interlocutors' responses. The fact that in some contemporary theories of verbal communication (cf. Searle, 1968, 1983) the speaker's intentions are the main or only source of 'meaning' may just be an extension of local (folk) theories of knowledge and social action that satisfy certain versions of current cognitive science programs (but cf. Rumelhart [to appear], for a different perspective). It can be easily shown that were one to start from different sociocultural premises and needs, the audience's support and understanding may, in fact, become a primary concern for the analyst. In my own work on Samoan speech acts (cf. Duranti, 1984), I found that if I wanted to explain how an orator could be accused of not keeping someone else's, i.e. a chief's, promise, I had to take into consideration local epistemologies of self and social action. This implied a reconsideration of Grice's notion of intentional meaning. According to this notion, for a speaker *A* to mean something by the utterance *x*, '*A* must intend to induce by *x* a belief in an audience, and he must also intend his utterance to be recognized as so intended'. (Grice, 1957/1971: 441). Samoans often seem to ignore the speaker's alleged intentions and concentrate instead on the consequences of someone's words. Rather than going back to speculate on what someone 'meant to say' (a phrase that

cannot be translated into Samoan), participants in the speech event rely on the dynamics between the speaker's words and the ensuing circumstances (audience's response included) to assign interpretation. In some cases, the audience may be allowed to say more about what went on than the one who uttered the original utterance(s). Interpretation is not conceived as the speaker's privilege. On the contrary, it is based on the ability (and power) that others may have to invoke certain conventions, to establish links between different acts and different social personae. Meaning is collectively defined on the basis of recognized (and sometimes restated) social relationships. In discussing these facts, I found myself constructing (or reinventing) a local theory of interpretation that shared many of the positions held in the western tradition by such authors as Bakhtin, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein, among others (cf. Duranti, 1984, 1985a). It is within this tradition that mutual dependence between someone's words and the audience's response and interpretation is recognized and made a point of departure for any hermeneutic enterprise.

In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement. To some extent, *primacy belongs to the response*, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response.

Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other (emphasis added) (Bakhtin, 1981: 282, written in 1934-35).

... understanding can go beyond the author's subjective act of meaning, and perhaps even necessarily and always goes beyond it. . . . as soon as we consider the appropriate model – for example, the understanding of historical actions, of historical events – we find ourselves in agreement. No one will assume that the subjective consciousness of the agent, or of the participant in the events, is commensurate with the historical significance of his actions. It is obvious to us that understanding the historical significance of an action presupposes that we do not restrict ourselves to the subjective plans, intentions, and dispositions of the agents. At least since Hegel's time it has been clear that history by its very nature does not have its primary focus in the self-knowledge of the individual, and it holds just as well for the experience of the art. I believe that this same insight must be applied even to the interpretation of texts whose informational sense is not open to an indeterminate explanation like the art work. Here too, as Husserl's critique of psycho-

logism had demonstrated, 'what is meant' is not a component of subjective inwardness (Gadamer, 1962/1976: 122).

In the last ten or fifteen years, similar points have been repeatedly made on the basis of empirical research on the sequential organization of talk (e.g. cf. Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Schenkein, 1978; Streek, 1980) and on certain kinds of verbal and non-verbal ritual exchanges (cf. Bourdieu, 1977; Kochman, 1983).

The work done within conversation analysis has shown that even the apparently most ritualized acts of speaking, e.g. the beginning of telephone conversations, involve negotiations and must be cooperatively worked out (cf. Schegloff, to appear). When we get to less routinized verbal exchanges, e.g. story telling, we find that the form and content of talk is continuously reshaped by the co-participants, through their ability to create certain alignments and suggest or impose certain interpretations (cf. Goodwin, this issue).

In other cases, as shown in child language studies, the work of verbal interaction may be done cooperatively to such an extent that propositions are produced across turns and across speakers (cf. Ochs, Schieffelin and Platt, 1979). Cross-cultural research has more recently shown that, once a proposition has been uttered, authorship (viz. who said what) is defined on the basis of the local conventions for assigning responsibility and agency (cf. Schieffelin, 1979; Duranti, 1985b). Thus, in the Brethren church services discussed by Borker (this issue), the presence of the Spirit in the performance is established through the participants' coordinated ability to achieve *textual coherence* around traditional metaphors and symbols.

The co-construction of a sociocultural order that is both presupposed by and realized through talk is also discussed by Haviland (this issue) in his analysis of an interaction in a Zinecantan village, where the *multifunctional* nature of talk is exploited and acted through parallel and competing topics (e.g. calculating the cost of a ritual and joking with/about a young bystander). By exploiting the multi-party structure of the conversation and the differentiated access to the topics (viz. counting, engaging in a teasing exchange about marriage negotiations) the participants can speak to and for someone else as a way of speaking *through* him and to each other.

... in the midst of the joking and the planning, we see people concurrently adjusting their social relationships with one another: as corn-farmers and partners in a business venture; as kinsmen; as neighbors; and as members of a

corporate group that commands loyalty and segments the social universe into *kinds*. (Haviland, this issue)

To what extent can we rely on the speakers' intentions in trying to make sense of what is going on? Against Grice's (1971) prediction, it would seem that, in this case, the clear *recognition of the speaker's intentions* may be the last thing that the participants *intend* (cf. also DuBois's [to appear] discussion of cases in which no sender can even be talked about, let alone his or her intentions). The teasing and joking analyzed by Haviland can take place and relationships maintained precisely because the co-participants avoid the immediate identification of certain words with the speaker's intentions. It is the availability of multiple personae behind each speaker/hearer that makes the interaction possible and communication meaningful. This is a point that is often ignored in current discussions of speech act theory. Thus, Clark and Carlson (1982) rightly stress the need to recognize the informative function that certain utterances have with respect to hearers and bystanders – as opposed to addressees (cf. also Brenneis, 1978; Goffman, 1976; Goodwin, 1981, for discussion of different kinds of audiences) – but end up extending even further the speech act version of the 'intentional fallacy' (cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1948). Not only might there be no way to know whether in fact the speaker *intends to inform* all participants of the illocutionary act that he is performing, but much of the ensuing interaction seems caused by how the participants' audience decide to interpret that act, regardless of the speaker's alleged intentions (cf. Duranti, 1984, 1986).

These and other facts suggest that to give the audience co-authorship is more than an ideological stand. It represents the awareness of a partnership that is necessary for an interaction to be sustained, but is often denied by analysts and participants alike. Speaker and audience are equals not simply because their roles are interchangeable – in fact, they may not be in some situations – but rather because every act of speaking is directed to and must be ratified by an audience. This is clearly recognized in the Breaking of Bread ceremony discussed by Borker (this issue), where the coherence and therefore authenticity of what performers say and do is judged and defined by the audience.

Talk, in fact, does not need to be *exchanged* between parties for us to say that communication was cooperatively achieved. The mere presence of an audience socially constitutes and ratifies the nature of a speech event (e.g. a sermon, a play, a class lecture, a story telling). An unsympathetic or unco-

operative audience can deeply affect the performance of any speech act, as any professional stage actor, who in principle repeats the same lines at every performance, can tell us. Furthermore, as Goodwin (this issue) reminded us, even in a theater, the audience has the option of creatively assigning new meanings to what is being said on the stage.

What this implies is that interpretation (of texts, sounds, etc.) is not a passive activity whereby the audience is just trying to figure out what the author meant to communicate. Rather, it is a way of making sense of what someone said (or wrote or drew) by linking it to a world or context that the audience can make sense of. The recipe for the interpretation of a text is never fully contained in the text. It could not be, in fact, for a number of reasons: first of all, because members of the audience must be given the freedom to make the author's agenda relevant to their own; second, because interpretation is itself an activity and as such depends on the context within which it takes place. When the context changes (audience included), interpretation will change accordingly. This means, among other things, that interpretation is a form of re-contextualization and as such can never fully recover the original content of a given act (although it can get pretty close to it). The hermeneutic circle is never completed because it must be drawn while space and time change; for this reason, the metaphor of a *spiral* would seem much more appropriate than the image of a circle (Michael Cole, p.c.). A similar argument was presented by Vološinov/Bakhtin and Wittgenstein in their respective criticism of Freud's theory of the interpretation of dreams (cf. Vološinov 1927/1976; Wittgenstein n.d. [1942]). The interpretation produced during analysis cannot provide the 'meaning' – in a causal sense, that is, the intentions, whether conscious or not – of the dream at the time of the dreaming. It provides a 'text' that makes sense within the narrower context of the interaction between the patient and the doctor and within the larger context of the plausibility of Freud's theory to the participants, viz. only some interpretations will be accepted as valid or sound by the analyst and by the patient.

When we, as ethnographers, bring the interaction we recorded to the printed page, we engage in a similar activity of recontextualization. That is inevitable. We set up a context for a new audience to judge and appreciate what went on around and through that text on some other occasion. Once we understand this, however, we do not come to the end of the process, we do not denounce the act of interpretation as impossible or inherently inadequate. We use the tools we have at our disposal (e.g. ethnography, analytical distinc-

tions, linguistic analysis, cross-cultural comparison) to recreate, at a different level, a complex and diverse picture where the organized diversity of everyday talk is maintained and highlighted rather than translated into monological forms of communication. In so doing, we must keep in mind Bakhtin's criticism of the inability of traditional stylistic analysis to appreciate the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's novels:

... [traditional] stylistic analysis is not oriented toward the novel as a whole, but only toward one or another of its subordinated stylistic unities. The traditional scholar bypasses the basic distinctive feature of the novel as a genre; he substitutes for it another object of study, and instead of novelistic style he actually analyzes something completely different. He transposes a symphonic (orchestrated) theme on to the piano keyboard. (Bakhtin, 1981: 263)

We present the papers in this issue with the hope that they will evoke at least part of the symphonic quality of verbal performance as realized in everyday life.

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**'Con Buenos Chiles': Talk, targets and teasing
in Zinacantán**

JOHN B. HAVILAND*

Abstract

Exploring the premise that conversationalists are engaged in a rich and peculiarly accessible form of social life, I pull apart the normal participant roles identified in conversation, concentrating in detail on the marked role of 'interlocutor', in Zinacanteco Tzotzil talk. I argue that multi-party interaction, involving three or more participants, is the 'canonical' case, around which conversational mechanisms are designed. Looking in detail at a fragment of prosaic interaction, in which Zinacanteco peasant corn-farmers plan a ritual, I show that there is a constant interplay between speakers and hearers, social identities and interrelationships, and conversational topics. In an apparently unrelated side-sequence, in which several adults tease a little boy, I suggest that topics of situational and cultural relevance are being explored between conversationalists, even when they do not directly address one another. It is, then, the 'texture' of the audience that is both exploited by interactants and a resource for ethnographic insight.

1. Activity in language

Ethnographers, like everyone else, meet language through the activities of everyday life. Even those of us particularly interested in words do not ordinarily find ourselves picking them apart, or hoisting them out of their

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familiar houses and yards: we use them right where we find them, at home. Usually, we do not find them asleep, but rather at work.

'That's a great deal to make one word mean', Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

'When I make a word do a lot like that', said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra'.¹

By the time we get back from the field, though, we often find ourselves tempted by one analytical urge or another; we end up stomping, whacking, twisting, and otherwise molesting the hardworking words we met on our ethnographic travels, until they are left, if not totally lifeless, at least limp and exhausted. We seem to be obsessed with bringing words back, as J. L. Austin puts it, into their own small corner of the world. The violent urges are normally of a type I call *subtractive*.

1.1. *Subtractive approaches to conversation and language*

The classical philosophical subtractive urge comes from the idea that there is an essential *informational* (or *propositional* or *referential*) *function* to words. Taking heart from seemingly unproblematic cases like 'table' or 'ice cream' or 'bachelor', and bolstered by enthusiasm for sentences about cats and mats, this sort of subtractive thinking strips from hardworking words everything that doesn't seem to relate to propositional content, and leaves it to less fastidious specialists to deal with the rest of the mess, and of course, the mess includes most of what the words were doing in the first place: teasing, joking, passing the time, gossiping, deciding, fighting, (as well as telling about, informing, finding out, speculating, and so on). I call this a *subtractive* urge because it amounts to deciding in advance how language works, or what is important about it, and *subtracting* the rest.

'I don't know what you mean by "glory"', Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't – till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'

'But "glory" doesn't mean a "nice knock-down argument"', Alice objected.

'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'.

'The question is', said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words mean so many different things'.

'The question is', said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all'.

Another more sophisticated (or at least more modern) subtractive urge starts not with meaning, referential or otherwise, but with *sequence*.

'[...] it's my turn to choose a subject—' [said Humpty Dumpty.] ('He talks about it just as if it was a game!' thought Alice.) 'So here's a question for you. How old did you say you were?'

Alice made a short calculation, and said 'Seven years and six months'.

'Wrong!' Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. 'You never said a word like it!'

Language takes its life, on this view, from its realization as structured sequences of turns. Speakers choose their words and shape their utterances in such a way that the *work* that they are performing is displayed in discernable ways within the sequential organization itself. Put another way, the work that words do, on this view, must be demonstrable within a paradigm in which sequential organization (that is, the ways that subsequent talk can be seen to reflect and react to that work – *orient to* it, in the standard parlance – or that prior talk can be seen to *anticipate* it) is accorded special privilege. Or, at least, a special purity of demonstration is expected when people's words are said to be *doing* something. Subtract sequence, and one is on treacherous ground best left to non-scientists who can afford to wallow in the speculative and the fuzzy.

To some of us ethnographers, though, it seems clear that words, in the places we meet them, typically resist subtractive molesting. We are hard pressed to find referents or propositions, or at least referents or propositions of a *single kind*; and we fail, hard as we try, to find evidence *only in talk* or the sequential organization of talk for what words seem to be achieving. Better evidence often comes from something that happens much later (or something that came long before); or perhaps from something that never happens at all, but simply turns out to be the case. Moreover, words do their work between people: speakers and hearers are actors whose medium is verbal, who trade places, and come and go, but who typically do more than talk.

1.2. *Words as actions*

Much goes on in conversation that is routinely part of the material which the ethnographer in the field must use. The existing literature pays special attention, for example, to those aspects of speech that index social relationships – from the formally simple but socially highly ramified choice between familiar and polite pronouns, to the complex terminological subtleties of reference and address in kinship and other domains, and again to the elaborate and codified special linguistic registers that are called into play between castes, classes, or even in-laws. One starts with the premise that, in talking with one another, human beings are engaged in a particularly clear and accessible form of social life.

Malinowski, of course, argued the same case very strongly long ago. His somewhat Austinian dictum – ‘Words are part of action and they are equivalents to actions’ (1935: 9) – combines with his view that language is central to social life. As he puts it,

Language is intertwined with the education of the young, with social intercourse, with the administration of law, the carrying out of ritual, and with all other forms of practical cooperation (1935: 52).

The very notion of ‘speech act’, derived from Austin’s observation that we are very often *doing* things as well as (or in the course of, or by means of) *saying* things, bring words squarely back into the domain of social action in general. But the subsequent formalization of speech act theory puts a special, and sometimes bizarre, emphasis on an elaborate coding process from the speaker’s intentions, to his meanings, to his words, back to understood meanings, and finally his illocutionary (as well as his more anarchic perlocutionary) effects on his addressee(s).

Starting with words (or perhaps with meanings) often leaves mysterious the actions that seem to be accomplished through talk. There are the classic headaches for speech act theory, the so-called ‘indirect’ speech acts, which seem to do their jobs while masquerading in an inappropriate verbal guise. A command posing as a question, or a question dressed like an apology, gives analysts – and occasionally interlocutors – difficulties.

‘They gave it me’, Humpty Dumpty continued thoughtfully . . . ‘– for an un-birthday present’.

‘I beg your pardon?’ Alice said with a puzzled air.

‘I’m not offended’, said Humpty Dumpty.
‘I mean, what *is* an un-birthday present?’

1.3. *Actions, with words attached*

Even philosophers, of course, have known for a long time that we do different sorts of things when we use words. In a well-known passage, Wittgenstein writes:

But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command? – There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call ‘symbols’, ‘words’, ‘sentences’. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics.)

Here the term ‘language-game’ is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. (1953, sect. 23.)

It may be unsurprising that linguistic philosophers, like Wittgenstein and Austin, might start with words, and only slowly move outwards to the things we do with them. One might suppose ethnographers, though, to procede in the opposite direction: starting with *activities*, and working inwards to the *actions* (whether verbal or otherwise) which organize them (see Levinson, 1979). There may be some things one can *only* do by talking (promising, perhaps, or apologizing), but there are many more that one can do perfectly well without words (asking, for example, commanding, or requesting), or that typically involve a Malinowskian ‘intertwining’ of words and other action (pointing, naming, perhaps even *denying*).

‘I’m sure I didn’t mean –’ Alice was beginning, but the Red Queen interrupted her impatiently.

‘That’s just what I complain of! You *should* have meant! What do you suppose is the use of a child without any meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning – and a child’s more important than a joke, I hope. You couldn’t deny that, even if you tried with both hands.’

‘I don’t deny things with my *hands*’, Alice objected.

‘Nobody said you did’, said the Red Queen. ‘I said you couldn’t if you tried.’

The natural starting place, then, is what we find people up to, the business at hand, the activities of everyday life. Wittgenstein suggests that some activities, realized in speech, are simply features of human life everywhere. We will recognize them wherever we see them. When, in the case to which I will shortly turn, Zinacanteco men tease a young boy with suggestions about marriage, we recognize their fun, and also his chagrin and embarrassment. Wittgenstein, indeed, suggested that the very basis of our understanding other human beings was a common ground of language activities.

Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing. (1953: sect. 25.)

Wittgenstein's 'countless' kinds of sentence or multiplicity of 'language games' hints at the argued infinity of perlocutions, and the notion of a 'form of life', embedded in an evolving 'natural history', leads us back to the domain of action: back to the house, yard, field or marketplace where we collected our words in the first place.

2. Participant roles in conversation

The words I present in this essay come from the front yard of my friend Romin, a Zinacanteco corn-farmer who lives in the hamlet of *Nabenchauk* 'The Lake of Thunder', a Tzotzil-speaking hamlet on the Pan-American highway in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. One morning in April, 1981, he and some of his kinsmen met there to make arrangements for a cornfield ritual designed to protect still fragile fields from windstorms. My text is drawn from a fragment of this event. Before displaying the phenomena, though, I must rid myself of another subtractive legacy, the concentration on *dialogue* (that is, talk between *two parties*) as the prototype of conversation.

2.1. 'N party' conversation

Many students of conversation have, both because of their theoretical predispositions and for empirical or methodological convenience, concentrated on interactions between *two* participants. A fairly simple information theoretic model of channel, sender and receiver, message and transmission has

often been applied to natural conversational exchanges, whether or not these are obviously embedded in wider activities that transcend the immediate talk. Speech act theory starts from an idealized speech situation which embraces a Speaker and a Hearer, with the former performing illocutionary acts by addressing utterances to the latter.

On the other hand, despite the fact that the vast corpus of empirical studies, produced by students of conversation, has concentrated on *two-party* talk, or on the interactions between speaker-hearer *dyads* in talk, the founding model of a conversational turn-taking system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974²) makes clear provision for *multiple* participants in natural conversation, and specifies with considerable subtlety the varied and important differences between ways of participating, as speaker or hearer, in an activity within which talk occurs (see also Goffman, 1979). Although much of the classic work in the field concentrates on the peculiarly reduced communicative channel provided by *telephone* conversations³ – systematically avoiding, by methodological fiat, certain distracting non-verbal or gestural phenomena⁴ – there is a growing and significant body of research on multi-party interaction.⁵

Analytical concentration on the specially *marked* case of two-party conversation has led to twists and contortions, especially in the speculative realm of speech act theory. For example, it is hard to incorporate into a standard Speaker and Hearer account of speech acts such indirect demands as the one I take myself to have been making when I said, to no one in particular, but within the earshot of other members of the household:

'Who left this rubbish all over the floor?'

but where my supposed indirect request (that that person please remove it) seems to have no analytically appropriate addressee. Clark and Carlson (1982a, 1982b) present a host of similar and more pointed examples – [Mother to infant] 'Don't you think your father should change your diapers?' – and a proposed revision of speech act theory to include informatives, addressed to hearers who are not addressees of the immediate or overt speech act.

No doubt analysts deliberately chose to concentrate on two-party exchanges because they seemed to involve the limiting, *simplest* conversational case, from whose perspective the complexities of talk between more than two people could eventually be elaborated. Such logic seems suspect, however, if we consider the *design* requirements of human face-to-face conversation.

The presence of more than two interlocutors (and, of course, we must abandon the static speech act model of *a* speaker and *a* hearer, since people exchange turns) means that the orderly transition from one speaker to the next, the crucial phenomenon that the notion of a sequential organization was meant to capture in the first place, cannot be mechanically managed. When there are just the two of us, if I stop talking, either you start or silence reigns. But when we are three or more, when I stop, the rest of you have to fight it out. That is, there are basic floor-selection mechanisms in 'n-party' talk ($n > 2$) that are *reduced* or altered just in the *special* case of two-party talk.

A volleyball analogy suggests itself. In this game, each team has a total of three hits to knock the ball across the net. A team can use one, two, or three hits, provided that no single player hits the ball twice in a row. When a team has exactly two members, if player A hits the ball and doesn't get it over the net, there is no question about player B's responsibility: s/he either hits it, or the point is lost. Two-person volleyball is thus both unambiguous and exhausting. Consider, now, three person teams, in which, after player A's first hit, *either* player B or C can make the next hit. Not surprisingly, in this game, balls sometimes fall inexplicably unhit to the ground. (B and C can simultaneously shout 'yours!'; in the two-person game, nobody has to shout anything, unless one's partner has fallen asleep.) The problem of who is to hit the ball next, that is, is *inherent in the design* of the game, although, in just the special case of two-person teams, it is solved by *default*.

The analogy is only partly frivolous. I have recently begun studying the conversation that accompanies volleyball games at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.⁶ One way of selecting *next hitter* is to call out a name:

Volley 1

(a ball is set up by J, and his two teammates, B and BB, must decide who will hit it. At line 68, B tells BB that the ball is for *him*.)

66 j; you got help
 67 bb; oh thanks
 68 b; that's yours, Bob <--
 69 j; beautiful
 70 there you go!
 71 p; ohhhh
 72 b; nice play, John

The method is not foolproof, of course, not only because teammates can share names (in this game both B and BB are called 'Bob'), but also because physical coordination does not always match verbally announced intention.

