Sociocultural Dimensions of Discourse

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1970s, an increasing number of linguists have been arguing that certain sentence phenomena—word order, tense and aspect marking, verbal agreement, nominal case marking, to mention only a few—can be better explained through a study of their use in discourse. This line of research characterizes both synchronic and diachronic studies (e.g., Dixon, 1972; Givón, 1976, 1979a, 1979b; Hopper, 1982; Hopper & Thompson, 1980; Sankoff & Brown, 1976). Even within autonomous theories of grammar, there have been some attempts at utilizing discourse notions—see, for instance, Chomsky's (1977) introduction of the node 'topic' in the phrase structure rules of a generative grammar.

Most of these studies, however, have tended to conceive of discourse from a strictly structural or psychological perspective and not from a broader sociocultural perspective. Thus, for instance, the notion of 'topic', a key concept in many early contributions to discourse analysis, has usually been defined by referring to the position that a certain nominal may take with respect to a certain predicate, namely, the tendency for topics to appear in sentence-initial position (e.g., Creider, 1979; Givón, 1976, 1979a; Hawkinson & Hyman, 1974; MacWhinney, 1977), or by introducing psychological notions such as memory, consciousness, center of attention, and involvement (Chafe, 1976, 1979, 1980; Clark & Haviland, 1977; Li & Thompson, 1976). While most of these studies discuss the relation of speaker to hearer, the relation is either textual or cognitive but not sociological. Speaker and hearer are related in terms of dimensions of information processing but not in terms of the social function that they carry out or in terms of their cooperative construction of reality.

The questions asked are often the following: Is the conveyed information shared or nonshared, old or new, conventionally or conversationally implicable for the participants engaged in a particular discourse?

Several studies on word order patterns have, however, shown that it is possible and, in fact, profitable, to look at the sequence of elements in actual utterances as the product of structural, perceptual, and social factors.[1] Schieffelin (1981) and Feld and Schieffelin (1981) have shown that in Kaluli, a non-Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea, there are two allowable word orders (in transitive sentences with three full constituents): OBJECT–SUBJECT–VERB (OSV) and SUBJECT–OB-JECT–VERB (SOV). On the basis of naturalistic data from household interaction, it is demonstrated that the choice between the two word order patterns is not only conditioned by which element is in focus, but also by the particular genre and speech act in which the utterance is produced. The word order OSV is preferred in making requests, teasing, and tattling, while SOV is preferred in reporting or announcing action and in narratives and stories. Duranti and Ochs (1979) have shown that in Italian (as spoken in Rome among friends and colleagues), word order is sensitive to sequential organization of turns in conversation (see also Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). So-called left dislocations—nominals that appear to the left of their unmarked position with a pronominal copy in the same sentence—are often found in turn-initial position and seem to be used as a warrant for gaining access to the floor. This is particularly true in multiparty conversation and in the course of decision making, where there is disagreement or need for foregrounding an assessment. Thus, the following transcript of an advanced linguistic seminar at the University of Rome, in which ten people participated, is laced wih left dislocations. In this example, members of the seminar are discussing whether or not the verb *fuggire*, 'to escape', can take a sentential complement. At this point, Speaker V introduces the term *rifuggire*. Once introduced, it is repeated by Speakers L, R, and F as they try to gain access to the floor. The last turn containing *rifuggire* is a left dislocation— *rifuggire già ce l'abbiamo* 'rifuggire we already have it (in our list of verbs)'—and closes the discussion.

(1)
    A: (. . .) *"fuggire da:l far qualcosa"*   *non mi sembra*
                escape from doing something   not to-me seems

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[1] An integrated and interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse has been proposed by researchers with fairly different interests and backgrounds, for example, Duranti and Ochs, 1979; Hymes, 1981; van Dijk, 1981.

non mi ┌sembra┐ buon italiano.
not to-me│seems │ good Italian

F: └*No.*   │
                 No   │

V: └*Ce l'avresti con)   "rifuggi┌re"*
                          with-it it would have reescape│

L: └*"Rifuggir┌e"*
                                                           Reescape │

R: └(??)

F: └*Ri-*
                                                                       Re-

ri-rifuggire" già┌   ce l'abbiamo.
re-reescape$_i$ alre│dy it$_i$ (we) have

A: └*Allora niente "fuggire."*
                 Then   no   escape

Translation

A: (. . .) "Fuggire dal far qualcosa" it doesn't seem good Italian.
F: No.
V: (You could do it with) "rifuggire".
L: "Rifuggire."
R: (??)
F: "Ri-ri-rifuggire" we already have it.
A: Then "fuggire" should be left out.