Volley 1

121 b; they're looking a little cold over there
 122 j; there it is Bob! <---
 123 all; ((laughing))
 124 bb; Thank you!
 125 b; I thought you were talkin' to me <---
 126 j; I was
 127 b+bb; ((laughter))

Here B and BB (both named 'Bob') believe that the previous set (a ball passed by one player to a teammate), and the vocative invitation of line 122, were addressed to him. Only BB actually hits the awry set (line 124), acknowledging the pass with a 'Thank you'; but subsequent talk (at 125-126) shows that J intended the pass for B all along (and that he, B, had thought so too).

2.2. Person and participant

There are clearly mechanisms in conversation (as in other varieties of cooperative activity) that are designed around the familiar linguistic paradigm of three *person* categories.⁷ First person grammaticalizes Speaker, second person Addressee (often conflating Addressee with mere Hearer), and third-person can refer to a variety of individuals, both participants and non-participants in the speech event. Hiding behind these familiar categories, of course, are considerable complexities. Michael Silverstein has noted, for example, that each person category can stand in for a *skill*: Speaker can be a mere mouthpiece for some Author behind the scenes. Addressee can be an errand boy, or an intermediary for some ultimate, unaddressed Target. Third person (Over)Hearer can be intended Recipient (as in Herb Clark's diaper example above), or, indeed, can catalyze other aspects of the form and content of utterances, whether ratified participant or not: she may, for example, be a Dyirbal mother-in-law (Dixon, 1971). And so on. Stephen Levinson (1983: 68-73; and especially n.d.) demonstrates that these participant roles, and others related to message form, message content, message transmission, and

access to channels of transmission, can be distinguished not only on notional grounds, but on the basis of grammatical reflexes of the relevant discriminations.⁸

We may have pulled apart the underdiscriminated notions of Speaker and Hearer, only to find ourselves obliged to bundle them back together again to accommodate people's habits of speech. That is, though analytically and sometimes actually distinguishable, these different participant roles often collapse onto a single body: the author (of message content) is usually *also* both the one who shapes message form (Levinson [n.d.] suggests the label 'scriptor') and also the Speaker who delivers the lines. Usually, the Recipient is *both* immediate Addressee and final Target. These may be the unmarked assignments, so that special circumstances may themselves require special marking.⁹

Particular ethnographic circumstances, established conversational traditions or special genres, may also complicate the repertoire of conversational participants. Codified speech situations (debates, courtrooms, public forums, plays) provide us with labelled categories that illustrate some of the issues: chairpersons, spokespersons, referees, interviewers, prompters, kibitzers – all suggest speech situations in which the cast of characters is elaborated in slightly different ways, and even informal conversation has its counterpart players.¹⁰

2.3. Talking back

Of particular importance in what follows is the Responder or Interlocutor role in Zinacanteco Tzotzil talk, a familiar enough personage in our own conversational tradition, but nearly indispensable in the equivalent Tzotzil activity, *lo'il*. In English conversation, the presence of 'back-channel' (Yngve, 1970) – in which listeners 'signal . . . understanding and sympathy' with what has been said so far – 'Gee, gosh, wow, *hmm*, *tsk*, *no!* are examples of such keep-going signals' (Goffman, 1976; reprinted in 1981: 27-29) – is a necessary ingredient in a speaker's being able to carry on with what he is saying. At the same time, listeners' encouraging back channel must not count as an attempt to get the full floor, thus disrupting the turn in progress.

In 1968 I spent a summer in a Maroon community in Suriname, where the people spoke a Portuguese based Creole called Saramaka (see Price, 1974). My host and primary teacher, Capitan Mayò, had high hopes that I would

learn something of both the language and the history of his village, Kadjoé. One afternoon he summoned me and my tape recorder in order to speak to me in a formal manner. My halting Saramaka, unfortunately, was not up to the task of responding to him appropriately, and shortly after he began my clumsy responses forced him to grind to a halt. Unperturbed, he signalled me to put the tape recorder on pause for a moment. Walking out to the street, he grabbed the first man he saw, and dragged him in to sit beside me. He was going to tell *me* a few things, he told the dragooned passer-by, but he needed a competent *listener* to be able to talk at all. Once he had the necessary verbal lubricant, he went on to declaim to me (and to my machine) for nearly an hour.

In Tzotzil conversation, the respondent's role is similarly indispensable.¹¹ It must, indeed, usually be formalized, in the sense that when a speaker is addressing remarks to a group of more than one listener, a single person emerges as the 'official' respondent, the one who gives acknowledging, often repetitive, back-channel or encouraging prompts. The others remain silent, though appropriately attentive. However, the division of labor between speaker and his official interlocutor need not always leave the speaker clearly on the floor: speaker and respondent may, in fact, often be more like co-speakers, with the rest of the audience serving as passive recipients of their collaborative talk.

3. Planning cornfield ritual

Let me now return to my friend Romin's front yard on that April morning in 1981. I will present a fragment of a prosaic, quotidian interaction. Several adult farmers work out shared farming costs, taking a brief moment in the midst of otherwise serious, if somewhat trivial, conversation, to joke with an adolescent boy about his marriage prospects. When the kid runs away in embarrassment, they continue with their business. I hope to dig a bit deeper into the moment, using the details of the interaction between speakers and hearers (or between co-speakers and audience) as my pick and shovel.

My *compadre* Petul had been out in the forest, with his sons and me, hauling and stacking timber for next year's building. The air was thick with smoky haze, swirling up from hundreds of cornfields, both highland and lowland, being burned off in preparation for planting. Soon it would be time to plant *our* fields, too, and as we were walking home we stopped in at Romin's

yard, so that Petul could consult with his son-in-law about arrangements for the joint farming operation. This year, Petul and Romin had joined several other Nabenchauk people, including a man of non-Indian extraction called Mario, in a major corn-farming operation far away in temperate fields in central Chiapas. Until new roads opened the area, the land had been inaccessible and almost unknown to Zinacanteco farmers. Moreover, this year's fields lay in a remote area inhabited by Spanish-speaking peasants, well beyond the nearby lands bordering the Grijalva River, where Zinacantecos had, for several generations, rented cornfields from *ladino* (non-Indian) ranchers.

In securing rented lands so far away, Mario was instrumental: his own *ladino* identity, and his personal and family contacts with rural Spanish-speakers, had brought him into contact with the new landlords. Here, where long-established social and economic ties linking Zinacanteco share-croppers to their *ladino* patrons did not exist, Mario was the crucial intermediary. He negotiated rents, arranged transport with the local owner, and managed the minutiae of daily accommodations with the rancher and his sons and daughters.

For Petul, and perhaps more for his son-in-law Romin, this situation was acceptable, but somewhat less than ideal. Zinacantecos are an independent lot, and their cooperative ventures are brittle and loosely knit. Petul has had, throughout his life, extraordinary success as a farmer and as a community ritual leader. Romin, his daughter's husband, is a politically powerful man in Zinacantán, a recent municipal President, a local authority, a former informant for the Harvard anthropological Chiapas Project, a model Indian for the local government Indianist bureaucracy. They needed and sought out Mario's aid in the honorable pursuit of growing corn, but the nuances of power, authority and responsibility for the operation as a whole were riddled with signs of tension and ambivalence. Who was boss? Who had the authority to make decisions? Who had the responsibility for the work and its organization? Who was the most important?

Here, then, was gathered together a somewhat disparate group of interested parties: Petul, consummate corn-farmer, with his hardworking sons; Romin, his politically influential and reasonably wealthy son-in-law, along with his adolescent sons who have just begun to be able to do a proper day's work in the cornfields (although they also go to school); and the ambiguous figure of Mario, to the rest of the world a cut above all Indians by virtue of being a *ladino*, albeit a poor one who lives uncomfortably near Indians — while to

Zinacantecos themselves a cut below full-fledged social actors, a category that includes only other Zinacantecos.

The business at hand was planning a ritual of dedication and protection for the cornfields, involving ceremonial gifts (of food and liquor), candles and shamanistic prayer at the corners of the cornfield, all designed to protect delicate new corn shoots from the ravages of wind and rain, near the beginning of the growing season.

Here again, Mario was, curiously, the key. Although a member of a *ladino* family that had long lived on the fringes of Zinacanteco society, who foregoes distinctive Indian clothing, speaks Spanish in the home, and resists participation in the civil-religious hierarchy that in many ways defines the boundaries of Zinacanteco life, Mario is a paradox. His mother *was* a Zinacanteco, until she made herself into a *ladina* after she married a non-Indian man and moved away; he is thus Petul's cousin. His first language is Spanish, but his Tzotzil is, if accented, fluent. He is comfortable with the government health clinics, but he is also an accomplished curer, in the Zinacanteco style: he dreams, he reads pulses, and, most significantly, he prays, in the rapid formal couplets of Tzotzil ritual speech.

As we join the group, sitting on diminutive chairs in Romin's patio, Petul and Romin have hit upon the expedient of presenting Mario with a bottle of liquor to facilitate a formal request. Rather than searching out another shaman to perform the corn dedication ceremony, they suggest that he, Mario, himself an interested party, agree to perform the ritual. He has agreed, and they have begun to drink the proffered rum, further advancing Mario along a road to befuddlement upon which, it seems, he had already embarked before he arrived at Romin's yard.

3.1. *How many candles?*

In the snatch of talk which will be my central text, the first and most obvious stratum of business is a straightforward financial accounting.

As the shaman, Mario must work out how many candles, skyrocketes, and other offerings will be required for the ceremony, so that the group can calculate what each contributor's share of the costs will be. One of Petul's sons, Antun, is serving as scribe, writing down the costs and numbers as Mario works them out. But there is more than a Speaker (spouting figures) and a Hearer (writing them down) involved here: there are bystanders (Mario's

hired workmen, who speak no Tzotzil and are thus left out of the conversation); there is Romin, a kibitzer, who ventures an occasional dissenting opinion about the costs or the arithmetic; there is Petul's other son, Manvel (shown as 'V' on the transcript), who serves the drinks and sometimes chides his younger brother, the scribe, but in an off-stage, unofficial voice; and there is Petul, the *real* expert in these matters, but here playing the role of facilitator, trying to keep the whole business moving along smoothly and efficiently.

Let's see how the talk progresses. We join the conversation after the men have already worked out the costs of candles, local rum, and skyrockets. They now consider what it will cost them to buy the chickens for the ritual meal. Mario says that chickens will cost two hundred fifty pesos each, and that they will need two, which works out to five hundred for the pair.¹²

Chanovun [lines 1-12]

- 1 a; k'u yepal
How much?
- 2 p; kinyentos pesos cha' kot xal
Five hundred pesos for two (chickens), he says.
- 3 m; [y de ahi quinientos pesos
And after that, starting with five hundred . . .
- 4 a; [quinientos veinticinco
525 . . .
- 5 r; [mmjmm
unh unh
- 6 doscientos cincuenta xi
No, he said two fifty . . .
- 7 m; doscientos cincuenta jun . kot
Two fifty for one (chicken).
- 8 a; [pero quiniento ta xcha'-kotal un bi
But it would be five hundred for two.
- 9 m; [cha' kot cinco
Five (hundred), for two (chickens).
- 10 p; kinyento ta xcha'-kotal a'a
Yes, five hundred for the two.
- 11 m; [cha' kot che'e
Two chickens, yes . . .

Here the mix of roles and activities is clear and finely articulated: Mario gives the costs (before the transcript starts, and again at lines 7 and 9); Antun clarifies them before writing them down (lines 1, 4, 8); Petul, official interlocutor as the senior spokesman for the rest of the farming group (and owner of the bottle being offered to Mario), gives encouraging and assenting repetitive back channel (lines 2, 10).

Romin, somewhat aloof, just offers corrections: no, he said two fifty, not five hundred (lines 5 and 6). He has misunderstood, of course, thinking only of the cost of a single chicken rather than the combined total cost of two. Realizing that he has made a mistake, Romin takes a different critical tack.

Chanovun [lines 12-14]

- 12 r; kinyento pero mi s-
500, but will it..
- 13 mi sta
will it be that much?
- 14 m; ja ja mu sta ja
Hehh hehh, no it won't be that much.

Romin expresses his doubt about whether the figure Mario quoted for chicken costs is correct, as it seems much too high. Mario agrees, with a laugh, that his estimate is excessive, whereupon a little discussion follows about whether they should just go ahead and collect that much anyway (since there is no harm in having a bit of extra cash for the ceremony [Antun at lines 15-16]), and also whether it will still be possible, in this era of steep inflation, to find cheap one hundred peso chickens as one could in the good old days (Petul at lines 20-22).

Chanovun [lines 15-22]

- 15 a; jk'eltik jtzobtik xa kere
Let's see, let's just collect it, man!
- 16 jk'eltik jay kotuk chman o
We'll see how many (animals) it will buy.
- 17 m; hehh
- 18 a; hehh
- 19 ta jk'eltik mi=
We'll see if . . .
- 20 p; =mi o to jta ta syene ijk'ele
We'll see if they can still be found for 100, as I used to see.
- 21 mi muk' bu jtatik to
If perhaps we can still find them (for that price).

22 bik'itik no'ox=
Just little ones.

The protagonists display several concerns here: they want the ceremony to come off smoothly. The procedure will involve working out a total budget for the ritual, and then dividing the costs between each of the adult heads of household involved in the farming operation. So they want neither to collect too little money, nor to spend any more than they have to. Against this background, Mario and Romin are jockeying with one another as experts on costs and prices; Antun, carefree and without particular responsibility, simply totes up the figures, turning his mind, perhaps, to the mini-fiesta of the ceremony itself. Petul, poorest and most habitually thrifty of the lot, a man who often will make a long and arduous journey to a distant village because he's heard that meat can be had there for a few pesos less per kilo, muses about whether a bit of savvy shopping will reduce the costs still farther. It is by mining the conversational lode, here, that one brings these words, and this activity, to life: finds not only messages but sentiments, not only participant roles but personalities, and complementary *social* roles in the business at hand.

3.2. Learn to read

A secondary conversational theme appears in a subsequent interaction between Mario and the young Antun, who is trying to do the sums as Mario mumbles out the costs. Mario begins to be impatient, in a joking sort of way, with Antun's slow calculations. He challenges the boy to work out the sums more quickly, switching to Spanish (at lines 24, 28, 33 and 35)³ and a brow-beating tone.

Chanovun [lines 23-41]

23 m; =aa mu xlok' avu'un
 Aw, you can't work it out!
24 solo de vela, cuanto es? <---
 Just the candles, how much is it?
25 v; nito tzkotol che'e
 Calculate the total, now.
26 skotol k'u yepal
 How much is it all together?
 [

27 r; doscientos cincuenta y cinco=
 255
 [
28 m; y solo de trago <---
 and just for liquor. . .
29 a; =doscientos cincuenta y cinco
 255
30 y trago - doscientos cincuenta=
 and liquor, 250.
31 m; =mjm¹⁴
32 a; y cohete - dos docena doscientos veinte
 and skyrockets, two dozen for 220.
33 m; a de ahi <---
 And then. . .
34 p; tzobo skotol
 add it all together.
 [
35 m; cuanto es <---
 How much is it?
 [
36 a; malaon ta jtzob skotol
 Wait for me, I'll just add it all up.

When Antun is hesitant in working out the total, at line 36, Mario mocks him, at line 40 below: '*chano vun, xichi*', he says, 'You should learn to read and write (literally, learn paper, as I always say)!'¹⁵

37 p; tzobo skotol un
 Add it all up!
 [
38 m; aa . . . kere:
 Aw, damn!
39 p; tzobo skotol un
 Just add it all up.
40 m; yu'un chano vun xichi= <---
 You should learn to read and write, I say!
41 r; =jmmm jmmm
42 ((truck passes))

3.3. Am I a baby?

Up to this point, the men have stuck to the main business of the moment – calculating ritual costs – although the question of Antun's competence, as

a scribe and accountant if not as a *man*, has now been broached and hangs, as it were, in the air. Now the issues of topic and activity, interlocutors and audience, spring to center stage. Mario turns to young Xun, Romin's eleven-year-old son, who has been sitting silently listening to the conversation, and addresses his next remarks to him.

- 43 m; (mi xak'an jtzeb) (mi chapas abtel)
(Do you want my daughter?) (Can you work?)
- 44 ta la sk'an ali ta jnopbe s- yalib li-ala tote
Because I hear your father wants me to pick a daughter-in-law for him.
- 45 pe:ro
but
- 46 jna'tik mi ta jnopbe yalib latote=
But who knows if I'll think of a daughter-in-law for your father
- 47 p; [(mi lok' kwenta?) <---
Did it work out?
- 48 a; [=ta skotole mi:l-
All together, one thousand and. . .
- 49 m; pero chapas preva mi xtune=
But you must first test her to see if she is any good.
- 50 v; hehh
- 51 a; =mil ciento veinticinco <---
one thousand one hundred twenty-five.
- 52 m; chapas -
You'll have to. . .
- 53 preva mi bye:n
test to see if she properly. . .
- 54 p; va'i la <---
Listen there!

Mario jokingly offers little Xun his daughter in marriage, saying that he has heard that Romin is preoccupied with acquiring a daughter-in-law. At least some of the audience here acknowledges the joke (Manvel, at line 50, for example, turns to look at little Xun and laughs), although Petul and Antun (at lines 47, 48 and 51) try to bring Mario back to the ritual accounting that Antun has finally worked out. In fact, at line 54, Petul explicitly tries to regain Mario's attention, and in the following line, he aims a direct vocative Mario's way. The nascent struggle between two conversational topics, the

ritual accounting and this little piece of sideplay about Xun and his marriage possibilities, seems at first to be resolved in favor of the official order of business, as talk continues.

- 55 Maryo!
[
- 56 v; eso <---
right!
- 57 m; mmm?
- 58 eh?
- 59 a; tzkotole mil ciento veinticinco
all together one thousand one hundred twenty-five.
- 60 v; [(yu'un chapas proval k'u cha'al xi) <---
You'll get to try out how she is, he says.
- 61 m; skotole=
all together
- 62 a; =mmm xchi'uk xa
yes, already including. . .
- 63 m; [bueno
good
- 64 a; kaxlane xch-
. .the chicklen, and the. . .
- 65 skotol chk taje
all together (that's the total).
- 66 p; trago, kwete
including liquor, and rockets
- 67 a; jiii
yes
- 68 p; kantela:
and candles. . .

They seem to have resumed discussion of the costs (and in fact, Petul seems to be anxious to terminate the whole business, now that a provisional total has been reached). But note the background prompting, at lines 56 and 60, by Manvel (V), a minor participant in the rest of the exchange. These remarks are aimed at little Xun, and delivered with a grin: they are jabs aimed at getting the little boy to take up the implicit challenge that Mario has offered; they are thus a sign that, despite Petul and Antun's efforts, the struggle between calculating costs and joking with Xun has not yet been resolved.¹⁶ Manvel, at least, seems to be trying to prompt Xun to retort.

Xun, however, remains silent here and throughout. In fact, as the joking resumes he ultimately is unable to contain his embarrassment. He jumps up and runs inside the house. His father, Romin, however, explicitly takes up the joking theme himself, in the next line. He offers his son an appropriately insulting retort, bracketed by the verb *uto* 'say that', and followed by the admonition, at line 71, that the boy shouldn't let such joking remarks pass.

- 69 r; mi unenon jch'unoj mantal atzeb uto: kere
 "Am I just a baby that I'll take orders from your daughter?"
 you should say that
 [
 70 v; va'i chk
 Listen to that...
 71 r; (k'u yu'un muk' bu chatak'av)
 Why don't you answer?

Romin, here, almost puts the words into his son's mouth: "Am I a baby?" "Do you take me for a baby?" – say *that!*¹⁷

Petul, stepping in now as Xun's grandfather, carries the joking on. As senior male in the family, it would fall to him, in a real marriage negotiation, to make a financial arrangement with the father of a prospective bride. From that perspective, the free offer of a woman in marriage is a real bargain, and he chides Xun not to let the opportunity pass.

- 72 p; mu me xavak' jvokoltikotik un
 Don't cause us extra trouble, now.
 73 (na'bil) (pial) ta ora mi ik'ot ti poxe
 We'll understand right away when the gifts of liquor arrive.
 [
 74 r; (...)
 75 kak'betik-
 we'll give them...

Romin now takes up the theme, turning it back towards Mario, the hypothetical father-in-law. If such a lightning marriage could be arranged, why it would even be to Mario's advantage, because they would give him generous gifts of liquor to drink as part of the festivities.

- 76 p; pero mi-
 But will it be...
 [
]

- 77 r; kak'betik yuch'an li'e=
 We'll give this one plenty to drink

Petul agrees, and even proposes that they go ahead and order the necessary liquor to seal the bargain on the spot (line 78). Mario begins to reformulate his position, at this point, by going on to tell Xun what will happen if the daughter turns out to be an unsatisfactory wife, breaking in on Petul at line 79.

- 78 p; =sta:k' xi xa chbat man-
 Sure! We'll just send out orders...
 [
 79 m; mi mu sna' spak'an vaj i jtzebe
 If my daughter doesn't know how to make tortillas.
 80 mi mu sna' skuch si'
 or if she doesn't know how to carry firewood.
 81 mi mu sna'=
 or if she doesn't know...
 82 a; = ja ja kere
 Ha ha, oh boy!
 83 m; chapbel li (matz') k'al xabat ta avabtele
 . .how to prepare your corn gruel when you go out to work.
 [
 84 p; mano junuk- junuk i- <---
 Buy him one...
 85 mano junuk
 buy one..
 [
 86 m; xabat xasutesbone un
 You will go and return her to me.
 [
 87 p; Xun <---
 John!
 88 m; chajsutesbe latak'ine
 And I'll return your money to you.
 [
 89 p; albo Xun
 Tell him, John...

Mario recites a list of common wifely failings, and he magnanimously offers, should his daughter exhibit any of them, to return Xun's money. Throughout this segment, at the highlighted lines, Petul continues to try to suggest to Xun what he should be doing (and saying) right at this minute:

namely, acquiring some bottles of liquor so as to make a formal proposal of marriage to the prospective father-in-law, so foolish as to *offer* a free bride. Suddenly, between lines 89 and 90 he must abruptly shift horses: he has heard Mario mention *money* for the first time. Aha! So the bride is to be *bought*¹⁸ after all!

- 90 p; a manbil
Oh, so she's to be bought
[
91 m; e:so entero
That's right, all of (your money back).
[
92 p; lajeltza manbil
So she has to be bought after all.
[
93 r; pero (ora??) uto
But (???), tell him.

3.4. Targets, near and far

Where do the conversationalists stand, at this point? Talk has been diverted from the cornfield ritual. What began, ostensibly as a side remark addressed by Mario to the little boy has now been taken up as the current business at hand. The paradoxes of addressees who aren't addressed, of respondents who don't or won't respond, of hearers who can't hear – all are present in this little scenario. Xun never says a word, but many words are said *for* him. What are we to make of the joking sequence?

On the surface, the whole episode could be seen as little more than a drunken diversion. Mario is already somewhat tipsy, and there is plenty of evidence in both the talk and the conduct of the others that they are simply playing along with the tomfoolery, and that they are impatient to get the encounter over with, and the business out of the way. As I showed in lines 55–68 above, they try to hurry Mario along and to redirect his attention to the ritual. Mario, on the other hand, is clearly enjoying his moment in the lime-light, and his opportunity to perform a bit.¹⁹

Looking more closely, one sees more to the joke: little Xun is a natural target for teasing, and marriage is a suitably inappropriate topic for any eleven-year-old boy. The subject of learning, growing up and competence

already is floating in the discursive air. ('Learn to read!' says Mario, quickly turning to Xun: 'Can you work? Do you want to marry my daughter?') This sort of verbal horseplay between the grown-up and the growing-up is familiar social comedy. It reminds us that Zinacantecos think about the same sorts of things that we do, even if not all wives in the world pat tortillas or haul wood, and even if not all adolescent boys pay cash for their brides.

Moreover, I am struck by the fact that the sequence does not simply die a natural death: Xun is in no position to respond, even though Mario has provided him with perfect openings for the stylized joking and wordplay characteristic of Tzotzil interaction (see Gossen, 1976). Instead, the other *adults* take up the challenge, and *they* engage Mario in verbal sparring. But as mere audience, neither directly addressed nor directly concerned, their words are *aimed but mediated*. They travel through little Xun.²⁰ Often, as I mentioned, they take the form of words *put in his mouth*.

We saw, in line 69, that Romin gives the boy a verbal nudge ('Why don't you answer him?'), having already provided (at line 69) a pre-shaped verbal barb in the form of the ironic and slightly impolite:

'Am I a baby, that I should be taking orders from your daughter (by agreeing to marry her just on *your* say-so)?'

Notice that Zinacantecos often instruct messengers in the precise Tzotzil phraseology of a message: 'go next door to the neighbor's house and say this –', with an exact prefabricated utterance offered.²¹ As the conversation goes on, with Mario laying further conditions on the hypothetical marriage, so too do the suggested retorts continue to appear. For example, Romin starts to formulate such a rejoinder at line 98, while Mario blusters on about how young Xun will have to prove his worth as a hard worker in order to marry the daughter.

- 94 m; chapas
You will do...
95 chabat ba'yi
you will go first
96 junuk jabil
for one year.
97 ta jk'el k'u x'elan xa'abtej
And I'll see how well you work.
98 r; pues, mi pentejoon xa <---

- Well, am I so stupid as to . . .
- 99 m; [treinta
Thirty . . .
- 100 cuarenta fila
or forty rows (of corn)
- 101 la' to un
Come back here!
- 102 ((laughter))

It is here at line 101 that Xun is overcome with *k'exlal* 'shame and embarrassment'. He jumps up to try to run away. Mario grabs him with one hand, saying 'Come back here', but the boy manages to twist away. As he runs into the house to hide, the rest of the participants bounce their final sallies off him. Mario continues with his description of the laborious tests of diligence the boy will have to pass.

- 103 cuarenta filas pe:ro
forty rows (of corn to hoe) but . . .
- 104 ta arroyo arroyo=
on very steep slopes!

And Petul now suggests an appropriate new retort:

- 105 p; =Xun
John
- 106 muk' bu xinupunotikótik
We won't get married.
- 107 mu jna' mi ijta ta pial ta jjak'be xi
I don't know, if I can get the money on credit, I'll ask for her,
say that!
- 108 ((laughter))

Inappropriate forms of paying for a bride have now become the theme to be elaborated. The form of words continues to be indirect: 'Xun! This is what you should say! Reply *this way!*'²²

- 109 r; mi ta jtoj ta abtel ya'el taje uto kere
Just say, "Can I pay for her with work!"
- 110 m; pero con buenos chiles noxtox un
And (he'll also pay) with good chilies.²³

- 111 p; vo'on chba jtz'un-
Me, I'll go plant . . .
- [
- 112 a; hehhh
- 113 p; vo'on chba jtz'un li iche uto
Tell him, "I'll be the one to plant the chilies."
- 114 x; hehh

As suddenly as it began, the joking sequence comes to an end. Xun, its vehicle, its catalyst, its reflective surface, has run off to hide in the house, peering out of the door from time to time to keep at least one ear on the ensuing talk. Antun and Mario abruptly return to the arithmetic: the task of figuring out each of the seven corn partner's shares.

- 115 a; ora
and now . . .
- 116 m; ora multiplicado²⁴ por siete
and now, multiplied by seven.
- 117 a; siete
seven?
- 118 m; entre siete personas
(divided) among seven persons.
- 119 a ver
let's see . . .
- 120 paso . avokol vun, Xun
John, please work out the numbers . . .

Since higher order calculations are anticipated, the conversational fragment comes to an end when Mario summons me (I am also called Xun) to put down my camera and to pick up a pencil to do the division (line 120).

4. The textured audience

I began with the suggestion that multiple-party conversation is not the specialized case but the *canonical* case, for which language was designed, and that the traditional grammaticalized categories of person do not exhaust, and perhaps in some ways even obscure, the intricacies of the social organization of participants and bystanders in talk. It is a commonplace of speech act theory that *indirect* illocutions exploit the virtues of different kinds of targets

and addressees: members of an indirectly addressed audience can conveniently 'hear' or 'not hear', sometimes just as they choose. (Little Xun didn't choose to hear, but his kinsmen heard *for him*.) A speaker can dodge responsibility for a verbal missile launched at someone else, but intercepted by a formally unaddressed bystander. It is similarly a commonplace of the ethnography of speaking and conversation analysis that people mutually collaborate as speakers and hearers, interlocutors as I have called them, and that the audience is not passive in the struggle over both turns and topics.

I have also argued, in probing the nature of the conversational social system, that the identities, social relationships, and immediate activities of the conversationalists – all focii of wider ethnographic attention – form a necessary background to situated talk. I have led the reader on a brief excursion into the front yard of a group of Indian farmers in a Zinacanteco village. We meet several peasants planning their farming operation. When we peer more closely we see other relevant discriminations: between farmers and their hired hands, between adults and persons something less than adults, between Indians and *ladinos* or between Zinacantecos and other Indians. Moreover, the *activities* in question begin to pull apart. Planning the corn work divides into the needs of growing itself and its ritual concomitants; and attached to these activities are different sorts of obligation and responsibility: financial, ritual, practical. In the midst of the joking and the planning, we see people concurrently adjusting their social relationships with one another: as corn-farmers and partners in a business venture; as kinsmen; as neighbors; and as members of a corporate group that commands loyalty and segments the social universe into *kinds*.

It is clear that we can move from the talk we hear (or overhear) to the knowledge about talkers' social lives we are seeking in part because we can divine something about *who* the talkers are and to *whom* they are addressing themselves. An otherwise prosaic interaction like this one shows that we need a richer, more textured model than that provided by, say, the traditional person categories of grammar or speech act analysis. Notice that talk itself can *invoke* rather different categories of social identity *simultaneously*: the conversational shifts transform the interlocutors, as a man is now corn-farmer, now petitioner, now ritual expert, now grandfather, and back again.

Moreover, social identity, and social relationships, lead to 'natural' topics. Inversely, topics in conversation can pick out *inherent* (appropriate) *targets*. Indeed, close scrutiny of a conversational passage like this one from Romin's yard shows an intricate interaction between topics, the construction

and maintenance of a situated 'universe of discourse', and the precise constituency of the pool of interlocutors. Issues, like competence and growing up and acting like an adult, once raised and if sustained by the appropriate cast of characters, can hang in the air, waiting to drop on an unsuspecting participant. Topics can have histories (both social and discursive), and can carry their own allusions. There can even be struggles *between* topics (little boy's marriages versus grown men's cooperative farming) as well as between talkers. Once we link these observations with the fact that talk directed, seemingly, at a single individual can aim more deviously, and yet quite precisely, at a highly *differentiated* wider audience, even the apparent diversion we have been looking at – a somewhat drunk and foolish ladino testing a little Zinacanteco boy – takes us to the heart of our ethnographic concerns.

Mario's suggestion that he become little Xun's father-in-law amounts, under the circumstances, to a challenge to Romin and Petul. A father-in-law commands service and obedience from a son-in-law; the family that buys a new bride lives under the constant threat that she will bolt. Romin and Petul try to turn this logic on its head: anyone so foolish as to *give* his daughter away must be giving away something of *no value*, that only a fool would accept. Perhaps, if she is to be bought after all, she can be bought *on credit*.

Mario, in turn, launches a barbed, culturally laden, counter-attack: all that really matters, since she will be an Indian wife, is whether she cooks, hauls firewood, and remains obedient. All that really matters about a prospective son-in-law (*your* son or grandson) is how well he hoes corn. Concerns about hypothetical work and hypothetical authority (between sons-in-law and fathers-in-law) thus allow indirectly engaged verbal interlocutors to dance around very real concerns about the delegation of responsibility and authority, between corn-farming partners, in mutual work. The dance is choreographed in conversational turns, in a verbal medium, and with a cast that skillfully juggles soloists, partners, and the ensemble as a whole.

We see here that words belong to people: the fact that prompts are offered and wording is important, that information is managed and that messages have authors show that talk is characteristic social stuff. Thus, in a parallel way, social personae and identities also belong: to kin, to friends, to colleagues, to ethnic groups. A joke aimed at my son can be a potential insult aimed at me. Words *are* sticks and stones: they can be heaved over fences, rolled under doors; and they can ricochet off one target and thwack another.

Carrying these diverse messages and content are different vehicles. The texture of audience and interlocutors is apparent in the timbrés of their

different *voices*. A social occasion provides many possibilities: for official speakers and addressees, for ratified and sufficiently qualified interlocutors (whose power or status may make them appropriate conversational as well as community pillars), but also for off-stage, undercover, under-the-breath subversives, for prompters and hecklers, for studied non-hearers, for spies, even for those, like little Xun's uncle Manvel, who, according to the Tzotzil scheme of things, engage in such unsavory activities as *sokbe sjol*, 'ruining the head of' or 'provoking' his nephew, or worse, *sa' k'op*, 'causing trouble' which literally translates as 'looking for words'.

The details of conversations, situated in their natural surroundings, display a constant movement between discovering (or creating) *new* knowledge (about Zinacantán or classes of people; about these individuals or their relationship of the moment; about addressees and targets, or speech in general; or about little boys, fathers and sons, and ethnic loyalties), and *finding* or rediscovering, or recognizing as an old friend, familiar old knowledge. Language again shows its Janus face: both *creative* and *presupposing* (Silverstein, 1976). The ethnographer interested in the minutiae of interaction must take the methodological challenge seriously: to relate a single instance, or the details of just one moment (even a very *rich* moment) to a more general understanding (of a society, or of a human life, or of these few Zinacanteco friends) that, in some way to be formulated, is the goal of all ethnography.

Here is the inextricably *social nature of talk*. Words feed on social structure, and yet social structure is built largely out of occasions for talk. Broadening our view of how words signify has shown us that all words index the moment of their utterance. Similarly, broadening the notion of the activity of talk, its protagonists and their relationships, shows us that all such moments of utterance instantiate the social structure that gives them both their character and their occasion. The categories of analysis for social action writ large, then, apply, on this richer view, to conversation as social system: not just Speakers and Hearers, passing Messages, but alliance, exchange, collaboration, opposition, competition, collusion, expressivity and deviousness, cloaked in a verbal garb and arranged on a conversational stage.

Ethnographers, in our real lives as well as in our extended visits to other people's lives, learn about the world and the people in it by doing, but also in large part by talking and listening. Usually we do both. We, like the people with whom we live, are *concurrently* speakers and hearers, actors and audience. The virtue of scrutinizing a tiny stretch of situated talk, as I have done here, is that by exploring levels of interpretive gloss in this highly

textured context of speech in action, we begin to be able to situate the activities, situations, beliefs, values and roles of codified ethnographic description in the settings and participants of momentary and ephemeral interactions, where (hopefully), we discover them in the first place.

Notes

1. Extracts from *Through the Looking Glass* are from Carroll, 1960.
2. Chuck Goodwin has pointed out to me that Harvey Sacks's distinctive perspective on conversational turn-taking focussed precisely on its canonical multi-party form. See for example Sacks (1978).
3. In these telephonic conversations, some *specialized* features of openings and closings (for example, that the person who answers the phone has to speak first, even though s/he doesn't know who's on the other end) are brought strikingly to the forefront of analytical attention. Looking at telephone conversations also allows us to forget (at least until the introduction of such technological innovations as 'call-waiting' devices or answering machines, see Robert Hopper, 1986) the familiar and natural fact that even conversational *dyads* are interrupted by or shaped to suit third (or fourth . . .) parties.
4. But see the work of C. Goodwin, 1981, on the crucial role of gaze.
5. See for example, the corpus of Chuck and Candy Goodwin (C. Goodwin, 1981: Ch. 5; C. Goodwin, 1984; M. Goodwin, 1980, 1982; Goodwin and Goodwin, n.d.), or Holmes (1984). I am indebted to the Goodwins for bringing these materials to my attention and sharing them with me. It seems not accidental that their, and my, interest in *argument* should bring the dynamics of multi-party interaction strikingly to the fore, although the connection, strongly drawn in their work, between narrative or storytelling and role switching and negotiation is perhaps more surprising.
6. My stay at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in 1985-86 was supported by a Fellowship from the Harry Franck Guggenheim Foundation and National Science Foundation Grant #BNS-8011494.
7. One supposes that all languages grammaticalize at least three person categories, although Laycock (1977) suggests that some New Guinea languages have smaller two-term systems (contrasting, in the words of his title, 'me and you' with 'the rest'). Why these are *abbreviated* systems, as he calls them, rather than simply exceptions to the proposed generalization is unclear, and one would need extensive material, ideally including conversational evidence, to draw firm conclusions.
8. Levinson (1983: 69) cites an example from Gazdar (1979):

'Billie is to come in now.'

which, to me at least, can suggest the presence of either a speaker's skill, or an addressee's skill. That is, it can indicate either that the person uttering the words is speaking for some other behind-the-scenes authority who issues the command, or that the words are addressed to someone, not Billie, who is in a position to relay the order to Billie; or both.

9. Sometimes the special marking device may overlap in interesting ways with other grammatical categories. For example, the Tzotzil evidential particle *la* is normally attached to a declarative sentence to mark the event described in the sentence as hearsay: something that the speaker cannot vouch for on his or her own evidence. Such a device is peculiarly appropriate, too, to a situation in which the speaker is merely *relaying* an utterance which comes from another; it can thus even be attached to a question as in:

Mi la chabat ta k'in?
 Q QUOT go+2A prep fiesta
 Are you going to the fiesta (s/he wants to know).

Here the evidential particle *la* suggests that the questioner is repeating the question on behalf of someone else.

10. Goffman (1974) distinguishes, at the sender's end, or *source*, such categories as *originator*, *emitter*, and, most interestingly, *animator*. Again I am indebted to Chuck Goodwin for this reminder. I began to think about the elaboration of such notions as part of a collaborative Working Group at the Australian National University in 1980 and 1981; this elaboration was, indeed, *animated* by such friends as Steve Levinson, Penny Brown, Elinor Ochs, Sandro Duranti, Bambi Schieffelin, Judith Irvine, and Michael Silverstein.
11. See Haviland (1977).
12. Transcripts from Zinacanteco Tzotzil are presented in a somewhat simplified version of the standard transcript notation. Tzotzil is written in a Spanish-based practical orthography in which the symbol ' stands for a glottal stop, and the symbol C' (where C is consonant) represents a glottalized consonant. Here the first line of each pair shows the original Tzotzil utterance, while the second line gives a free English gloss. Overlaps and latches are marked with square brackets and equal signs connecting latched turns. The spacing of overlaps corresponds to the Tzotzil lines (not to the glosses). For more details about Zinacanteco Tzotzil see Haviland (1981). The participants' names are abbreviated as follows: M = Mario, the ladino curer; A = Antun, Petul's son who is writing down the accounts; P = Petul, the senior man in the group; R = Romin, his politically powerful son-in-law; V = Manvel, Petul's oldest son, who is mostly employed in pouring beer and occasionally directing remarks at his brother or his nephew, the little boy who is teased later in the discussion. The little boy, by the way, is named Xun or 'John.'
13. And notice that he drags Antun with him into Spanish, another unsurprising feature of conversational organization – that co-participants' linguistic registers are subject to collaborative negotiation as much as their topics and messages.
14. This *mjm* is not equivalent to a neutral English assenting noise of similar shape, but suggests both denial and impatience, like an exasperated waving of the hand: Mario seems to want the *total* sum and not another recitation of its ingredient subtotals.
15. The Tzotzil expression for 'school' is *chanob vun* 'place where one learns paper', and the same idiom stands for all three R's that ideally come with a Mexican primary school education. One is literate if one *sna' vun* 'knows paper'. And see Marios's summons to me, the literate anthropologist, in line 120 at the end of the transcript.
16. Indeed, I think that Petul's insistence on drawing out the details of the proposed

- total of 1,125 pesos – repeating the items that went into its calculation, at lines 66 and 68 – show that he is aware of the possible diversionary topic and is trying to stave it off.
17. Alessandro Duranti has pointed out to me that the 'I' of this 'Am I a baby?' is, curiously, not the 'I' of the speaker, since the retort is offered as a model for little Xun to say. Still, given the analysis of social relationships that I suggest below, it is far from clear that Romin *himself* is not also implicitly remarking to Mario: 'Don't take *me* for a fool, either!'
18. The normal modern pattern in Zinacantan requires a groom to pay a brideprice to his prospective father-in-law. What once might have been an extensive courtship, with labor donated to the bride's family and expensive gifts and visits (see Collier, 1968), has, in recent times, come down to a simple exchange: cash for the bride. The joking about *cost* refers to this background.
19. Perhaps in part he is playing to my camera, as I was filming the interaction. In an earlier sequence, Mario and Petul had engaged in an extended sequence of joking where they both imitated the ridiculous Tzotzil accents of rural bumpkins from lowland hamlets. Clearly both enjoyed the opportunity to entertain everyone, including me.
20. The parallel with the indirection of speech in interaction with tabooed affines, in classical 'avoidance relations', is obvious. The best known cases are the 'Mother-in-law' or 'Brother-in-law' 'languages' or vocabularies of Australia, used as part of a wider syndrome of avoidance and respectful relations between certain affines. In the classic description, Thompson mentions that, among the Ompela, a man will avoid speaking directly to a son-in-law, preferring instead to use *indirection* and speaking 'to his child, or even to his dog, to which he speaks as to a son, and not directly to the person for whom the remark is intended' (Thompson, 1935: 480–481). See also Haviland (1979a, 1979b); Dixon (1971, 1972).
- An important aspect of oral humor, gossip, passing and receiving information, in a socially acceptable but also potent way, is *mis-* or *re-direction*. The classic descriptions of Caribbean linguistic play and disputation show how 'dropping hints,' using child messengers, strategically placed 'out-louds' (in Guyana called 'broadcasting'), aggressive silence, and even public and overt '[a] busing' all exploit aspects of a communicative *space* which is partitioned according to specific ends and intentions, see Fisher (1976) and Reisman (1974). I am indebted to Brackette Williams for discussion of these materials (see Williams, 1986).
21. Often it seems that this phraseological caution derives from a desire to control, insofar as possible, all information that leaves the house compound. See Haviland and Haviland (1983), for a description of the Zinacanteco preoccupation with privacy and confidentiality.
22. Studies of child language show a similar pattern: adults or other caregivers sometimes offer pre-formed utterances to pre-verbal infants, thus somehow using them as the purveyors of messages whose real sources (or real targets) are thereby conveniently disguised. See Schieffelin (1979), Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1985), Ochs (1982), and Ervin-Tripp and Strage (1985). I am indebted to Elinor Ochs for pointing out this similarity, on seeing the film from which this conversational fragment is transcribed.
23. The title of my essay draws upon this Spanish remark. The reference to *chili'*, as Lourdes de Leon has pointed out to me, is a common sexual image in Mexican Spanish *albur*, or ribald competitive male joking. It is here particularly ap-

appropriate because earlier the group of farmers had been discussing a plan to devote part of their new cornfields to commercial chile growing, a crop which at the time promised lucrative returns.

24. Mario has made a mistake here: he means 'divided by' but gets the word wrong, as one can clearly see from his subsequent reformulation.

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Audience diversity, participation and interpretation*

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Abstract

This paper investigates how an audience and the interpretive work in which it is engaged are constituted through a dynamic process of ongoing interaction. Analysis focuses first on how the topic of the talk in progress can both provide an arena for displaying competence and expertise, and differentiate members of an audience from each other in terms of their access to that domain of discourse. Second, through its interpretive work and participation displays an audience can shape what is to be made of the talk they are hearing. Typically speakers provide their recipients with an initial characterization of a story they are about to tell which acts as a guide for their understanding of those events. In addition, throughout the telling, the speaker, through his/her gestures, intonation, word selection and arrangement of events, proposes a certain alignment to the story being told. However, recipients through their interaction with each other can offer competing frameworks for both interpretation and alignment which undercut those of the speaker. The meaning that the story will be found to have thus emerges not from the actions of the speaker alone, but rather as the product of a collaborative process of interaction in which the audience plays a very active role.