The relevance of social context of the type illustrated above is part of a vast array of sociocultural dimensions that enter in the very definition of discourse. In this chapter, I examine some of these dimensions by framing my discussion within the goals and orientations of the ethnographic approach advocated by Gumperz and Hymes (1964, 1972). I thus consider discourse as it relates to and is constructed by particular aspects of social organization and speakers' cultural constructions of the world.

To better understand the theoretical and methodological foundations of a sociocultural study of discourse, we must place this orientation within the more general context of the study of verbal behavior as defined by social and cultural anthropologists.

Social and cultural anthropologists studying discourse have manifested two main concerns. The first one is a continuous effort to relate a given text to its context. This concern is well represented in the following

excerpt from Turner's review of Calame-Griaule's (1965) study of the Dogons' theory of language.

> Unless we present texts in terms of the circumstances under which they were obtained, from whom they were taken, and the social and psychological characteristics of their narrators, we are in danger of selecting concordant features from disparate accounts and producing a logically satisfactory synthesis which would perhaps be unintelligible to most members of the indigenous culture. (Turner, 1974, p. 159)

We could summarize this attitude by saying that for an anthropological study of discourse, one needs something more than texts. One needs an ethnography of discourse.

The second concern is the need for a characterization of speech not simply as a tool for describing the world but also as a tool for changing the world. In its most extreme formulation, this view goes back to Malinowski's concept of "language as an instrument of action," which he had first defined as characteristic of "primitive languages" as opposed to "civilized" ones (Malinowski, 1923) but later accepted as typical of language in general (Malinowski, 1935.)[2] The latter view is what we might call the pragmatic view of language. Such a view is currently reflected in sociolinguistics, which has distinguished itself from mainstream structural linguistics[3] by not favoring the so-called referential (or descriptive) uses of language over its social ones (see Halliday, 1973; Hymes, 1974; Myers & Brenneis, 1984; Romaine, 1981; Silverstein, 1976b, 1977). To make propositions about the world—what is usually called the referential or descriptive function of language—is seen by sociolinguists as only one of the many functions of speech and not necessarily the one through which other aspects of speech—the social ones—can be defined or explained.

The interaction between these two concerns, for a truly ethnographic study of discourse and for an explicit consideration of a wide range of functions realized by speech, has been often recognized by social and cultural anthropologists. We owe in fact to Malinowski, the father of modern ethnography, the notion of 'context of situation' (Malinowski, 1923) through which to understand the pragmatic uses of speech. This notion was later echoed by Hymes' (1964; 1972a) notion of speech event. Furthermore, symbolic forms have often been described as affecting

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[2] The recognition of Malinowski's role in drawing attention to the pragmatic functions of language does not imply an acceptance of his (at times) extremely behavioristic concept of meaning. For a criticism of Malinowski's theory of meaning, see Henson, 1974; Pignato, 1981; and Sahlins, 1976. With the exception of the British linguist J. R. Firth, Malinowski had no followers among linguists (Hymes, 1964b; Lyons, 1966, 1977).

[3] For the purpose of this discussion, I am adopting Lepschy's (1970) view of generative grammar as a continuation of what is traditionally called "structural linguistics."

people's perception of the world, their behavior, and their very sense of social structure (Bernstein 1971; Cook-Gumperz, 1975; Dolgin, Kemnitzer, & Schneider, 1977; Lévi-Strauss, 1963, ch. 10; Whorf, 1956).

A Bridge

The absence of explicit and broader sociocultural concerns typical of most linguists' analyses of discourse becomes problematic if we are interested in a discourse grammar that would be something more than sentence grammar one step further (or higher) but would instead lead the way toward a communicative grammar that relates discourse as a linguistic structure and discourse as a social process. At the same time, many anthropologists do not seem interested in exploiting the potential richness of detailed linguistic analysis and thus fail to integrate their ethnographic knowledge with the linguists' knowledge and expertise in analyzing structural patterns of discourse. Anyone who starts from speech and tries to reach out to social context knows that it is a long and hazardous road; the more one gets involved in social interaction and cultural values the more difficult it becomes to look at the linguistic system as a separate code. One of Goffman's (1964) metaphors well illustrates these difficulties. He compared becoming interested in social context to crossing a bridge: When one gets to the other side, one often finds himself too busy to want to go back. It is essential, however, to have someone running back and forth across the bridge. It is important to try to maintain a link between discourse form and social conduct, between language and other symbolic systems, between Chomsky's ideal speaker–hearer and the actual members of a speech community. Those involved in the analysis of discourse seem ideal candidates for such an important role in interdisciplinary osmosis.