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1. Introduction

This paper will investigate how an audience listening to a story within conversation is organized interactively. The main phenomena to be examined are how the structure of the talk in progress can shape its audience and, reciprocally, how the audience, through its interpretive work and use of the available participation structures, shapes what is to be made of the talk. The first part of the paper will focus on how members of an audience can be differentiated from each other by the topic of the talk in progress. It will be found that talk about a particular subject can partition its audience into relevant subsets, some of whom have more access to the domain of discourse constituted by the talk than others. Moreover, access to this domain of discourse can provide a testing ground through which participants can negotiate their expertise and competence vis-à-vis one another. The effect of all this is that, rather than being a single homogeneous entity, an audience can be internally diversified in ways that are relevant to the detailed organization of the talk in progress. Analysis will then turn to investigation of how such an audience can shape the way in which the speaker's talk is to be interpreted. Through the use of available participation frameworks members of an audience can communicate to each other an alignment to the events that the speaker is describing, and a way of understanding their import, that the speaker himself actively opposes. Such phenomena provide some demonstration of how the sense and relevance of talk, rather than emerging from the speaker's actions alone, are constituted within a collaborative process of interaction that includes the audience as a very active co-participant.

2. Differentiation within the audience

The use of a single term, such as 'audience', to refer to all those who are witnessing a performance has the power to suggest that an audience is in some sense a single, homogeneous entity. However, playwrights have long recognized that members of an audience might significantly differ from each other in ways relevant to the performance they are witnessing. Indeed, on occasion, they have considered the heterogeneity of the audience as a dramatic topic in its own right. For example, different members of the audience to the play within the play in *Hamlet* interpret it in very different ways. On the one hand, there are parties such as Polonius and the Queen who treat the play as

a fictive entertainment. The King, however, by bringing to bear knowledge of events in his own guilty past, sees the play as an accusation and storms away from it. The players' audience also includes someone who is already informed about the events being staged, Hamlet himself. During the performance, he behaves quite differently from other members of the audience, for example explicating and commenting on the scenes being witnessed. Indeed, after he identifies a character who has just appeared on the stage, Ophelia says 'You are good as a chorus, my lord'. Moreover, as the author of some of the material being performed, Hamlet is as interested in the reactions of others in the audience to the performance as in the performance itself.

Such phenomena point to the importance of the *attention structure* that an audience brings to a performance, an issue that is dealt with in the play scene in *Hamlet* in other ways as well. As noted earlier, at the end of the play within the play, the King, seeing the accusation that Hamlet has made against him within it, storms out of the scene. However, the same accusation is also contained in the dumb show which precedes the play, and there the King displays no reaction whatsoever. John Dover Wilson (1960: 5) asked 'How comes it . . . that Claudius, who brings the Gonzago play to a sudden end "upon talk of the poisoning", sits totally unmoved through the same scene enacted in dumb-show a few minutes earlier?' As a solution to this puzzle, he argues that the play scene has to be staged so that during the dumb show, the King is seen to be paying attention to a conversation he is having with Gertrude and Polonius, and not to what is occurring on the stage:

Thus they are not watching the inner-stage at all; the play is nothing to them; their whole attention is concentrated upon the problem of Hamlet's madness. The dumb-show enters, performs its brief pantomime – a matter of a few moments only – and passes out entirely unnoticed by the disputants; and when the audience turn again to see how this silent representation of his crime has affected the King, they find him still closely engaged with Gertrude and Polonius. (Wilson, 1960: 184)

The dumb show thus fails because its principal addressees do not act as audience to it. In order to constitute an audience, it is not enough for appropriate recipients to be physically present at the place where a performance occurs. Rather potential witnesses to the performance must actively align themselves to what is happening as an audience. Moreover, given the continual possibilities for disattention that are available (any movie theater pro-

vides ample evidence of the ease with which one can shift attention from the screen to one's companion) such alignment is an ongoing process.

2.1. *Audience differentiation within conversation*

Research into the organization of conversation has revealed that audience structures of similar complexity are found there as well. For example, just as the audience to the Gonzago play contained both parties who had not yet seen it and someone already well acquainted with it, so many stories in conversation are told in the simultaneous presence of both new recipients and listeners who are rehearsing the story. Indeed, this poses systematic interactive problems for parties such as couples who share much of their experience in common. While they attend together many of the social events where stories are told, they have already heard (or lived through) each other's stories. The partner of the teller is thus put in the position of being audience to a performance of which they are only too well acquainted. This can lead to a range of behavior on the part of both listener and teller, including talk from the partner not selected as teller that is much like the chorus complained about by Ophelia.¹ Unlike the usual situation in the theater, parties who are principal characters in the events being narrated in conversation are frequently present at the telling. On the one hand, this can lead to attempts to defend themselves from the portrayal being offered by the speaker, and indeed to dispute this with both speaker and the rest of the audience (M. H. Goodwin, 1982b), and on the other hand such recipients may face the task of organizing their reactions to the telling in terms of the story-relevant scrutiny they will receive from others in the audience (C. Goodwin, 1984).

As is suggested by the way in which the local focus of attention might shift from teller to principal character, attention structure is as central to the organization of a performance in conversation as it is in the theater. Indeed Goffman (1972: 64) notes that one of the key attributes of encounters, in general, is the way in which 'two or more persons in a social situation . . . jointly ratify one another as authorized co-sustainers of a single, albeit moving, focus of visual and cognitive attention'. The dynamic properties of this focus of attention create a range of possibilities for structuring interaction between performer and audience. First it appears that this process is capable of partitioning the audience into distinct zones in terms of the mutual access they have to the speaker. Thus, on many occasions, one

member of the audience will act as principal recipient, and the speaker will preferentially direct the focus of his/her gaze and attention to this party. Parties not included within this special axis of heightened engagement can attend to tasks unrelated to the talk during preliminary segments of the telling, while returning their attention to the speaker at focal segments such as the climax (C. Goodwin, 1984). Second, the story-relevant orientation provided by principal recipient, and the way in which her actions provide a locus for the speaker's explicit attention, can free others in the audience to deal with the speaker's talk in quite different ways. For example, they might use it as a point of departure for playful, fanciful comments, that, though tied to the speaker's talk, do not deal with it in the way that the speaker proposes it should be dealt with (M. H. Goodwin, 1985). Such byplay creates an audience structure of considerable complexity with teller and one subset of the audience dealing with the talk in one way, while a second subset of the audience attends to what is being said but uses it as a point of departure for its own fanciful constructions.

2.2. *Data*

For clarity, the analysis in the present paper will focus on a single story which was videotaped at a midwestern backyard picnic. Three couples, Pam and Curt (the host and hostess), Gary and Carney, and Mike and Phyllis have gathered around a picnic table where they have been talking and drinking beer. In the sequence to be examined, Mike tells the others about a fight he had witnessed the previous evening at a local car race. Since the hostess, Pam, has withdrawn from the group to attend to something in the house, the audience to the story consists of

- Curt (the host)
- Gary and Carney
- Phyllis (Mike's wife).

A transcript of the entire telling can be found in the Appendix.²

2.3. *Audience differentiation and topic*

The present paper will expand previous analysis of differentiation within an audience by investigating some of the ways in which the topic of the talk of the moment can partition its audience.

2.3.1. *Differential competence in a domain of discourse*

In listening to a story, recipients bring to bear on it their own knowledge of the kinds of events it is describing and the scenes within which such events are embedded.³ One simple, but clear, example of how participants make use of prior knowledge of the scene encompassing the fight Mike describes to analyze and interpret its import, occurs near the end of the telling. Mike draws on his knowledge of the characters who regularly attend the races to observe that the party who initiated the fight made a big mistake by attacking the person he did because his victim (Keegan) had kinship ties to many others who were habitually found in the pits:

(1) G.84:2:15

- 98 Mike: But *yihknow* eh- uh-he *made iz*
 99 first mistake number *one* by *messin* with
 100 Keegan because a *'pits'r* fulla Keegans
 101 en when there *is* nt't a Keegan there=
 102 Curt: °Mhm,
 103 Mike: =ere's a *'Fra*:nks,
 104 Curt: There's a *'Fra*:nks,
 105 Mike: [()
 106 Curt: [[I kno₁w.
 107 Mike: Because they're *related*jih
 108 kno:w?

Note how Curt in line 104 makes a special effort to claim that he has independent access to the ties between the Keegans and the Franks by overlapping his production of the Franks' name with Mike's statement of it. Such behavior suggests that demonstrating detailed independent knowledge of the scene Mike is describing may be an event of some consequence, and indeed elsewhere within the telling, Curt is quick to claim that he is acquainted with a character that Mike suggests he might not recognize. Near the beginning of his story, Mike provides his audience with the name of one of the protagonists in the fight, Paul DeWald, and then begins to further identify the character by stating where he is from. Providing the audience with such information can be taken as a proposal that the speaker does not expect his audience to be able to recognize that character on their own (i.e. if recognition could be made by the recipient the further identification being provided would not be necessary).⁴ Before Mike has the opportunity to finish this identification, Curt interrupts with the statement that he already knows DeWald:

(2) G.84:2:15

- 7 Mike: Paul de *Wa*:ld. Guy out of,=
 8 Curt: --> =De *Wa*:ld yeah I °(know₁'m.)
 9 Mike: [Tiffen.
 10 Mike: =D'you know *him*?
 11 Curt: °Uh_{huh}=
 12 Curt: =I know who 'e *i*:s,

Note also how, in line 12, Curt is careful to specify the exact parameters of his knowledge about DeWald (he states that he knows who he is, but not that he actually knows him).

All of these phenomena together provide some demonstration of how displaying precise independent knowledge of the scene in which Mike's story is embedded is not only being utilized to analyze and understand the talk being produced, but is an issue of some consequence for at least some of those present. In essence, it would appear that the world of automobiles within which Mike's story is set is a domain of expertise and knowledge, indeed a small culture in its own right, that has considerable importance to some of those involved in the telling.

Gary's actions shed further light on this process. Though he tries to talk into this topic his contributions are not ratified by the others present. For example, shortly before the story being examined emerges, Curt proposes that Al, the winner of the feature, is the 'only good regular out there' (lines 1-3 below). This is disputed nonvocally with a head shake by Mike (line 4), and Curt modifies his position by asking about someone else, Keegan, who might constitute a 'good regular' (line 5).⁵ Curt's statement is also challenged by Gary who says 'What do you mean. My brother-in-law's out there' (lines 14-15). However, unlike Mike's far less salient action, what Gary says is ignored by the others who overlap his talk with continuing talk of their own. The following is the sequence within which this occurs:

(3) G.84:2:10

- 1 Curt: He- he's about the only *regular*
 2 he's about the only *go//od*
 3 regular₁ out there's,
 4 Mike: ((Head Shake))
 5 Curt: Keegan still go out?
 6 Carney: °(Help me up.)

- 7 Mike: Keegan's,
 8 Carney: [(gently,)
 9 Mike: out there he's,
 10 Carney: [(*Oghh!*
 11 Mike: [(He run,
 12 (0.5)
 13 Mike: E: [r he's uh::
 --> 14 Gary: [Wuhyih *mean* my:,
 --> 15 Gary: My [*brother-in-law's* out there,
 16 Mike: [doin real good this year'n
 17 M'Gilton's doin real good
 18 thi [s year,
 19 Curt: M'Gilton's still there?=
 20 Gary: =hh*Hawki* ns,
 21 Curt: [*Oxfrey* runnin-I heard
 22 *Oxfrey* gotta new *ca:r*.
 23 Gary: *Hawkins* is ru [*nnin*,
 24 Mike: [*Oxfrey's* runnin the
 25 same car 'e run last year,=
 26 Phyl: *Mike* siz there wz a big fight down

The way in which Gary organizes his talk in this sequence may be relevant to the treatment he receives from Mike and Curt. Two phenomena will be noted: first the timing of Gary's talk, and second how he identifies the party about which he is talking. With respect to the issue of timing, it can be noted that Gary does not challenge Curt immediately after he speaks (line 3), but waits approximately four and half seconds before beginning his counter in line 14. Though this delay might seem short in clock time, during it the sequence between Curt and Mike moves forward to new material, a discussion of Keegan. Gary thus lets the sequential position where his action would be appropriate pass, and tries to insert it in the midst of talk that has now moved on to another subject. Such action is part of a larger pattern of disattention that Gary has displayed to the emerging sequence between Curt and Mike since its inception. Thus, when they begin their discussion about cars, Gary turns away from them to talk to a dog under the table, and in the interval between Curt's statement and his counter he is drinking beer and helping his wife stand up behind him. The way in which Gary is ignored by Mike and Curt thus mirrors the treatment he has given them.

2.3.2. *Assessing competence in the details of talk*

In his counter, Gary identifies the driver he is talking about as 'my brother-in-

law'. Examination of the larger automobile discussion, within which the sequences being examined here occur, reveals that competence in this domain of discourse entails not just knowledge about the subject being discussed, for example the ability to recognize the racers who frequent the track, but also specific practices for making expertise in this subject matter visible in the details of the talk one produces. Thus throughout the discussion, the racers talked about by Mike and Curt are identified in a particular way: by specifying the racer's last name,⁶ and if further identification is required, by adding the place he is from to the name. The place reference is appended through use of a distinctive format, tying the place to the name with the words 'out of'. Note, for example, Mike's 'Paul DeWald. Guy of Tiffen' in example 2 on p. 289. Gary's identification of the racer he is talking about in his counter to Curt does not follow this format. The identification format chosen by Gary, 'my brother-in-law', could be heard as claiming a special status for the speaker by displaying his kinship ties to the racer. In brief, it appears that through the way in which he formats his talk, Gary displays lack of competence in the current domain of discourse. Support for this possibility is provided by Gary's subsequent actions. The next time he talks about this racer (line 20 in example 3) he identifies him through use of his last name, and thus adapts his talk to the identification format being used by others, and indeed by Curt in the talk (lines 17 and 19) that immediately precedes Gary's. Gary seems to be trying to adapt his talk to theirs in other ways as well. Thus in line 23, he picks up another term for describing the activities of a driver that has just been used by Curt (line 21) when he says '*Hawkins* is *runnin*'.

Indeed throughout the auto discussion one can see Gary trying to learn how to talk appropriately in this domain of discourse,⁷ though he never completely succeeds. For example several minutes later he adds a place identification to the name 'Hawkins'. However, he uses the word 'from' instead of the expression 'out of' to do this (line 1 below) and moreover, shortly after this, again introduces his kinship ties to Hawkins (lines 6-7):

(4) G.84:6:15

- 1 Gary: *No:w Rich Hawkins* from
 2 *Bellview* drives one, fer some guys
 3 frm up't *Bellview*.
 4 (0.4)
 5 Mike: *Yah*.
 6 Gary: *He's my:: liddle sister's*

- 7 brother'n law.
 8 (0.5)
 9 Gary: He's a policem'n in Bellview b't
 10 he- (0.4) I guess he's, not
 11 afraid t'drive a ca:r,
 12 (1.0)
 13 Gary: I d'kno what they have tuh dri:ve I
 14 haven'even been over there tuh see (im
 15 lately)
 16 Mike: [[It's a pretty good ca:r.

When one examines the vocal and nonvocal behavior of Mike during this sequence, additional support is found for the possibility that Gary's audience might be actively attending to the appropriateness of alternative identification formats he uses. Mike responds to certain identification formats used by Gary but actively disattends others. Thus Gary's Name + Place identification in lines 1-3 receives a 'Yah' from Mike in line 5. However, when Gary identifies Hawkins as his little sister's brother-in-law in lines 6-7, Mike, who has been looking down, withdraws his gaze even farther from Gary. When Gary changes this identification to 'a policeman in Bellview' in line 9, Mike again responds to him with a nod. When Gary then produces the implicit brag about Hawkins in lines 10-11 ('I guess he's not afraid to drive a car') Mike again withdraws from him. At this point Gary (lines 13-15) makes a statement which reveals how little he actually knows about Hawkins as a racer (he doesn't even know what kind of car he has) and Mike uses this as an opportunity to demonstrate his familiarity with the track and his competence as an expert to assess the car. In brief, Mike withdraws from Gary when he talks about Hawkins in ways that either display Hawkins' ties to Gary or make claims about Hawkins' status, but ratifies identification formats based on place or occupation. In addition, Mike makes use of opportunities to establish his status as an expert and Gary's as one who is not. Such phenomena have a clear relevance to the process of being socialized into competence in a domain of expertise. The status of some particular person as an expert is made visible within the activity itself, and actions of a neophyte are responded to by the expert who acts as audience to his behavior in a differential fashion, with some being treated as appropriate while others that could be responded to are ignored. Such a process of 'selective reinforcement' is central to many learning programs. From a slightly different perspective, such phenomena shed light on how a domain of expertise might be interactively constituted. For example, the very large set of possible ways of identifying something

or doing something is through a process of interaction shaped into a subset of choices that other practitioners of this knowledge treat as appropriate. Moreover, in so far as such choices are consequential, the competence of the party making them can be assessed, supported and sanctioned within the midst of moment-to-moment interaction.

Such phenomena provide some demonstration of how automobile racing (and related events such as restoring old cars) constitute for these participants not just any topic in talk, but a domain of special relevance for establishing the competence, expertise, and standing, vis-à-vis one another, of the men conversing about these subjects. Mike's story emerges from this domain of action and two of his recipients, Curt and Gary, differ significantly from each other in the competence they are able to display within it. While Curt can demonstrate independent access to much of the background information that Mike uses to set the scene for the story and analyze its import (pps. 288-289), Gary is shown to have far less access to both that scene and the procedures used to talk about it, and his actions are frequently not ratified by either Mike or Curt.

2.3.3. *Non-engrossed recipients*

In addition to Curt and Gary, Mike's audience also includes two women, Phyllis and Carney. However, the talk about cars does not seem to be relevant to them in the way that it is for the men present, and indeed, at the end of Mike's story, Carney withdraws from the conversational cluster and Phyllis follows shortly afterwards, with the effect that the rest of the automobile discussion is an entirely male activity. A number of issues seem to be implicated in the women's lack of involvement in this particular domain of discourse. Investigating these issues requires that we look more closely at the actual talk Mike produces. The following is a transcript of the body of Mike's story. Line numbers are keyed to the complete version of the story in the appendix. For a reader unfamiliar with these materials, the transcript might initially appear difficult to follow. To make this material more accessible, here is a brief synopsis of the events that Mike describes:

In the midst of a race a driver named DeWald tried several times to put another driver named Keegan into the wall. DeWald was unsuccessful and finally Keegan 'rapped him a good one in the ass'. However the incident cost Keegan three spots in the feature. After the race an enraged Keegan tore off his helmet and went after DeWald with an iron bar, but was convinced to drop it by the crowd that had formed around him.

Here is a transcript of what Mike actually said:

(5) G.84:2:15

- 41 Mike: De *Wa*:ld spun ou:t. 'n he
42 waited.
43 (0.5)
44 Mike: Al come around'n passed im Al wz
45 leading the feature
46 (0.5)
47 Mike: en then the *sekint*- place guy,
48 (0.8)
49 Mike: en nen *Keegan*. En boy when *Keeg'n* come
50 around he come right up into im tried
51 tuh put im intuh th'*wa*:ll.
52 Curt: Yeh?,
53 Mike: 'n 'e tried it about four differn times
54 finally *Keegan* rapped im a good one in
55 the *a:ss'n* then th-b- *DeWald* wen o:ff.
56 (0.5)
57 Curt: Mm
58 Mike: [[But in ne *meantime* it'd cost *Keegan*
59 three spo:ts'nnuh *feature*.
60 Curt: Yeah?,
61 Mike: So, *boy* when *Keeg'n* come in he- yihknow
62 how *he's* gotta temper anyway, he js: :
63 °*wa*::::h sc reamed iz damn=
64 Curt: Mm
65 Mike: =e:ngine yihknow,
66 (0.5)
67 Mike: settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
68 off'n *clunk* it goes on top a the car he
69 gets out'n goes up t'the trailer 'n
70 gets that °god damn iron *ba:r?*, 'hhh
71 *rraps* that trailer en away he starts
72 t'go en evrybuddy seh *hey* you don't
73 need *dat* y'know, seh ye:h yer right'n
74 'e throws that son'vabitch down- =
75 Curt: °Mm hm hm
76 Mike: ='hhhhh So they all go down

When the story is examined in detail, it can be seen that in a number of different ways his talk seems to be designed more for the men present than for the women. First, not only are the characters in the story all male, but

they are doing things (for example racing cars and threatening each other with tire irons) that only males typically engage in, in the participants' culture. Second, the themes that motivate the story and give it its drama – establishing who is better than whom in both sport and action and settling such differences through violent confrontation – also display a perspective that is more characteristic of males than females in this culture. Third, the sense of events occurring within a male domain of action is heightened through the language used to construct the description. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is the profanity used (though other types of word selection, such as terms imparting a sense of violent conflict, are also relevant as well). Fourth, in addition to word selection from domains such as profanity, the speaker also organizes larger descriptive units in ways that establish a recognizably male perspective on the events being recounted. For example, not just the word '*a:ss*' but all of '*Keegan* rapped im a good one in the *a:ss*' (lines 54–55) makes visible to recipients conflict that is distinctively male (note also that speaker has made a special effort to infuse his talk with this perspective – for example the thing that got 'rapped' was not in fact a particular part of *DeWald's* body, but his car). Thus, though half of the people listening to Mike's story are female, the story makes visible to its recipients a distinctively male alignment to the events it is recounting. It would thus appear that like the issues of access to this domain of discourse noted above, features such as these also divide present recipients into distinctive subsets. Though the story could be understood by any of those listening to Mike, properties of it – such as the characters in it, the activities in which they are engaged, the themes that motivate its drama, and the words selected to tell it – show that some of those present (specifically the men) are a more appropriate audience of what it has to offer than others.⁸

From a slightly different perspective, such phenomena can be approached in terms of the engrossment that the events in the story offer the audience. Consider for example lines 58–59 in which Mike describes what *DeWald's* action cost *Keegan*: 'But in the *meantime* it'd cost *Keegan* three spo:ts in the *feature*'. A true *aficionado* of the sport might well be quite attuned to the injustice of such an event and be able easily to become engrossed in the drama it provides, and immediately see the power of this situation to motivate particular kinds of subsequent action, such as confronting the perpetrator of the offense. However, as the existence of many 'football widows' demonstrates, others might be able to understand the events being described without in any way becoming engrossed in them, and indeed treat the events that

their spouses see as high drama as, in fact, quite uninteresting. Subsequent events in the telling reveal that while Phyllis understands Mike's story quite well, she does not find the drama in it that Mike does. Such a capacity for differential involvement is not of course restricted to the domains of discourse involving sports, but is common in many types of talk.

Indeed audience engrossment and participation status can interact with each other in interesting ways. After the automobile discussion Mike, Curt and Gary start telling dirty jokes. The obscenity of the jokes (as well as more specific themes in them such as male competition) again locate the domain of discourse as one whose prototypical participants are male. Nonetheless one of the women, Carney, becomes engrossed in the jokes and wants to listen to them. However, when she joins the men, she seats herself at the picnic table with her *back* to the rest of the group. Thus, while she is physically present and able to act as a recipient to the jokes, she vividly marks that her participation status in the telling is quite different from that of the men seated with her.

Finally, recipients are differentiated from each other in another way as well. Though the events being described are news to Curt, Gary and Carney, one member of his audience, Phyllis, the teller's wife, has already heard the story.

2.4. *Heterogeneity of the audience*

The audience to Mike's story contains a collection of recipients with very different types of access to the domain of discourse within which the story is embedded. Its principal recipient, Curt, is able to competently display relevant knowledge about the larger scene that brackets the story, and indeed the story emerges from a sequence in which Curt is checking his knowledge of regulars at the track against Mike's. Gary, by way of contrast, though an appropriate recipient of the story, is shown to be not only less familiar with the world of the track, but also to lack the ability to appropriately constitute this world within the details of his talk; in fact, some of the actions he makes are explicitly ignored by Mike and Curt. Gary thus has a more peripheral standing as audience to Mike's talk than does Curt. Indeed, though all of Mike's listeners are included within the scope of his audience (i.e. those sitting around the table are recipients of the story, not parties who happen to overhear it), in a number of ways, Mike's talk seems designed more for

Curt as its focal recipient than for any of the others present. For example, in lines 61-62 Mike says with reference to Keegan 'You know how *he's* got a temper anyway' and thus proposes that the recipient to his story is already quite familiar with Keegan, and indeed at this point Mike moves his gaze specifically to Curt. By including within the story material that acknowledges Curt's special access to the world of the track, while making the story as a whole available to all present, Mike may be attending to, and attempting to take into account the heterogeneity of his audience. The women present create further complexities with respect to audience structure. On the one hand, the talk does not seem to encompass them in the way that it does the men present. None the less, Phyllis has not only already heard the story but seems as familiar with the track and its characters as anyone else present, but Mike. However (as will be seen in more detail below) she does not seem to find in it the seriousness and drama that Mike and Curt do. In brief, Mike's audience is not homogeneous, but rather contains recipients who are differentiated from each other in a variety of ways that are relevant to the story that he is telling.

3. Audience interpretation of the story

The diversity of Mike's audience is, in fact, quite consequential for his telling. Within a telling, members of an audience have resources available to them for

1. Analyzing the talk that is being heard,
2. Aligning themselves to it in a particular way,
3. Participating in the field of action it creates.

By making use of these resources, one of the non-engrossed recipients is able to offer a way of understanding the events that Mike is describing that undercuts the seriousness and drama he attributes to them. The participation frame-works that she uses enables her to recruit others, including those whose competence in this domain of discourse has been challenged by Mike, to her position. The effect of this is that Mike faces serious problems when he attempts to produce the climax of his story, as many of his recipients treat it in a way that he finds quite inappropriate.

3.1. *Alternative prefaces*

Many stories in conversation (including the one to be examined here) are preceded by a brief preface which offers an initial characterization of what the story will be about. The characterization in the preface provides recipients with key resources that they use to analyze the story as it is being told (Sacks, 1974). For example, if the preface states that the story will be about something 'terrible', recipients can look for such an event to help them find the climax of the story, a place where particular types of responses from them become relevant. In addition, the characterization in the preface provides them with information about the type of alignment and response that is appropriate to the story. Thus, if the speaker glosses what will be told as 'something terrible', recipients are informed that laughter constitutes an inappropriate response. Recipients do not of course have to go along with the speaker's proposal about how the talk about to be produced should be treated, and indeed in the data to be examined here, two competing proposals are offered, and most of Mike's recipients choose to treat his talk in ways that he considers quite inappropriate.

The actual preface to Mike's story (lines 1-2 below) is provided not by him but rather by the one party present who has already heard it, his wife Phyllis. After another recipient, Curt, displays interest in hearing it (line 3) she turns the floor over to Mike for the actual telling (lines 5-7).⁹ In line 14, after the sequence with Curt about recognition of DeWald noted above (p. 289, example 2) he starts the story:

(6) G.84:2:15

- 1 Phyl: Mike siz there wz a big fight down
 2 there las'night,
 3 Curt: Oh rilly?
 4 (0.5)
 5 Phyl: Wih Keegan en, what.
 6 Paul [de Wa::ld?
 7 Mike: [Paul de Wa:l] d. Guy out of,=
 8 Curt: =De Wa:ld yeah I [°(know]'m.)
 9 Mike: Tiffen.
 10 Mike: =D'you know him?,
 11 Curt: °Uhuh=
 12 Curt: =I know who 'e i:s,
 13 (1.8)
 14 Mike: Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in

The preface provided by Phyllis describes the events in the story in a particular way, specifically as being about a 'big fight' (line 1). Note that, by reporting the talk of another, Phyllis does not herself say that there was a 'big fight', but rather that *Mike* says there was. Her own interpretation of the event is left unspecified. Before Mike has a chance to actually tell the story Phyllis, in interaction with other members of the audience, offers a second, quite different characterization of the events they are about to hear, one that belittles their drama, power and even seriousness. Phyllis thus launches Mike into a particular type of telling and then, after he is embarked on it, calls into question the seriousness and drama of the events he is about to describe.

The talk that Phyllis uses to do this builds on issues initially raised by Gary. Just as Mike begins his story, Gary (lines 17-18) asks whether a similar incident had occurred the week before. Initially Mike says that this did not happen (line 19). However, Gary persists in lines 20, 21 and 23,¹⁰ and in lines 24-25, Mike recalls such an incident but challenges the details of Gary's version of it (and thus continues to display his own expertise even while acknowledging the essential correctness of Gary's claim):

(7) G.84:2:20

- 14 Mike: Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in
 15 the,
 16 (0.6)
 17 Gary: W'wz it la:st week sumpn like th't
 18 ha [pp'n too?
 19 Mike: Ohno:, th [is:
 20 Gary: [Somebody bumped somebody
 21 else'n [they- spun aroun=
 22 Mike: I don't know.
 23 Gary: =th'tra: [ck
 24 Mike: [Oh that wz::uh a'week
 25 be [fore last in the late models
 26 Phyl: (Yeh they'd be doin'it) en den ney go
 27 down'n ney throw their helmets off'n
 28 nen n(h)ey [j's l:lo] ok=
 29 Mike: But,
 30 Phyl: et each other.

One thing that Gary's talk might be heard as doing is challenging whether Mike's story is indeed about a newsworthy event, and thus worth telling; i.e. instead of being dramatic and unusual the kind of events that Mike is talking

about happen all the time. In lines 26–30 Phyllis picks up on these possibilities in Gary's talk by portraying such violent confrontations as not newsworthy and dramatic, but rather empty show: e.g., despite the violent bravado of the protagonists (for example throwing their helmets off) they end up 'just looking at each other'. Phyllis explicitly ties what she says to what Gary has just said (in addition to the 'Yeah' that begins her talk in line 26 the videotape reveals that she nods toward Gary just before she starts to talk). By doing so, she is able to cast her description of how the prospective fighters just bluster at each other as representative of a series of repetitive events (note her use of present tense) and thus to formulate this as typical of the way in which the fights that Mike finds so dramatic in fact, come off, i.e. they regularly end up as just empty bravado. Phyllis thus undercuts the telling that Mike is about to produce by proposing an alternative framework for interpreting the events he will describe.

When Phyllis speaks, she does more than simply propose a competing cognitive framework for analyzing the talk in progress. In addition, she invokes a set of participation structures available to recipients of a telling that permit them to actively display both their alignment to, and their understanding of the talk in progress. For example, by embedding laughter in her talk (The '(h)' in line 28 marks a laugh token) Phyllis visibly treats events such as these as laughables. This effect is heightened by the way in which she dramatizes the events he is talking about. On the videotape, one can see her enacting throwing the helmet off. The character of this enactment is also conveyed by the patterning of emphasis in her talk (for example the stress on 'throw' and 'helmets'). In much the way that someone quoting another's speech simultaneously comments on the talk being quoted (Volosinov, 1973), Phyllis's enactment displays an alignment toward the events being mimicked that is congruent with her vocal treatment of them as laughables. Such actions not only enable her to participate in the telling in a particular way but also invite others to join her in this. Thus laugh tokens can constitute invitations to laugh (Jefferson, 1979) and enactments frequently act as solicits for heightened recipient response (M. H. Goodwin, 1980).

What Phyllis does is, in fact, responded to. Through both talk and outright laughter, all the other recipients to Mike's story do affiliate themselves to Phyllis's position.¹¹ Indeed Curt, Mike's principal recipient, in line 37 calls such protagonists 'little high school kids'. The only one present who does not join in this participation framework is Mike himself, who tries to proceed with his telling and eventually succeeds (line 41). The following is a complete

transcript of the section of the telling that contains the second characterization of the story and the response to it by other recipients:

(8) G.84:2:15

- 26 Phyl: (Yeh they doin'it) en den ney go
 27 down'n ney *throw* their *helmets* off'n
 28 nen n(h)ey [j's l:lo]ok=
 29 Mike: But,
 30 Phyl: et each [othe [r.
 31 Mike: this [this [Ye::h hh heh heh
 32 Curt: [Ye::h hh heh heh
 33 Phyl: [ehhehhhh
 34 Mike: [This:: uh:::
 35 Gary: (They know they gon//na get {hurt/heard}),
 36 Phyl: [[ehh heh!
 37 Curt: [[Little high school kids,=
 38 Gary: (No [matter=
 39 Mike: [This,
 40 Gary: =what [ju:re)
 41 Mike: De Wa::ld spun ou:t. 'n he
 42 waited.

In brief, Phyllis is able to not only propose a competing cognitive framework for interpreting the events that Mike is about to describe, but also to recruit others to such a perspective by invoking a distinctive alignment framework that they also participate in.

Crucial to these operations is their placement. They occur *after* the preface sequence, but *before* the projected story is actually told. Thus, as Mike's story emerges, two competing interpretations of the events he is describing are on the floor and publicly available to his recipients: on the one hand the characterization of these events as a 'big fight' provided by the preface, and on the other the subsequent portrayal of them as empty bravado.

3.2. Building a story in the presence of competing interpretive frameworks

When Mike tells the story (example 5 on p. 294) he organizes his description of the events he had witnessed in a way that is quite consistent with Phyllis's initial characterization of them as a violent confrontation. First, the telling has a recognizable thematic and dramatic development. The ordering of

incidents that Mike recounts can be heard as moving toward the 'big fight' announced at the beginning of the telling. Second, events leading up to the projected fight are colored by an aura of violent conflict through the way in which Mike constructs his description of them. Incidents in which actual physical contact occurs, even between inanimate objects, are described with heightened vividness: for example, the iron bar that 'rapps' the trailer in line 71, the helmet that hits the top of the car with a loud 'clunk' in line 68, and the way in which Keegan 'rapped im a good one in the a:ss' in lines 54-55. Characters are described in terms of attributes such as having a 'temper' (line 62) and things that they do, such as racing an engine, are not only described in a way that depicts the event as loud, violent and angry (for example 'screamed' in line 63) but actually enacted for recipients. The sense of an impending, violent confrontation between angry males is heightened by the speaker's use of profanity. Moreover it can be noted that speaker engages in somewhat special work to include the profanity. Placing 'god damn' before 'iron bar' in line 70 adds nothing to the description of the bar itself. Indeed, despite its syntactic position within a specific noun phrase 'god damn' seems less to modify the particular words that follow than to infuse the larger pattern of emerging action with a sense of power and drama, and to make visible a distinctive perspective toward those events. Similarly, by using 'son'vabitch' in line 74 the speaker is doing quite a bit more than simply referencing the bar noted earlier. The profanity in this story is thus not essential to the 'factual' description of the events being recounted, but rather establishes a particular alignment to those events. In brief, Mike's description is carefully constructed to demonstrate dramatic movement toward an impending, almost epic, battle. In this, it is entirely consistent with Phyllis' description of it as being about a 'big fight'.

3.3. Recipient interpretation of the story

As Mike produces the body of his story (i.e. the sequence presented on p. 294 as example 5) the interaction of the participants is organized in a distinctive way: Mike is the only participant producing extended talk, and vocal comments by recipients are restricted to continuers such as 'uh huh'. By organizing their behavior in this way, recipients demonstrate their understanding that an extended telling is in progress, and their co-participation in the telling.

The first recipient talk that analyzes Mike's talk in a specific way rather than simply acknowledging receipt of it is Gary's 'All show' in line 77:

(9) G.84:2:15

67	Mike:	settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
68		off'n <i>clunk</i> it goes on top a the car he
69		gets out'n goes up t'the trailer 'n
70		gets that °god damn iron <i>ba:r?</i> , 'hhh
71		<i>rraps</i> that trailer en away he starts
72		t'go en evrybuddy seh <i>hey</i> you don't
73		need <i>dat</i> Y'know, seh <i>ye:h</i> yer right'n
74		'e throws _l that son'vabitch down= _n
75	Curt:	_l °Mm <i>hm</i> hm
76	Mike:	=·hhhhh So they all _l go dow _l n
--> 77	Gary:	_{A:ll} _l All show.
78		(0.2)

Despite the way in which Mike has carefully organized his story to display movement toward a violent confrontation, there are, in fact, some features of it that could lead someone to propose that the confrontation is only show. Labov (1985), in his analysis of why it is frequently not necessary for speakers to actually lie, notes how language provides a range of expressions that can be used to suggest the occurrence of a state of affairs that did not literally happen. It is quite possible that expressions of this type are being used by Mike to build his story. Thus Sacks (1971) has observed that phrases such as 'at first I thought' inform the recipient that the perception about to be reported was inaccurate. In the present data, it would appear that by using the verb 'start' in the phrase 'and away he starts to go' (lines 71-72) to describe Keegan's actions, Mike alerts his recipients to the fact that these actions were not in fact consummated (i.e. if the action had been brought to completion, the protagonist would probably have been described as having performed it, not as having *started* to do it). Moreover, analyzing the events in Mike's story as 'All show' is quite consistent with Phyllis's characterization of the protagonists as men who produce elaborate aggressive displays but end up 'just looking at each other' (example 7, p. 299). Indeed, when what Mike says just before Gary's comment is examined, we find that it matches almost precisely the situation described by Phyllis. Thus in Phyllis's description, the protagonists violently throw down their helmets but avoid actual physical violence; Mike's talk describes an impending confrontation, complete with

one party throwing off his helmet with a loud 'chunk', that is withdrawn from before actual violence occurs. It thus appears that Gary has found something in the talk that matches a preview provided earlier of what that talk might contain, and that he now operates on that talk in the way that the preview proposed it should be dealt with. In essence, the preview has provided him with a template that he can apply to the emerging talk and use to understand it when a match is found.

When the videotape is examined, further evidence that Gary might be using Phyllis's actions as a guide for his own is found. Thus Phyllis moves her gaze to Mike just after his enactment of the screaming engine in line 63. She continues to gaze toward Mike until right after he describes the iron bar being thrown down in line 74. At this point, she not only withdraws her gaze from Mike, but as she does so, performs a lateral head shake with shoulder shrug that appears to comment in a pejorative 'Wouldn't-you-know-it' way on what she has just heard. It is just after this happens that Gary says 'All show'. In so far as Phyllis is not only the party who first proposed that such confrontations do not in fact lead to real fights, but also the only listener who has already heard Mike's story, it is possible that others might use what she does as a guide to their own understanding of the story – for example, use the fact that she withdraws from the teller and visibly comments on what she has just heard, as suggesting that the climax of the story has, in fact, been reached. It must, however, be emphasized that these possibilities cannot be definitely established in the data that are available to us. Indeed, while it is likely that Gary (who is gazing toward Mike) could perceive actions made by Phyllis (who is seated next to Mike) this is not certain.

Phyllis's earlier talk did more than simply outline upcoming events. It also provided a distinctive alignment to those events and a way of understanding their import. Thus, when Phyllis first provided her analysis, others visibly joined with her in laughing about such incidents. This raises the possibility that by re-invoking the configuration of analysis and participation used by Phyllis, Gary might be able to recruit others to also deal with the talk they have just heard in the way they dealt with Phyllis's talk, and indeed, what Gary says here has a marked effect on the organization of the participants' interaction. Most of the others present affiliate themselves, either vocally or visually to the interpretation that Gary has offered, and begin to comment on the talk they have heard. For example, Phyllis turns and nods in agreement with Gary (visible on the videotape, but not in the transcript) and

Carney says with laughter 'It reminds me of those wrestlers on television' (lines 86–89):

(10) G.84:2:15

- 74 Mike: n 'e throws_o that son'vabitch down=
 75 Curt: Mm hm hm
 76 Mike: ='hhhhh So they all go dow_n
 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, th_ey all,=
 80 Mike: They all-
 81 Gary: =hn- hn!
 82 Mike: They all go down th_{ere},=
 83 Gary: Gimme
 84 a beer Curt,
 85 Mike: =N_o some- somebuddy so:mebuddy,
 86 Carney: It reminds me of those
 87 wrestl(h)ers. 'hhh
 88 Mike: So:me body ra:pped=
 89 Carney: hhh(h)on t(h)elevisi_{on}. ° ()
 90 Gary: =Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin there.

Gary's actions have strong sequential implications for not only the talk that has so far been heard, but also for the possible future development of Mike's telling. One of the ways in which a characterization of a story is used by recipients is as a resource for finding when the climax of a story has arrived. If, in fact, all that Mike's protagonists do is 'look at each other' then his story might be heard as having reached its climax. In a variety of different ways Gary treats Mike's story as complete. Thus his 'All Show' is a summary assessment, an object that Jefferson (1978: 244) notes constitutes a 'prototypical telling-ending device'. In addition, right after saying this, Gary visibly withdraws from the telling by turning away from Mike and asking Curt for a beer (lines 90–92). By producing summary talk and no longer acting as audience, Gary treats the telling as something that has run its course and from which one can now be withdrawn.

In essence, after Gary's comments, there is a structural change in the organization of the participants' interaction and the way in which they are dealing with the story. Gary and some of the other recipients stop operating

on the talk in progress in a way that is appropriate to an unfinished *telling sequence* and move to a *response sequence* in which they comment on the talk and start to disengage from it.

These data provide some demonstration that an audience is not simply a collection of passive listeners, but rather a dynamic entity that can actively influence the interpretation that will be given a speaker's talk. Phyllis is able to propose two very different interpretive frameworks for understanding the talk that her husband is about to produce. Through the participation possibilities provided by these templates she is also able to get others to visibly affiliate themselves to one of the positions she is offering. Gary is then able to choose to hear the talk in a way that is consistent with one of these frameworks but not the other. Moreover, by reactivating the participation structures provided by Phyllis' second template he is able to lead others to not only a type of analysis, but also a type of interaction, that is consistent with that particular view of the talk, i.e. aligning themselves to the events in the story as phenomena to be laughed at. This has consequences for the organization of the telling as a whole as some of its audience start to withdraw from it. In essence, when Mike gets to a point in his story that could be heard as consistent with the 'laughable' characterization (though this point might, in fact, be merely the prelude to a more elaborate fight) some of his recipients treat this as the climax of his story and both ridicule his protagonists and withdraw from the telling. Such phenomena provide further insight into how recipients utilize an initial characterization of an upcoming story to analyze its emerging structure in ways that are relevant to their own actions. Indeed, with her second characterization, Phyllis might be able to guide other recipients to find the climax/conclusion of Mike's story at a place where Mike himself is ready to continue with it.

3.4. Reconstituting the audience

While Gary can propose to treat the incidents being described as 'All show', and the telling as something that has now reached its projected climax and can be withdrawn from, others are free to either align themselves with him or counter his proposals. In the present data, both options are actualized by different participants. As was noted in the last section (pps. 304-305) both Carney and Phyllis affiliate themselves with Gary's analysis of the events they have just heard. However, Mike explicitly counters Gary by saying 'No.

Somebody rapped Dewald in the mouth' and tries to move the telling forward to further events that are consistent with the 'fight' version. Because of the way in which Gary's talk has transformed the structure of the current interaction so that others are now overlapping Mike's talk, it takes him several attempts to produce this statement in the clear. First, he tries to continue with his story (lines 80-82). However after Gary asks for a beer (lines 83-84), Mike in line 85 uses the word 'No' to explicitly disagree with the 'all show' proposal and starts to say that somebody did in fact hit DeWald. He is unable to finish this statement until lines 94-96 because of the talk that others are producing at this point:

(11) G.84:2:15

- 76 Mike: =hhhhh So they all go down
 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, they all=
 80 Mike: They all-
 81 Gary: =hn- hn!
 82 Mike: They all go down th ere,=
 83 Gary: Gimme
 84 a beer Curt,
 --> 85 Mike: =N o some- somebuddy so:mebuddy,
 86 Carney: It reminds me of those
 87 wrestl(h)ers. 'hhh
 --> 88 Mike: So:me body rapped=
 89 Carney: hhh(h)on t(h)elevisi on. °()
 90 Gary: =Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin there.
 93 Carney: °().
 --> 94 Mike: So:mebuddy rapped uh:.
 95 Curt: °((clears throat))
 --> 96 Mike: DeWald'nna mouth.
 97 Curt: Well, h e deserved it.
 98 Mike: But yihknow eh- uh-he made iz
 99 first mistake number one by messin with
 100 Keegan because a'pits'r fulla Keegans
 101 en when there is nt't a Keegan there=
 102 Curt: °Mmhm,
 103 Mike: =ere's a'Fra :nks,
 104 Curt: There's a' Fra:nks,

- 105 Mike: [[()
 106 Curt: I know.
 107 Mike: Because they're relatedjih
 108 know?

These data thus provide an example of an audience displaying through its behavior an interpretation of the speaker's talk that the speaker himself actively opposes.

The fact that Mike does actively oppose the actions being performed on his talk by his recipients is noteworthy in its own right. Other analysis has revealed that speakers can be quite adept at modifying the structure of their talk even as it is emerging to take into account actions being performed by their recipients (C. Goodwin, 1981; M. H. Goodwin, 1980). One effect of this is that incongruence between talk and recipientship to that talk can frequently be averted before it becomes a visible, noticeable event. On some occasions, speakers go along with recipient laughter and heckling, and then return to their talk when it has run its course (M. H. Goodwin, 1985). In the present data, Mike refuses to adapt his actions to the actions of his recipients. Such a stance is consistent with the importance and seriousness that Mike elsewhere invests in the automobile world about which he is talking. For Mike, events such as these are not laughing matters. Thus, while not adapting to what his recipients are doing might cause problems in the telling of this story, by taking the position he does, Mike maintains his integrity with respect to a particular domain of discourse that is quite crucial in constituting who he is.

Gary's proposals were not restricted to how the incidents described by Mike should be analyzed, but also dealt with the orientation that the audience was now to give the teller. Though Mike is able to counter what Gary said, he does this within a pattern of interaction that has been heavily shaped by Gary's action. Instead of talking to others who are visibly acting as recipients to his story (i.e. the situation during the telling of the body of the story, example 5 on p. 294) Mike must now fight to be heard in the midst of other talk that is either belittling the characters in his story, or dealing with activities entirely unrelated to it. Thus Mike faces the task of not only countering what Gary has said (and getting others to listen to and possibly accept that counter) but also of finding recipients who will continue to act as an audience to his talk.

At least one party does not align himself with Gary's withdrawal. Curt continues to act as audience to Mike's talk, and, moreover, to do this even

though he is called upon to engage in other activities as well. After saying 'All show' Gary not only turns away, but also asks Curt to get him a beer (lines 83-84, 90-92). Curt does then get the beer. However, Curt manages to do this in such a way that he returns his orientation to Mike, even while in the midst of extracting a can from a six pack, by bending the upper part of his body back toward Mike.¹² Thus, though he is simultaneously engaged in another activity, Curt, unlike Gary, manages to remain a participant in the telling until Mike does in fact describe actual physical violence. Curt then produces subsequent talk to this new talk (line 97).

However, though Mike still has an audience, it is a different, more limited audience than the one that listened to the opening of his story and this does indeed seem to have consequences for the further course of the telling. First, though subsequent talk reveals that there is in fact quite a bit more that could be said about the confrontation (Mike later notes that the episode ended with DeWald on the back of his pickup truck with a jack 'trying to keep himself from getting his ass beat') Mike moves away from further development of the story itself and into commentary about it, analyzing why it was a mistake for DeWald to pick on Keegan (lines 98-104). He thus does not return to the type of story-telling that he was performing before Gary's talk, but instead moves to a type of talk that is frequently used to start disengagement from a story. Second, the analysis he now offers seems designed for Curt's listening more than for any of the others present. Thus, through use of phenomena such as reference to the 'Franks' family without prior identification of them, the talk proposes that an appropriate recipient to it is familiar enough with the racetrack and its regular characters to recognize them on his own, i.e. that the recipient of the current talk is a well-versed fan of the races. Prior talk (as well as Curt's own retrieval of the name 'Franks' in line 104) strongly indicates that the one present who can most meet these criteria is Curt. It thus appears that as some of Mike's audience withdraws from him he reorganizes his talk so that it can be seen as most appropriate to the recipient who remains.¹³ In essence, the audience is reconstituted into a subset of its original members not only through the actions of those who withdraw from it, but also by congruent changes in the organization of speaker's talk.

4. The audience in more elaborate performances

The data just examined were drawn from spontaneous conversation. Within conversation participants are able to not only comment on what they have

heard in a variety of ways, but rapidly become speakers themselves so that the party they were audience to now becomes audience to them. Such possibilities are frequently not available at more formal performances, such as a play, at which members of the audience do not have the option of becoming performers in their own right. In view of this, it might be argued that the active role played by the audience in the preceding example is a by-product of its conversational location rather than an intrinsic characteristic of audience itself.

Though diminished opportunities for visible response make it more difficult to study the dynamic articulation of audience with performance in more stylized settings, there is nonetheless some evidence that, at such events, the audience plays a very active role in constituting what is to be made of the performance they are witnessing. For example, the theater director Jan Kott (1984: 1-5) describes a Polish production of *Hamlet* shortly after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia:

When the line 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' was uttered on-stage, a murmur rippled through the audience from the gallery right under the ceiling to the first row in the orchestra. When, later, the line 'Denmark's a prison' was repeated three times, I felt the house go silent, like the sudden lull before a storm. Then applause broke somewhere in the center of the auditorium, and then somewhere in the gallery: individual, quiet applause that seemed frightened at its own audacity. In another moment, the entire auditorium had broken into a fierce applause that lasted until hands went numb.

By applying information of their own to the text being heard the audience to this performance was able to interpret it in ways that were clearly unforeseen by Shakespeare at the time he wrote the words being responded to. The meaning that the text was found to have arose not just from the work of the playwright but rather as the emergent product of an active collaboration between author and audience. This occurred in a far more formal setting than spontaneous conversation, one in which the audience did not have the opportunity (at least within the framework of the performance itself) to produce novel talk that was responsive to the scenes they were witnessing. Nonetheless, through the precise placement of the response moves (such as applause) that were available to them, this audience were able to display an interpretation of the events being witnessed that had a specific relevance to their own situation.

Moreover, as indicated by Kott's description of how the applause slowly built up, this was achieved through an active process of interaction.¹⁴

The phenomena which have been examined in this paper provide some demonstration of how an audience is both shaped by the talk it is attending and helps shape what will be made of that talk. On the one hand, the details of the talk of the moment are able to differentiate those within the audience from each other in ways that are relevant to the tasks they face as audience. Indeed differential access to specific domains of discourse not only places a speaker in the position of addressing a heterogeneous audience, but also provides an arena within which participants can test, negotiate and establish their competence and standing vis-à-vis each other. On the other hand, through use of participation resources available to them, members of the audience are able to not only interact with each other, but actively influence the interpretation that will be made of the performance being witnessed.

Appendix

Complete auto race story

(12) G.84:2:15

((Participants have been talking about Mike's visit to a dirt track auto race.))

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Phyl: | Mike siz there wz a big fight down |
| 2 | | there las'night, |
| 3 | Curt: | Oh rilly? |
| 4 | | (0.5) |
| 5 | Phyl: | Wih Keegan en, what. |
| 6 | | Paul [de Wa::ld? |
| 7 | Mike: | [Paul de Wa:l]d. Guy out of,= |
| 8 | Curt: | =De Wa:ld yeah I [°(know)] 'm.) |
| 9 | Mike: | [Tiffen.] |
| 10 | Mike: | =D'you know him?, |
| 11 | Curt: | °Uhhuh= |
| 12 | Curt: | =I know who 'e i:s, |
| 13 | | (1.8) |
| 14 | Mike: | Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in |
| 15 | | the, |
| 16 | | (0.6) |

- 17 Gary: W'wz it la:st week sumpn like th't
 18 ha pp'n too?
 19 Mike: Ohno:, th is:
 20 Gary: Somebody bumped somebody
 21 else'n they- spun aroun=
 22 Mike: I don't know.
 23 Gary: =th'tra: ck
 24 Mike: Oh that wz::uh a'week
 25 be fore last in the late models
 26 Phyl: (Yeh they'd be doin'it) en den ney go
 27 down'n ney throw their helmets off'n
 28 nen n(h)ey j's l:lo ok=
 29 Mike: But,
 30 Phyl: et each othe r.
 31 Mike: this
 32 Curt: Ye::h hh heh heh
 33 Phyl: ehhehhhh
 34 Mike: This:: uh:::
 35 Gary: (They know they gon//na get {hurt/heard}),
 36 Phyl: ehh heh!
 37 Curt: [[Little high school kids,=
 38 Gary: (No matter=
 39 Mike: This,
 40 Gary: =what ju:re)
 41 Mike: De Wa::ld spun out: 'n he
 42 waited.
 43 (0.5)
 44 Mike: Al come around'n passed im Al wz
 45 leading the feature
 46 (0.5)
 47 Mike: en then the sekint- place guy,
 48 (0.8)
 49 Mike: en nen Keegan. En boy when Keeg'n come
 50 around he come right up into im tried
 51 tuh put im intuh th'wa:ll.
 52 Curt: Yeh?,
 53 Mike: 'n 'e tried it about four diffen times
 54 finally Keegan rapped im a good one in
 55 the a:ss'n then th-b- DeWald wen o:ff.
 56 (0.5)
 57 Curt: Mm
 58 Mike: [[But in ne meantime it'd cost Keegan
 59 three spo:ts'nnuh feature.
 60 Curt: Yeah?
 61 Mike: So, boy when Keeg'n come in he- yihknow

- 62 how he's gotta temper anyway, he js::
 63 °wa:::h sc reamed iz damn=
 64 Curt: mm
 65 Mike: =engine yihknow,
 66 (0.5)
 67 Mike: settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
 68 off'n clunk it goes on top a the car he
 69 gets out'n goes up t'the trailer 'n
 70 gets that °god damn iron ba:r?, 'hhh
 71 rrap that railer en away he starts
 72 t'go en evrybuddy seh hey you don't
 73 need dat y'know, seh ye:h yer right'n
 74 'e throws that son'vabitch down=
 75 Curt: °Mm hm hm
 76 Mike: =hhhhh So they all go dow n
 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, th ey all,=
 80 Mike: They all-
 81 Gary: =hn- hn!
 82 Mike: They all go down th ere,=
 83 Gary: Gimme
 84 a beer Curt,
 85 Mike: °N o some- somebuddy so:mebuddy,
 86 Carney: It reminds me of those
 87 wrestl(h)ers. 'hhh
 88 Mike: So:me body rap:ped=
 89 Carney: hhh(h)on t(h)elevi sion. °()
 90 Gary: =Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin there.
 93 Carney: °().
 94 Mike: So:mebuddy rapped uh:.
 95 Curt: °((clears throat))
 96 Mike: DeWald'nna mouth.
 97 Curt: Well, h e deserved it.
 98 Mike: But yihknow eh- uh-he made iz
 99 first mistake number one by messin with
 100 Keegan because a'pits'r fulla Keegans
 101 en when there is nt't a Keegan there=
 102 Curt: °Mmhm,
 103 Mike: =ere's a'Fra :nks,
 104 Curt: There's a'Fra:nks,

- 105 Mike: ()
 106 Curt: [[I kno [w.
 107 Mike: Because they're relatedjih
 108 kno:w?

Notes

- For more detailed analysis of such phenomena see Sacks (1971) and C. Goodwin (1981, Chapter 5).
- Talk is transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 731-733). For purposes of the analysis to be developed in this paper the following transcription conventions are the most relevant:
 - Punctuation symbols are used to mark intonation changes rather than as grammatical symbols.
 - * A period indicates a falling contour.
 - * A question mark indicates a raising contour.
 - * A comma indicates a falling-raising contour.
 - Italics indicates some form of emphasis, which may be signaled by changes in pitch and/or amplitude.
 - A bracket joining the talk of separate speakers marks the point at which overlapping talk begins.
 - Colons indicate that the sound just before the colon has been noticeably lengthened.
 - Numbers within parentheses (e.g. '(0.5)'), mark silences in seconds and tenths of seconds.
 - The letter 'h' within parentheses (e.g. 'wrestl(h)ers') marks a laugh token.
- A particularly vivid example of the importance of the audience applying appropriate knowledge to what they are hearing is provided by Bohannan's (1986) description of what happened when she told the story of *Hamlet* to members of an African society in which it was expected that a dead man's brother would marry his wife and take over his kingship, ghosts were not reincarnations of the dead but omens sent by witches, symptoms of madness were thought to be caused by bewitchment from relatives in the male line, etc. By using such background knowledge to interpret what they were listening to, the African audience found a very different story in *Hamlet* than would a western audience.
- For more detailed analysis of this interactive organization of such recognition formats see Sacks and Schegloff (1979).
- See Schegloff (1985) for more detailed analysis of this sequence.
- A racer's first name may be given the first time he is introduced into the talk (for example Paul DeWald in example 2 on p. 289) but subsequent reference to him will use only the last name. There is one exception to this. The best racer, Al, is consistently identified through use of only his first name. Indeed, the way in which procedures for identifying him differ from those used to identify all others in the scene is one of the ways in which his special status is made visible within the details of the participants' talk about him.
- I am indebted to Gail Jefferson for bringing this phenomenon to my attention.

- See Sacks (1978: 262-269) for very interesting and relevant analysis of how the interests and social organization of a group of girls can enable them to find information and motive power in a story to which boys are oblivious.
- By displaying uncertainty about DeWald's name, Phyllis is able to successively address two recipients who differ from each significantly in ways relevant to the organization of her talk. Thus Curt is proposed to be uninformed about the name of the character she is talking about, while Mike is proposed to be the authority on who that character is. For more detailed analysis of the interactive organization of utterances such as this, and how they might deal with problems that parties such as spouses who share much of their experience in common systematically encounter see C. Goodwin (1981: Chapter 5).
- Note how Gary escalates his initial claim for an equivalent event by using the same term Mike used in line 14, 'bumped' to now describe the incident he heard about, i.e. 'somebody bumped somebody else'.
- See M. H. Goodwin (1982b: 89) for analysis of how invitations to laugh can be used to affiliate members of an audience to a speaker's position in a dispute. For more general treatment of the process of alignment to positions within disputes see Maynard (forthcoming).
- Curt returns his gaze to Mike just at the point where Mike hesitates in his talk in line 95. For more detailed analysis of how such perturbations in the stream of speech can act as requests for the gaze of recipients see C. Goodwin 1981, Chapter 2.
- More extensive analysis of how a teller reorganizes the structure of a story as the constitution of its audience changes can be found in M. H. Goodwin (1982a).
- For clarity, our discussion of theatrical performances has been restricted to a single clear example. However, as work in reader response criticism demonstrates (see, for example, Tompkins, 1980), the issue of how the audience helps constitute a literary or dramatic work is far richer than the limited phenomena we have been briefly able to look at here. Spontaneous conversation and western theater are clearly but two points in a continuum that contains multiple possibilities for different types of audience participation. For a very interesting analysis of a situation that falls between the participation frameworks which have been examined here, a ritualized performance in Kaluli society in which the audience actively helps construct the story being performed, see E. Schieffelin (1984).

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'Moved by the Spirit': Constructing meaning in a Brethren Breaking of Bread service

RUTH A. BORKER

Abstract

This paper compares two spontaneous Breaking of Bread services that took place at a Scottish Brethren assembly. While seeming the same on the surface, these two services were experienced very differently by participants: the first was felt to be a powerful expression of the voice of the Holy Spirit and the other to be more expressive of the voices of men. Brethren understanding of the Christian gospel, participation in the meeting, and the speech acts that occur are examined to understand the Breaking of Bread and the difference between these two services. It is argued that the differences between these two services lies in their symbolic unity. The first manifested a high level of semantic coherence through the weaving together of Biblical symbols related to the communion through multiple speech acts by multiple speakers, while the second in its actual speech and cited texts never achieved this symbolic unity. These meetings point to the active role of symbols in the creation of any speech event and its meaning, and the need to see meaning as a co-creation, the result of a complex interaction of structural processes and of a dynamic interaction between participants and the language they use.

1. Introduction

Establishing coherence and meaning in any speech event is the result of a complex interaction between participants and the texts they create, shaped by a range of communicative and structural processes. This is especially the case in the Brethren worship service, an event in which there is no human leader and no set order of service and yet an event participants believe must

be 'done decently and in order' as befits its being the most important hour of every week.

In this paper I will examine two worship services that took place on successive Sundays in a small Open Brethren assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland.¹ On the surface, these meetings seem equivalent. In both services approximately the same people were present and the same men initiated a number of similar speech acts in roughly similar order. Yet one service was felt by the participants to be a powerful expression of the voice of the Holy Spirit and the other to be more expressive of the voices of men. To understand the differences between these two similar events we need to explore the religious and cultural conceptions that underlie the meetings and the ways these are manifested in models of participation, of speech acts, and of meeting structure. Even more, we have to uncover the very complex ways in which these models are realized in specific meetings, and how these realizations are experienced by the Brethren. Consideration of the Breaking of Bread service points us to the key role of semantic forces in shaping events, and the centrality of symbols in their definition and actualization. These meetings direct us to go beyond an individual-focused (whether speaker or hearer) approach to meaning and to see meaning as a dynamic co-creation of speaker, audience and the symbols they use. To put this in Brethren terms, there *is* power in the word.

The Sunday worship or Breaking of Bread service is the center of the Open Brethren experience. There is no leader. The service progresses as *men* are 'moved by the Spirit' to offer prayer, worship, Bible reading, and hymns (which are sung by all), culminating in the sharing of the bread and wine. When it is 'really in the Spirit', it is immensely moving and meaningful for the participants, a vital experience of the basic truth of Christianity as they understand it.

After a brief description of the two meetings, I will consider what we need to know to understand the services as events and to appreciate the difference between these two specific meetings, looking in turn at the Brethren understanding of the Christian gospel, participation in the meeting, the speech acts that occur, and finally the symbolic unity that embodies for Brethren the true meaning of the meeting. For as I will show, it is in their symbolic texture and coherence that the real difference between these meetings lie.

2. Two worship services

Meeting 1

One Sunday morning in the winter of 1972 the members of a small Brethren assembly in the city of Edinburgh began to arrive for the Breaking of Bread service. Individuals sat on wooden benches facing toward an undecorated table on which were placed a loaf of bread and three cups of non-alcoholic wine. Waiting for the meeting to start, people prayed silently and many looked through their Bibles or their copies of *The Believer's Hymnbook*. At eleven, Elder 1 rose and read the hymn 'Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!' including the lines:

All who trust Thee are forgiven
Through the virtue of Thy blood;
Rent in thee the veil of heaven (v. 2) . . .
While thou dost our place prepare;
For Thy saints still interceding
Till in glory we appear (v. 3).

The congregation rose and sang the hymn *a capella*.

Elder 2 rose and read a letter of introduction for a couple visiting from Aberdeen and welcomed them.

He read (John 14: 1-6) where Jesus says:

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life.²

and commented on the veil as signifying the gulf between God and man resulting from sin, and on Jesus as 'the way' to bridge that gulf. Elder 2 continued by reading (Luke 23: 42-45) the account of Jesus on the cross telling the thief: 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' and Jesus's death when 'the veil of the temple was rent'. Noting the statement of the opening hymn that all is forgiven, he spoke of the rent veil which allows both the grace of God to shine down and saved Christians to enter heaven.

He then offered a spontaneous opening prayer, thanking God that 'we are a redeemed group of people', 'for the metaphors that express our happiness', 'that the veil has been rent', and that 'we have a high priest to worship Thee'.

Member 1 rose and read the hymn 'Abba, Father!', including the lines:

This high honour we inherit:
Thy free gift through Jesus' blood (v. 1) . . .
Thine own purpose gave us being,
When, in Christ, in that vast plan
Thou in Christ didst choose Thy people
E'en before the world began (v. 2).

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Elder 3 rose and read Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 12: 5-9, 17: 2) which spoke of: 'the place which the Lord your God shall choose' and the fact that 'ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you.' He related these verses to passages in John and to the idea of 'the place God has prepared, to which they have not yet come'. He said 'meanwhile we come to the place God said, to worship and delight in God'. Noting the connection of place and chosen people made possible through sacrifice and repeating lines from John 14 read earlier, he continued 'we have come to the place it has pleased God to put His name on, we have come here as His servants to offer our prayers, worship and thanksgiving' and 'we see before us our sacrifice, our High Priest'.

Elder 4 rose and read the hymn 'The veil is rent', including the lines:

By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest
we enter through the veil (v. 4).

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Elder 3 rose and offered a spontaneous prayer. He thanked God for the perfect sacrifice of the Son, saying 'we can see again this morning the rent veil and see Him now at Thy right hand' and thanking God that Jesus said 'He would come again, and take us to His side'.

He then read the hymn 'We saw Thee not when Thou didst come', which recounted the scene of the crucifixion, the veiling of the sun when Christ died, and His journey to the skies.

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Member 2 rose and read (Luke 22: 1-20) a description of the Last Supper that speaks of the coming kingdom of God. He then gave spontaneous thanks

for the bread, thanking the Father for Christ's 'presence at Thy right hand, interceding for us'.

Elder 1 went to the table and broke the loaf of bread in thirds. He put each piece on a plate. Assisted by Elder 5 and Member 5 (a young man), he passed the bread to members of the congregation.

Member 2 rose and gave spontaneous thanks for the cup, noting the conversation of the thief at the crucifixion and Jesus saying to him 'tonight ye shall be with me in paradise'.

Elder 1, Elder 5 and Member 5 went to the table to get the cups and passed them to the congregation. The three returned the cups to the table and passed the collection bags to the congregation.

Member 3 rose and read the hymn, 'Praise the Saviour, O my Soul!'

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Elder 1 rose, turned to the congregation, and gave the announcements. He then offered a spontaneous closing prayer in which he thanked God again for 'the rent veil through which grace flows' and for Christ who died at the cross and 'even now prepares a place'.

Meeting 2

The next week the congregation again gathered on Sunday morning for the worship meeting, silently waiting in their seats, praying and reading. At eleven, Elder 4 rose and read the hymn 'To Calvary, Lord in spirit now', which speaks of Christ's suffering and anguish on the cross.

The congregation rose and sang the hymn *a capella*.

Elder 4 remained standing and gave a spontaneous opening prayer, thanking God for His love, for the privilege of gathering around the emblems and for Christ's work at Calvary.

Elder 2 rose and read the hymn, 'Crowned with thorns upon the tree', which again spoke of the agony of the cross.

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Elder 3 rose and read Psalm 22, which starts 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me'. He prefaced his reading with the comment 'let us think of the One on the cross as we read', and interspersed brief comments on Christ's suffering throughout his reading of the psalm.

Member 3 rose and read the hymn 'Saviour, we remember Thee!', which in the first verse speaks of:

Thy deep woe and agony,
All thy suffering on the tree

and in later verses speaks of the resurrection.

The congregation remained seated and sang the hymn.

Elder 1 rose and read (Matt. 27: 27-51) without comment an account of Jesus on the cross speaking the words of the psalmist and the fulfillment of other prophecies in Psalm 22, concluding with the line: 'behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom'. He then read the hymn 'The veil is rent', which had been sung the week before. In its middle verses, the hymn pictures Jesus's agony on the cross, three times citing "'Tis finished!', which Jesus cried before dying.

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Elder 3 rose and offered a spontaneous prayer, thanking God for Jesus and His life on earth. Making reference to the picture painted by Matthew of Calvary's cross, he spoke of 'the cruel way of sinners as they rejected God's way to salvation . . . they put Him on the cross, spit on Him and parted His remnant and cast lots, they scorned and reviled Him' and went on to quote again 'why hath thou forsaken me?', concluding with a mention of the rent veil.

He then read the hymn 'Behold! Behold the Lamb of God', including lines which cite both 'Eli, lama sabachthani?' (My God, why hath thou forsaken me?) and "'Tis finished' in portraying the agony of the cross.

The congregation rose and sang the hymn.

Member 2 rose and read (Mark 14: 12-26) an account of the last supper that focuses on Judas's betrayal and describes Christ's instituting of the breaking of bread. He then offered a spontaneous thanks for the bread, citing the warning not to take the elements unworthily.

Elder 1 went to the table and broke the loaf in thirds. He put each piece on a plate and, assisted by Elder 5 and Member 5, he passed these among the congregation.

Elder 2 rose after a rather long silence and gave a short spontaneous thanks for the cup, starting 'Holy Father, we thank Thee that Thou know the answer to the question posed so long ago by our Lord'.

Elder 1, Elder 5 and Member 5 went to the table to get the cups and passed them to the congregation.

The three returned the cups to the table and passed the collection bags to the congregation.

Elder 1 rose, turned to the congregation and gave the announcements.

He then offered a spontaneous closing prayer in which he thanked God that 'before we began we were redeemed, two thousand years ago on Calvary's cross' and that 'all of us some years ago saw Jesus as our personal savior'

3. Brethren and the evangelical understanding of the Gospel

The question I want to address in this paper is: why was the first meeting experienced by participants as strongly led by the Spirit while the second did not have for them the same powerful sense of the Spirit's voice?

The starting point for understanding these services is the fact that Open Brethren are evangelical Protestants: they believe in the absolute truth of the Bible and believe in the need for a personal acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When you realize you are a sinner, and take Christ as savior, they believe you receive the Holy Spirit to guide you in God's will. The worship service is held to give thanks for Christ's sacrifice. Brethren enact a communion service because, they say, Jesus Himself asked to be remembered in that way.

In Scotland, Brethren are known among evangelicals for a variety of distinctive doctrines and practices, for the rigorous Bible training of *all* members, and for a tendency to be 'sectarian'. They celebrate communion every Sunday morning and have no institutional ministers because they believe in the 'priesthood of all believers'.³ While all are considered priests, members have different roles in the assembly, as the local group is called. Women can only speak at meetings if men are not present. Some men are recognized as responsible for the spiritual and practical well-being of the assembly. These men are referred to individually as 'overseers' or 'elders' and collectively as the 'oversight'.⁴

Each assembly is regarded as independent. Brethren do not see the word 'church' as referring to an institution, but to the body of Christ, to which all true believers – past, present, and future – belong. They strongly condemn institutional division into denominations and see themselves as a return to proper New Testament church organization.⁵ Assemblies are linked to one another in a variety of ways. The Open assemblies in Edinburgh, for example, held yearly conferences together; and men spoke at gospel services at other

Table 1. *Participants and speech acts*

Meeting One		
Initiator	Act No.	Speech Act
Elder 1	1	Hymn 61 – 'Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!'
Elder 2	2	Letter of Greeting
Elder 2	3	Ministry on John 14: 1-6, Luke 23: 42-45
Elder 2	4	Opening prayer
Member 1	5	Hymn 2 – 'Abba, Father! we adore thee'
Elder 3	6	Ministry on Deut. 12: 5-9, 17: 2
Elder 4	7	Hymn 283 – 'The veil is rent: Lo! Jesus stands'
Elder 3	8	Prayer
Elder 3	9	Hymn 461 – 'We saw Thee not when Thou didst come'
Member 2	10	Reading of Luke 22: 1-20
Member 2	11	Thanks for the bread (Elder 1 breaks bread, and it is passed around)
Member 2	12	Thanks for the cup (3 cups passed around) (collection bags passed around)
Member 3	13	Hymn 230 – 'Praise thy Saviour, O my soul!'
Elder 2	14	Announcements
Member 4	15	Thanks to fellowship for prayers for him
Elder 1	16	Closing prayer
Meeting Two		
Initiator	Act No.	Speech Act
Elder 4	1	Hymn 305 – 'To Calvary, Lord, in spirit now'
Elder 4	2	Opening prayer
Elder 2	3	Hymn 42 – 'Crowned with thorns upon the tree'
Elder 3	4	Ministry on Psalm 22
Member 3	5	Hymn 251 – 'Saviour, we remember Thee!' (sung seated)
Elder 1	6	Reading of Matt. 27: 27-mid 51
Elder 1	7	Hymn 283 – 'The veil is rent: Lo! Jesus stands'
Elder 3	8	Prayer
Elder 3	9	Hymn 30 – 'Behold! behold the Lamb of God'
Member 2	10	Reading of Mark 14: 12-26
Member 2	11	Thanks for the bread (Elder 1 breaks bread and it is passed around)
Elder 2	12	Thanks for the cup (3 cups passed around) (collection bags passed around)
Elder 2	13	Announcements
Elder 1	14	Closing prayer

assemblies to which they had ties.⁶ Each assembly or network of assemblies has a tendency to develop its own particular variant for celebrating the Breaking of Bread within the general Brethren model.⁷

4. The Breaking of Bread

The Breaking of Bread is important to Brethren because through their common participation they experience the leading by the Holy Spirit and their unity as members of the body of Christ. The coherence of a service comes from three sources: (1) shared rules of participation, (2) a limited repertoire of types of acts, and (3) shared symbols. The power of the worship service lies in the ways in which it handles two interconnected problems: (1) creating order and semantic coherence despite the lack of a human leader and (2) achieving a sense of spontaneity rather than routinization. It is the simultaneous experience of coherence and spontaneity that produces the powerful sense of unity in the Spirit.

4.1. *Participation in the Breaking of Bread service*

Participation in the Breaking of Bread, which literally refers to taking the bread and wine, is open to all believers. The question of who is a believer, however, is problematic. Some argue one must be in the Brethren assemblies. As described in the first meeting, visitors are usually identified and greeted at the beginning of a service, when letters of introduction from their home assembly may be read. The Breaking of Bread is totally insider-directed. It has no outward proselytizing aspect for the Brethren, and from the origin of the movement in the early 19th century it has been at the heart of being Brethren. As members often said to me, 'it is what we come for', and there are numerous signs of its special status including the fact that *The Believer's Hymnbook*, the Brethren published hymnbook, is only used in this service.

If one is a believer and present at the meeting, then one is considered to be a participant. There is *no distinction made between speakers and audience members*. Participants do, however, have different roles. All participants are to prepare for the meeting by being 'right with God', focusing on Jesus and His redemptive work, so that they can be active listeners, attuned to whether speech is from the 'Spirit' or the 'flesh'. Some participants, men, are potential

speakers as well. Women cannot be speakers because men are present. Men are supposed to come to the meeting, 'prepared, but not prepared to speak'. Men should engage in Bible study and prayer during the week, so that they will be ready to speak if led, but they are not to plan their words in advance.⁸ To do so would be to give in to the 'fleshly' temptation of vanity and to not show sufficient faith in the ability of the Spirit to lead. In fact, not all men speak. Men are seen as having different 'gifts', and they should contribute accordingly.⁹ Those 'young in the Lord' must learn to recognize the prompting of the Spirit. In general, members felt that it is better for men to err towards silence rather than possibly speak 'out of the Spirit' and disrupt the worship of others.

From the Brethren perspective, there is another and most important participant: God, in all three persons of the Trinity. For the most part, the service is directly addressed to God the Father, the Son is believed to be present at it, while the Holy Spirit is seen as leading some men to speak, and guiding all participants in their response to what occurs. At every point in the service, participants must determine if what is said as well as their response to it is of the flesh or of the Spirit. One man even suggested to me that women are in a privileged position here, for if what is said matches what is in their minds, it must be the Spirit at work.

In the assembly discussed here, there were usually eighteen men, twenty-eight women and a few children in attendance at the Breaking of Bread. On average only 6 or 7 men spoke at a meeting, and 4 elders accounted for the vast majority of speech acts at all meetings, not because they were 'in authority' (which for Brethren would smack of an institutional ministry) but, Brethren say, because of their gifts (which are why they are recognized as the oversight). Both the meetings considered are typical in these respects. The four elders initiated most speech acts; the rest were offered by men who spoke regularly though not necessarily every week. In fact all the men who spoke at the second service spoke in the first as well, and this is certainly not the source of their difference.

4.2. *Speech acts and rules for their occurrence*

A service consists of a number of types of speech acts, as well as such non-verbal acts as the actual breaking of bread, the sharing of the wine, and the collection. The most important of these speech acts, those with a spiritual

focus, are referred to as 'praise, prayer, and worship', although more mundane acts such as welcomes, announcements and personal thanks to members (as in the first meeting) also occur. More specifically, people classify spiritually-oriented speech acts into (1) reading and singing hymns, (2) Bible reading, (3) 'a word' or 'ministry' which is a Bible reading with commentary, and (4) prayer. There are also periods, usually short, of silence – the meaning of which is ambiguous in that it can be either silent meditation and waiting on the Spirit or spiritual void.

All of the speech acts that occur in a Breaking of Bread service occur in other Brethren contexts as well, but in the Breaking of Bread they have a distinctive form. Prayer usually involves supplication, but in the Breaking of Bread consists only of praise and thanksgiving. Ministry is usually directed towards teaching or correcting people but in the Breaking of Bread is directed towards God.¹⁰ Hymns are usually sung to the accompaniment of a piano but in the Breaking of Bread are sung *a cappella*. As a result, while these speech acts are distinguished by distinctive features, e.g. to whom they are addressed, whether the author is the speaker or another, whether they are spoken or sung, within the Breaking of Bread they tend to collapse into one another. Prayers of thanksgiving and praise are like ministries, which are directed to God and not people. Hymns which are read before they are sung are simply another believer's way of stating the same joy and adulation the present participants feel. The different types of speech acts become different manifestations of the same message. The Breaking of Bread is a *worship* service and all within it is subsumed in that category. The purpose of the meeting gives shape to its components.

While silence occurs, it is not in itself highly valued – the meeting requires speech. As one Brethren pointed out to me, they are not Quakers. The worship service is the collective outward expression in words of a shared inner experience. The silence between the thanks for the bread and the thanks for the wine in the second meeting is a first clue to the meeting's problematic nature.

There is no set sequence in which acts occur, but the nature of the event and the constituent elements generate a systematic patterning. Meetings always start with a hymn. This is seen in part as practical, since people are still arriving, but also as spiritually appropriate. Hymns are 'praise', expressive of emotion. An opening hymn they say 'sets the mood', 'brings all into the same thought'. All meetings are supposed to open with prayer, a dedication to God, and while there is always an opening prayer, it is not the first act and

may not even be the second or third. But, after all, the entire service is overtly dedicated to God. Basically, at meetings, there is an opening segment which includes a hymn, greetings if there are any, and an opening prayer and perhaps more, which merges with a period during which, as one Brethren put it, 'the scene is set for the table', followed by the communion itself, which is the highpoint of the meeting, and then a winding down with the collection and closing segment consisting usually of a ministry or hymn, announcements and the closing prayer.

While people recognize a typical pattern for meetings, they do not value routinization. Scottish Brethren talked about routinization as 'empty form', 'ritual' or 'tradition'. As Rappaport (1979) has made clear, the defining features of ritual are invariance and the evaluation of performance in terms of success in enacting that invariant form. It is exactly this *standard* of invariance that the Brethren reject. Doing things the same way every time is not valued. Brethren do not, like such radical Anabaptists as the early Quakers (Bauman, 1983), reject the very idea of symbols and specific forms having spiritual value, as seen in the centrality of 'breaking the bread' and 'drinking of the cup'.¹¹ They are, rather, concerned with the source of the speech and action. The only *form* that has value is that which has been instituted by God (the Breaking of Bread service and baptism) and not that originating from men.

Opposition to routinization does not mean Brethren do not believe in order. In fact, a central criterion for thinking about what occurs at meetings lies in the Biblical injunctions that 'God is not the author of confusion' and that 'all things be done decently and in order' (I Cor. 14: 33, 40). Each assembly or group of interacting assemblies has its own sense of what is appropriate during the Breaking of Bread, though all agree on the basic types of speech acts. While some of these views are explicitly stated, e.g. that 'corrective ministry' is out of place before the actual breaking of bread, many are implicit and only learned from personal experience in many meetings. The implicitness of the rules contributes to the pressure on newcomers to err toward silence rather than risk contributing in a way that others may find 'out of the Spirit'. An explicit Brethren rule of participation limits the number of speakers to one at a time, and implicit rules include those that govern the alternation between speech acts and the control of the floor.

Brethren believe that orderliness requires there can be only one speaker at a time. On only a few occasions did I ever see two men rise to speak at the same time, and one always quickly sat down so there was never more

than minimal overlap of speakers. Multiple speakers and overlaps would in themselves be experienced by Brethren as clear signs the Spirit was not leading, being in their view 'chaos' and 'noise' which have a human or even Satanic, rather than a divine, source. Both the meetings fit the model of order, having no instances of simultaneous multiple speakers. This model and the small number of actual speakers obviously makes it easier for order to be maintained. But it makes the problem of routinization more salient, as it is the same few men week after week who lead the assembly in worship, and it is in terms of this possibility that we get another clue to the difference between the meetings.

One of the most noticeable features is that it is very rare to have two of any type of speech act in a row,¹² and some of these sequences would seem very odd to the assembly members. Having two hymns in a row is likely to be seen as a sign of a spiritual problem, as hymns are the 'easiest' thing to do and so the easiest to do without being led by the Spirit, whether from a 'fleshly desire' to contribute, or to fill an 'awkward' silence. Except for the communion itself, I never heard two prayers in a row. Once in the meetings I attended there were two ministries in a row and once a reading followed by a ministry, but otherwise, the types of acts alternate, and this is the case in both meetings considered. People told me anything could happen; it would even be possible for communion itself not to occur, though no one knew of this ever happening. Such statements clearly reflect their strong commitment to the idea that one should wait on the Spirit and count on nothing else.

The alternation of speech acts produces a sense of being led from one type of act to another, and, in fact, this is often done by the same speaker. For example, ministry is often immediately followed by prayer or a hymn; prayers are very likely to be followed by a hymn. I think that this movement from one type of speech act to another in itself is felt as an expression of the unity of the service, as they are expressions in multiple forms of the same message. Thus ministry focuses on an aspect of Jesus, prayer is the thanks to God for it, hymns express the joy one feels at it. The pattern of speech acts points to the fact that what is moving is the floor – temporary right of direction – which may be expressed in successive and differing speech acts.

In the first meeting, there was a greater tendency for different types of speech acts to build into one another, often but not always by the same speaker, while in the second there tended to be single contributions by speakers and a pattern of a hymn followed by another type of speech act, followed by a hymn. Given this framework, some deviation in sequence

may show the presence of the Spirit, and we see such a deviation in the first meeting. But to understand how these differences in sequencing were *experienced* we need to look to their content and specifically to the symbolic unity they did and did not manifest.

4.3. *Symbolic unity and its actualization*

A Breaking of Bread consists of different sorts of acts, initiated by different individuals. Its real coherence comes from what it is: a communion. The central actions of sharing the bread and wine automatically give a symbolic focus, selecting particular portions of the Brethren repertoire of symbols and metaphors as appropriate. The focus is the broken body and the spilt blood, Christ and the cross. Further, this symbolic focus generates structure for the meeting as the actual taking of the bread and wine is the culmination towards which all earlier acts build. But this clear focus also creates the possibility of routinization. Brethren feel the Spirit is not leading if the content of speech is not clearly on the crucifixion, as in a hymn on prayer. But some texts are so transparently 'appropriate', e.g. Luke 22 or the hymn 'Sweet feast of love divine!', a man can read them, even without the Spirit's prompting. This tension, I argue, is resolved in the emergence and elaboration of specific metaphors or images that bring out some particular aspect within the general symbolic focus. It is in terms of this that we can most clearly understand how the two meetings differ.

Brethren talk about the most successful services as ones in which the people were 'in tune', the parts 'dovetailed together', the service showed 'harmony'. They say a problematic service, on the other hand, 'dragged', parts created a 'break', the service was 'disjointed'. In elaborating, Brethren say that meetings led by the Spirit have a 'thread', 'a line', 'a train of thought' that runs through them. This is the sign of the single force — the Holy Spirit — underlying all: there are many speaking, but a single voice. The common theme co-created by multiple speakers is simultaneously a manifestation of unity and an intense experience of it. It is on this dimension that the two services differ. The first has a symbolic tightness, with a few images weaving around one another, giving direction and intensity to the meeting. The second never realized a symbolic specificity and direction.

The first service wove the images of the rent veil and the place God has prepared for His people around the key symbols of the cross and sacrifice.

There was a great deal of cross-referencing to earlier speech acts and developing of secondary images that are linked to those of the veil and the place: the inheritance coming to God's people, Jesus as the high priest (or intercessor), the journey or way, and Christ's coming for his people. In all these, there was an underlying frame of locality, of movement and placement in space, that gave a textural unity to the speech of many speakers (Fernandez, 1974). Every contribution through the communion, whether hymn, prayer or ministry, regardless of speaker, built upon this symbolic set.

The opening hymn with its lines: 'rent in Thee the veil of heaven' (v. 2) and 'while Thou dost our place prepare/ for Thy saints still interceding/ Till in glory we appear' (v. 3) contained the symbols that would be developed. Elder 2 pulled out and elaborated the images of the veil and place through two New Testament readings. The use of an unusual sequence of events, having a ministry before the opening prayer, served as a sign of the Spirit, as Elder 2 was obviously moved by the hymn to focus on the veil and the place being prepared. The opening prayer, which immediately followed, further developed the theme of the veil, and a place for God's people and reinvoked the theme of Christ as the High Priest which is connected to each. The next hymn, from Member 1, picked up the theme of God's people and their inheritance, images that were then enriched in a ministry by Elder 3 through the reading of relatively obscure Old Testament references on the place God has chosen as a future inheritance for his people. He brought out the 'truth' that the connection of place and people is only possible through sacrifice, and then he tied these verses to New Testament verses in John and Revelations, further elaborating the connection of place and sacrifice, back-referencing to the earlier reading from John and the image of Christ as the High Priest. Elder 4 then wove the veil image back in with the hymn 'The veil is rent: Lo! Jesus stands', which in v. 4 ties the rent veil to Christ as sacrifice and Priest. Finally, Elder 3 prayed, weaving together the images of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice through Old and New Testament allusions, the rent veil, Jesus as the High Priest, and His coming return for his people, noting 'till then we meet here again with the emblems to remember him'. He immediately offered a hymn which included reference to the 'veiling' of the sun at Christ's death, and the wilderness in which God's people wait for him to come, so they can journey to the heavens. This pulling together of the threads served as the completion of the 'setting of the table' and a reading on the Last Supper, which speaks of the coming kingdom of God, and thanks for the bread, with indirect reference to Christ as the High Priest, followed. The

thanks for the bread was followed in turn by a thanks for the cup that referred back not only to the opening hymn but the opening reading in speaking of Christ as the only one good enough to pay the price of sin and His telling the thief 'tonight shall you be with me in paradise'.

Turner (1964) has pointed to the ability of dominant symbols to synthesize a wide range of meanings, although only some meanings are foregrounded in any particular use of the symbol. Turner was concerned with rituals in which the appearance of symbols was set. What we see in this service, and in other successful services, is a process by which some dimension of the necessarily dominant symbol of the cross is spontaneously brought out and highlighted through the use of secondary symbols, to create a deeper insight into the meaning of the cross. While both the rent veil and image of a place for God's people are relevant to communion as they embody aspects of the Old Testament dispensation that are transformed by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, they are not standardly joined to one another. As a result, doing so provides fresh insights to well-known Biblical 'truths' and becomes an experience of the 'living word'. This was done through Old and New Testament references, through hymns, prayers and ministries, from different speakers, in a slightly unusual sequence. Further, the images were embedded in the hymns¹³ and Bible texts and so the offering of these texts was a sign of speakers being led. The total effect was a strong sense of spontaneity and oneness of mind – the signs of the Spirit's voice.

The service the next week contrasted in a number of ways. It was not seen as 'dead', but it did not have the specificity and power of the week before. It dragged a little and had some awkward silences. There was no realization of semantic unity. Its theme was the cross and Christ's agony as He paid the price of sin. But since the cross is inherently the focus of all communion services, it does not provide specificity. Particular images were invoked in the meeting, but speakers did not clearly relate them to one another nor develop them from speech act to speech act. An image would be carried from one speech act to the next, but would not be elaborated as another image would be picked up in the act that followed, creating a sense of jerkiness.

The opening hymn by Elder 4 focused on Calvary and Christ's suffering, ending with a reference to Creation being redeemed and blessed by Christ. In his opening prayer, he implicitly referred back to the idea of Creation in speaking of Jesus 'who was there before the beginning of the world', sacrificing himself at Calvary. The next hymn, from Elder 2, picked up on Calvary and Christ's suffering, through the use of graphic images of Christ's body

broken and bleeding on the cross, but it did not include the idea of the creator being sacrificed, which did not recur in the meeting. The image of the broken and bleeding body was developed by Elder 3's reading of Psalm 22 and his commentary upon it. However it brought in as well a host of specific events associated with Calvary and the theme of Christ being rejected, which was elaborated in the commentary. Psalm 22 is regarded by Brethren as 'prophetic', a foretelling in the Old Testament of Christ's crucifixion. This was followed by a hymn, from Member 1, on Calvary, but one which neither had the graphic richness of the earlier hymn and reading nor included any of their specific images. Elder 1 then read Matthew's account of Calvary, which all present knew recounted the fulfilling of the prophecies from Psalm 22, including the cry 'My God, why hath thou forsaken me?' He made no comment on the reading, and so did not explicitly pull out from the text images or relate them to earlier contributions. The account ends with reference to the veil of the temple being rent, and Elder 1 followed his reading with the hymn 'The veil is rent: Lo! Jesus stands', which had been given the week before. But, in this meeting, the context and meaning of the hymn were very different. The hymn did build on his own Bible reading, by repeating the image of the veil, but the veil had not been mentioned by other speakers in the service. The hymn's middle verses focus on Jesus's agony on the cross and quote His cry 'Tis finished', but this cry from the cross is not the one included in Matthew's account (it's in John's gospel), nor is it prophesied in Psalm 22. In other words, there was a lack of coordination and resonance between the texts read, as well as a failure to create clear connections between images when they did recur. Elder 3 tried to bring the strands of the meeting together at this point with a prayer and a hymn. First, he thanked God for Christ's life on earth, making reference to the picture Matthew paints, mentioning those events foretold in the psalm, and concluding 'with boldness we would push aside the rent veil this morning . . . and proclaim our king the one who died on Calvary's cross'. Then he finished his pulling together of previously invoked images by reading a hymn about Calvary which contained both of the cited cries of Christ from the cross, although the first was given in its original form – 'Eli, lama sabachthani'. These contributions of Elder 3 did give some coherence and led directly into the communion. As he had the week before, Member 2, read an account of the Last Supper before giving the thanks for the bread, but this reading focused on Judas's betrayal of Jesus, previously unmentioned in the service. Member 2 then expanded on this idea in the thanks by citing the warning not to take communion unworthily.

Finally there was an awkward silence as Member 2 did not rise to give the thanks for the cup although most present expected him to do so since he had given the thanks for the bread. This silence was ended when Elder 2 gave a short thanks, starting 'Holy Father, we thank Thee that Thou knows the answer to the question posed so long ago by our Lord'.

This meeting never took on a clear symbolic texture. Images of the cross and Christ's suffering were invoked but, even when they were repeated, they were not consistently developed. The meeting broke into short segments with every other act being a hymn. There was a disjointedness and lack of coordination: all the images were known and fit together, but they weren't invoked through Biblical texts and hymns that bound them together. Further, while in this service as in the one before, the speech revolved around the connection of Old and New Testament images, in this meeting the link was the more transparent one of fulfillment of messianic prophecy presented simply through reading rather than the transformative connections developed in the first meeting through multiple speech acts. What coherence there was came from the shared knowledge of the participants (as of the multiple cries of Jesus from the cross), and not from the cited texts themselves. The actual speech in this meeting never achieved the coherence, the symbolic unity, manifested in the first meeting. It is in light of these problems in its semantic nature that other aspects of the meeting can be seen as possibly problematic. The hymns, the readings, the sequence of events were all predictably likely to occur in any Breaking of Bread. In fact, all the Bible readings and all but one of the hymns were given in other worship services I attended. The men spoke very much in their usual style, e.g. Elder 3 looking to the Old Testament (as he did the week before), Member 2 reading on the last supper before praying for the bread, Elder 1 giving reading rather than ministry. In this context, the recurrence of the hymn from the week before, the reading of the well-known New Testament fulfilment of the earlier Old Testament reading, the general shortage of ministry, seem signs people were not fully in tune and possibly contributing somewhat automatically, relying on their knowledge of what is appropriate, rather than being led by the Spirit.

The real difference between these two meetings was that in the second each aspect of the meeting – the sequence, the words, the participants – was in a real sense predictable *in itself*. It had no movement or intensity. The first, while containing nothing inappropriate or truly odd, did not consist totally of the expected. It put the known together in a slightly new way and it did this through the synchronization of different speech acts and different speakers

using the same specific metaphors contained in read texts. For the Brethren, the sense of the Spirit is not in a set order of service, a required theme, or particular participants. It is not that there were specific indicators of a spiritual problem or even that there was a cumulative effect from such indicators. The experience of a meeting as led (or not led) by the Spirit is the result of a complex interaction of semantic and structural processes and their realization in the meeting itself. For the Brethren, the spontaneous unity of voice that proclaims the presence of the Spirit lies in the enactment of a delicate balance of the possible, the familiar, but not totally expected, in multiple speech acts by multiple speakers.

5. Conclusion

The Brethren Breaking of Bread is a distinctive type of formal event, which is highly marked for its participants. Beyond this, however, I think it suggests some important dimensions essential to the creation of any speech event and its meaning. As this issue demonstrates, we are seeking to develop models that conceptualize events as co-creations of participants, of speakers and audience. In doing so, we must be careful not to preserve an overly individualized and cognitized model of meaning, albeit one that sees the locus as shifting between individuals in a dialectical relation between speaker and listener, rather than simply residing in one or the other. The construction of speech events and their meaning is the result of a complex interaction of processes. Structural factors shape what is possible and how it can be interpreted. As I have tried to show, symbols and symbolic forms are major forces in the construction of meaning. In a very real sense, what we see in these services is a dynamic interaction between participants and the symbols in the texts. The meaning of these symbols is not just shared knowledge in the minds of the individuals taking part. The symbols and metaphors that emerge in the Breaking of Bread are all contained in the Bible, which for the Brethren is the ultimate source of truth and meaning – meaning which they do not create but 'discover' (Maltz, 1984). While the meaning of each symbol must be enacted within the service, its Biblical source gives it an inherent semantic logic and coherence, that makes these symbols a motivating force in the creation of the service through co-ordinating the speech of multiple participants. This is recognized by the Brethren in speaking of the word of God as 'the Living Word' (which is at

once both the Bible and Christ). It is not only powerful but interactive – taking on meaning from the specific context of its realization.

Notes

1. The data on which this paper is based were gathered 1972–1973. I also draw for comparison on data gathered in California 1985–1986. I would like to thank Don Brenneis, Sandro Duranti, and Danny Maltz for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. This and all subsequent Bible quotes are from the King James, or what in Scotland is called the Authorized, Version. This was the only version I ever heard read in a service in Edinburgh, although people often owned multiple translations.
3. Weekly spontaneous communion services are actually not unique to Brethren in Scotland as it is the practice as well of the various Pentecostal denominations there, although they all have ministers who are at least potentially in charge of what goes on.
4. The oversight is how Brethren interpret the New Testament verses on church organization and bishops. In the Edinburgh assemblies, there were no men specifically recognized as 'deacons'. 'Elder' does not refer to age but to authority. In the assembly discussed here, the elders, who were in their 40's and 50's, were actually among the younger men in the assembly.
5. In keeping with this view, Brethren abjure any special name for themselves, and tend to refer to members and fellowships by terms in the general Biblical repertoire: believers, saints, Christians, the assemblies. This, in fact, can be seen as contributing to their 'sectarian' tendencies as this framework of terms suggests that only among the Brethren are the Biblical principles found enacted, and true believers found. The name Brethren was applied to them by others in response to their use of it as a term of address and reference for members and while recognized, and to some extent accepted, by members, it was not often used even when they spoke with me. The most common terminology in Edinburgh was to speak of the 'believers' and the 'assemblies'. In the U.S., they are often called Plymouth Brethren to distinguish them from various 'Brethren' churches of Continental origin. This term was known but not used in Scotland.
6. Open assemblies (and individual believers) are often classified by members on a dimension of 'closedness' and 'openness', the factors involved in this judgement largely relating to the Breaking of Bread meeting. Key in such judgements are one's position on who one believes can take part and what one regards as 'Biblical' practice and allowable occurrences. The Brethren movement overall is split between Open and Closed or Exclusive assemblies, on related dimensions.
7. My discussion here applies to the Edinburgh and to some extent the more open Scottish assemblies, but cannot in its particulars be generalized. Research I have done on Open Brethren in Southern California, for example, suggests a number of specific differences in the rules and form for the service there, although the overall logic and meaning remain the same.
8. Whether it is appropriate to prepare a message before the meeting, and then offer it, if it seems right, is in fact a point of debate among American Brethren, although

in Edinburgh in the 1970's such action was seen as wrong by all members I interviewed.

9. Elder 5, for example, was thought to have a gift for financial management rather than for speech. He acted as assembly treasurer. While he never spoke at worship meetings, he participated in such non-verbal ways as passing the bread and wine.
10. There was some disagreement on terminology here. Most distinguished between 'ministry to God' and 'ministry to man', seeing only the first as appropriate to take place before the actual breaking of bread (I have heard no one make this distinction in California). Others used the word ministry just for 'corrective' ministry directed to members, and so said there must be 'no ministry before the breaking of bread', although 'a word' of praise or worship was, of course, appropriate. All felt that corrective ministry would be appropriate after the actual communion. Although it was not very common at this assembly, it was a regular feature of the worship service at other Edinburgh assemblies.
11. In fact, much of the argument among Brethren relate to such things as the use of a single or multiple cups, whether the bread can be 'pre-cut' to facilitate breaking it, which show a concern with form and symbols.
12. The specifics here reflect, among other things, the particular context of Scotland, where music is not highly valued, and the small size of the assembly which means an individual often makes multiple contributions. Such issues as whether a man should 'stand up' more than once are, in fact, points of debate among Brethren I spoke with in the U.S., although I have observed men get up more than once on a number of occasions.
13. There is an index of first lines (which function as titles) in *The Believer's Hymn Book*, but not one for other lines, nor a concordance of words or phrases as in some other hymnbooks. There is no music included.

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**Shared territory:
Audience, indirection and meaning***

DONALD BRENNEIS

Abstract

In cases of what linguists and anthropologists have usually labeled 'indirection', meaning relies on the active participation of audience in making sense – or a second sense – out of an utterance. The critical interpretive and meaning-creating role of the audience is central to this paper, which further suggests a definition of indirection and a preliminary typology of four major ways in which it is accomplished in communication.

1. Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian literary theorist and polymath whose insights have become increasingly significant for the ethnographic study of language and verbal art, has written that 'A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor' (1973: 86, quoted in Holquist, 1983: 4). One of the goals of this article and of this issue has been to take Bakhtin's suggestive, if sweeping, claim to the field, that is, to examine in a range of ethnographic contexts the roles of hearers – of audiences – in helping to create meaning. Audiences not only shape talk but are actively involved in defining how it is to be understood.

Nowhere does this Bakhtinian maxim ring closer to true than in cases of what linguists and ethnographers have usually labeled 'indirection', where 'meaning' relies on the active participation of audience in making sense – or a second sense – out of an utterance. In those speech acts termed 'indirect', all the meaning clearly does not lie in the text itself, nor in the speaker's

intention alone; the audience is necessarily engaged in a search for hidden meanings.

The clear identification of 'speaker' and 'interlocutor' and getting any sense of what they share are very problematic tasks, however. Bakhtin's theoretical position and Duranti's (1984) empirically rooted arguments against the perils of a solely speaker-focused approach to meaning have taken us part of the way, but we should not expect that 'hearer' is any less troublesome a category. Audience as a static notion is unlikely to be very helpful. An audience is rarely a single unit; students of rhetoric have long distinguished, for example, between primary and secondary audiences, groups with different relationships to the message and, therefore, different interests and interpretative frames (see, for example, Haviland, this issue). Audience members vary considerably in the degree of knowledge and investment they bring to particular messages. Further, roles shift; the audience of one moment might be the speaker of the next (see Goodwin, this issue). Finally, those present who never speak, for example, the women in the breaking of bread service analyzed by Borker (this issue), may nonetheless be defined as critical for the authenticity of the event, not by their passive presence but by unspoken participation.

A straightforward communicative model presupposing a single speaker and unitary or relatively invariant hearer(s), with a single message being passed from one to the other, is inadequate for explaining the variety of events considered in this volume. One reason is that it presumes that messages are carried in solitary utterances rather than through connected discourse; neither the interactive construction of much talk nor such phenomena as co-narration are encompassed in this approach. Beyond this, multiple meanings – shared or unshared – which lie at the heart of indirection as a verbal practice cannot profitably be explored through such a model. Linguistic notions that meaning inheres in lexical or sentential structures are very problematic when applied to oblique speech. On the other hand, it is very difficult to speak of meaning at the level of an event – of a bounded and sustained stream of related discourse – in any way independent of what could only be termed function, whether ascribed by the participants themselves or read into the situation by an outsider. Indirection is, in short, a complex and challenging phenomenon.

My strategy in approaching indirection will be a primarily typological one, an attempt to make some sense of the disparate range of phenomena characterized as 'indirection'. The varieties of indirection I suggest are not intended to be exhaustive, nor will the examples I provide reflect the wide range of

cultures from which indirection has been reported, as it is evident to varying degrees in communicative practice worldwide. This brief and schematic discussion should, however, make clear the critical interpretative role of the audience, without which such ways of speaking would be impossible.

2. Varieties of indirection

A satisfying general definition of indirection is difficult to come by, but a number of dimensions are clearly involved. First, speakers 'mean' more, or other, than what they have said. Meaning does not lie in the text alone; the literal message would be inadequate or misleading in itself. Second, indirection implies something about the speaker's stance vis-à-vis his or her message. Although worked out in many different ways, indirection usually allows the avoidance or disavowal of full responsibility for what one has said. Third, listeners are not only allowed but compelled to draw their own conclusions. The audience must be actively involved. Finally, indirection has a formal direction. Formal features of the texts or aspects of the organization of the communicative event itself both make messages oblique and signal that more is going on than meets the ear. Indirection joins together *form*, how something is said or, beyond that, staged; *function*, both individual intentions and the audience's definition of what is taking place; and *meaning*, the overt and covert content of what is being said.

Individuals draw upon a wide variety of devices in speaking indirectly. At times indirection is apparent in the message itself; at times less obvious aspects of the communicative event are involved. I would like to suggest four rough-hewn varieties of indirection: text-centered, voice-centered, audience-centered and event-centered.

(a) *Text-centered indirection* relies upon features of the message itself both to suggest the intended meaning and to let listeners know that they should attend to such meanings. Such discourse is often patently ambiguous or opaque. Metaphor and open-ended allusion are common, for example, in Caribbean speech, especially in such speech acts as 'passing remarks' in Antigua (Reisman, 1970: 133), 'throwing a phrase' in Belize (French and Kernan, 1981: 249–253) and *indirectas* among Puerto Rican women (Morris, 1981: 102–104). As with 'signifying' in many north American black communities (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972), audience members must determine for themselves why and how a puzzling or apparently out of place comment

actually makes sense, and to whom it might apply. The speakers cannot easily be held accountable for such applications. (see, among many examples, Strathern, 1975; Rosaldo, 1973; Sapir, 1977).

Opaque texts can be created through less complex devices as well. Morris describes a number of features making meanings opaque in spoken Puerto Rican Spanish: the recurrent use of phrases like *el deso* ('the thing') rather than concrete nouns, the failure to be specific enough or, on the other hand, being overly specific, and the use of multiple labels or names for the same things or individuals (1981: 32-52). Contributing to the opacity of some speech genres among Hindi-speaking Fiji Indians is the frequent use of third-person pronouns without antecedents: 'he', 'she' and 'they' frequently appear on the scene and commit outrageous acts without ever being identified (Brenneis, 1978: 164-165).

Not all text-centered indirection is patently ambiguous. The widespread phenomenon of what Brown and Levinson (1978: 137) characterize as 'conventionalized conversational indirectness' includes, for example, whimperatives (Sadock, 1970) and other questions routinely used to serve imperative ends. In such indirectness, linguistic form does not map directly onto intended social function; the utterance is not opaque but provides conventional cues to indicate that such underlying intentions are present.

In some cases, a person's entire performance can make perfect sense by itself. There is, in contrast to metaphoric instances, no mystery about it, but such performances can also be seen as having different but equally coherent meanings, usually ones rooted in ongoing community life. Fiji Indian religious speeches (Brenneis, 1978), which strike the knowledgeable outsider as discussions of religious exempla, may often also be read as having parallel political plots. There is no opacity. Rather, cueing devices, formal features intended to let the audience know that they should be listening for something more, are critical. Both opaque and apparently clear indirect strategies shift the audience's interpretive frame. Metaphor and allusion, however, work through overt mystery, while the kinds of parabolic plots characteristic of Fiji Indian speeches rely on devices serving other than primarily semantic purposes to suggest that the message is opened.

(b) *Voice-centered indirection* depends upon ambiguity concerning who is really responsible for a message. Hymes's (1972) distinction between 'sender' and 'addresser' is useful here; does a message have a single identifiable author, is that person the one whom we hear speaking, or are there many voices sharing in the message? There are several types of voice-centered indirection.

The first is shared narration or co-performance, at the core of which lie, on the one hand, individual deniability and, on the other, practices critical to being sociable. Many voices can tell the story together, as in the most valued varieties of Fiji Indian village gossip (Brenneis, 1984a; see also Haviland, this volume), or accounts can be constructed through question-answer pairs, as with testimony in mediation sessions in Fiji (Brenneis, 1984b). Such co-performed events often take on an emergent quality; one 'discovers' truths rather than telling them (see Borker, this issue). No single voice has control, and no individual is responsible for the message.

A second kind of voice-based indirection is ventriloquism through spokesmen, the Samoan *fono* with its chiefs and orators being the classic case (Duranti, 1981; Duranti, 1984; Shore, 1982). Here the underlying question is 'Whose message is this?' Is the chief or his orator sending the message, or are both involved and responsible for it? The audience needs to take such issues into account in forming their interpretation of an action in regard to the event.

Another type of voice-centered indirection is ventriloquism through reported speech. Reported speech permeates Fiji Indian gossip, where both literal and dummy quotatives are central in the phrasing of messages and in determining the prosodic features and interactional pacing of the dialogue (Brenneis, 1984a). Similar practices are evident in the 'he-said-she-said' patterns characteristic of black children's gossip arguments in Philadelphia (M.H. Goodwin, 1980).

A final type of voice-centered indirection is anonymity. In Puerto Rico, for example, *cartas anonimas*, ('anonymous letters'), are frequently used to make public accusations or attacks (Morris, 1981: 105). Their texts are quite explicit and direct, but the sender's identity is not evident. Similarly, in Fiji unsigned, hand-lettered placards attacking individuals are occasionally posted near the road. While villagers could often determine who the authors were likely to have been, accused parties could not retaliate without being considered intemperate.

(c) *Audience-centered indirection*: in order to understand this a distinction between primary and secondary audience is needed.¹ A primary audience is composed of the individual or group to whom a performance is chiefly directed, i.e., those whom the performer hopes to influence directly. The primary audience need not be physically present but can learn later of the event. The secondary audience includes others who are either present or likely to hear about things later. This is not merely a residual category, how-

ever; the secondary audience can provide a dummy addressee and a control on the responses of one's real target. Fisher's (1976) analysis of 'dropping remarks' on Barbados provides an elegant example of such indirection. Comments are ostensibly addressed to one party, in reality the secondary audience, while one's primary target, the 'overhearer', is also present. To respond publically to the speaker's words, often intentionally ambiguous in themselves, would be to stand self-accused of whatever shortcomings they suggest. In their papers in this issue, both Goodwin and Haviland delineate the complex diversities of particular audiences and their effect on message form in considerable detail.

Related to indirection through both speaker and audience is a phenomenon noted in a variety of societies. This is a propensity in certain kinds of interactions for simultaneous speech, extensive overlapping of turns and a generally chaotic flavor. Reisman's (1974) discussion of Antiguan contrapuntal conversations is the classic description of such 'noise'; the 'tea meetings' analyzed by Abrahams (1983) are similarly rowdy events. 'Noise' is also characteristic of Fiji Indian gossip; the more intense the overlap and the quicker the transition between speakers, the more satisfying the session (Brenneis, 1984a). Two observations are important here. First, while such occasions might seem chaotic to outsiders, in practice speakers are usually attending carefully to each other and responding appropriately (see, for example, Lein and Brenneis, 1978; Brenneis, 1984a); speakers are, at the same time, subtle and attentive listeners, a point also made for the Caribbean (Reisman, 1974; Williams, n.d.). Second, because of this, it is often analytically difficult to sort out who is voice and who is audience.

(d) *Event-based indirection*, the final category, refers to instances where the event's occurrence is itself a significant message, in fact the most important message being conveyed. In egalitarian communities with a concern for personal autonomy in both participation and interpretation, the construction of a public communicative context, of a framework for interpreting highlighted interaction, is in itself meaningful beyond the import of any of its particular elements. In Fiji Indian aesthetic theory, for example, the importance of different kinds of communicative events rests in large part in their staging of the prerequisites for participating in a shared emotional experience. Fiji Indians claim that emotions are located not within an individual but in an event. Its organizational features – who participates, how they participate and that they participate – are much more important than its contents. The text-context distinction becomes very fuzzy, as does the relationship between

speaker and audience; all may join in creating the event. Moreover, the meaning of such events in a strict linguistic sense may be rather impoverished. Only in the fusing of meaning with emotional or aesthetic experience, culturally guided and defined as it is, can what is communicated be understood by observers.

Although it is worked out in quite different ways, the elaborate taxonomy of varieties of sense and nonsense on St. Vincent provided by Abrahams and Bauman (1983) reveals an analogous concern for the significance of speech events in themselves. The conventional association of some genres with the themes, styles and interactional patterns they imply suggests that event-based indirection, that is, the reading of 'meanings' from the occasions in which performance takes place, is important in a range of societies.

3. Conclusions

One goal in suggesting this typology is to demonstrate the complexity of indirect communicative practices and the necessary involvement of an active audience in understanding what is going on. A second goal has been to call into question – however indirectly – the possibility of any purely direct speech acts, that is, ones that should be taken solely at face value. A traditional approach among linguists has been to focus on those 'literal' meanings based on the definitions of lexical items and the semantic interpretations of the combinatorial rules applied to them. It obviously is invaluable to us as both speakers and students of language to take for granted the possibility of such literal meaning. Whether utterances ever only mean what they say, however, is problematic.

The recognition of speaker intention central to much of pragmatic theory was an important step in expanding our understanding of meaning. Meaning and intention have become increasingly entangled, however, with an implicit equation between them often being made (see, for example, Brown and Levinson, 1978; Levinson, 1983; Grice, 1957, quoted in Duranti, 1984). Beyond this, the, in many ways, salutary stress on one class of participant – speakers – has tended to obscure the very active roles others may be playing, whether in response, co-performance or interpretation. By focusing on indirection – where, by definition, meaning cannot reside in the text alone – this paper has briefly illuminated some of the complexities of that territory

shared by speaker and interlocutor, as have the other articles in this issue. It remains for other voices and other audiences to guide us further.

Note

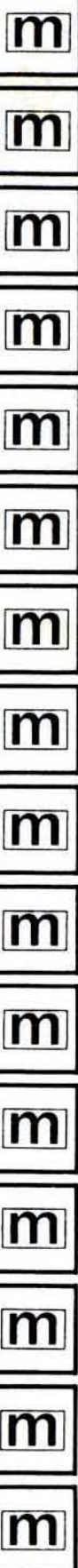
1. The distinction between primary and secondary audience is not the same as that made by Hymes (1972) between addressee and audience. The addressee is formally identified in the text, as through personal pronouns or personal names. The distinction between primary and secondary audience, on the other hand, rests on some reading of the speaker's intentions; his or her goals define and differentiate the various audiences.

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Florian Coulmas (ed.)

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List of contributors and contributions:

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