The question remains of how to provide a context for such interaction among different aspects and different approaches to the study of discourse. To accomplish such a task, the student of discourse must have access to units of analysis that would allow for different kinds of data (viz., linguistic expressions, social beliefs, social organization) to be integrated in a coherent and meaningful way. Whereas structural linguistics abounds in analytic categories (as well as in theoretical models), it has been difficult to establish useful and easily identifiable units for language use in social life. The task becomes even harder when we want to be able to move in and out of texts, not only to relate the parts (e.g., sentences, paragraphs) to each other but also to relate the text to its sociocultural context (e.g., its purposes, the invoked norms of interpretation, and social identities of the participants).

I suggest that, as a way of integrating linguistic, textual, and further sociocultural knowledge, we follow Hymes' (1964a) idea of starting from speech events. I will thus discuss some of the basic issues and concerns for a sociocultural study of discourse, relying on Hymes' (1972a) SPEAK-ING model. Though it is not supported by a theory of verbal interaction, such a model indicates some basic prerequisites of a theory of language use that aims at integrating and comparing, across societies, the different levels of linguistic and broader sociocultural knowledge employed by speakers in the construction, use, and interpretation of discourse units in daily social interaction.

The rest of this chapter is organized in the following way: In the next section I briefly outline Hymes' original program for an ethnographic study of language use and introduce the concept of speech event. I then discuss the basic components of a speech event and review some of the most salient contributions to an understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of discourse form and content. Finally, I draw some conclusions about possible directions for future research.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

Before discussing the notion of 'speech event', it is necessary to outline the basic theoretical and methodological concerns of the ethnographic approach as originally defined by Hymes.

Trying to integrate the tools and goals of several disciplines, including cultural anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism, Hymes (1962) called for an ethnography of speaking—later (Hymes, 1964a) to become an ethnography of communication:

> such an approach cannot simply take separate results from linguistics, psychology, sociology, ethnology, as given and seek to correlate them, however partially useful such work is. It must call attention to the need for fresh kinds of data, to the need to investigate directly the use of language in contexts of situations so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity, patterns which escape separate studies of grammar, of personality, of religion, of kinship and the like, each abstracting from the patterning of speech activity as such into some other frame of reference. . . . such an approach cannot take linguistic form, a given code, or speech itself, as frame of reference. It must take as context a community, investigating its communicative habits as a whole, so that any given use of channel and code takes its place as but part of the resources upon which the members of the community draw. (Hymes, 1964, pp. 2–3).

For Hymes, speech must be examined within the larger frame of reference of communication, which in turn, must be described through ethnography. As pointed out by Agar (1980), ethnography is an ambiguous term. It

can refer to a process (viz., doing ethnography) or to a product (viz., an ethnography of certain people). As a process, ethnography traditionally involves a number of techniques for the description of a culture from the point of view of its members (Goodenough, 1964; Malinowski, 1922; Spradley, 1980). As a product, an ethnography is usually a monograph that covers many different aspects of the social life of a particular group. To say that the study of language must come under the more general goal of an ethnography of ways of speaking in a given speech community means at least two things: (1) One must use ethnographic techniques, for example, participant observation, interviews with the participants about norms and expectations about the use of speech, extensive recording of people's verbal activities across a number of different situations, transcription *in situ* of the recorded material with the assistance of members of the community able to understand the particular way of speaking used by the participants, (2) One has ethnographic concerns for the description of the form and content of verbal interaction. The latter involves, among other things, a concern for the way in which the participants themselves see their actions as well as for a culture-specific definition of the activities or some of their aspects (viz., ways of speaking) being studied (Agar, 1975; Basso, 1979; Fitzgerald, 1975; Mandelbaum, 1949; Myers, 1982).

Ethnographic concerns imply a different object of study from what is traditionally defined by mainstream linguistic theory. The field of ethnography of communication or ethnography of speaking (Bauman & Sherzer, 1974, 1975; Gumperz & Hymes, 1964, 1972; Hymes, 1974; Saville-Troike, 1982) has represented an attempt at defining a different object of inquiry along the lines suggested by Hymes (1962, 1964a). This enterprise has been succinctly characterized by Bauman and Sherzer:

> Grammars deal essentially with the structure of languages as abstract and self-contained codes, ethnographies with the patterns and structures of sociocultural life. There is much to be learned through correlation or conflation of these differentially focused products of linguistic and anthropological inquiry, but the ethnography of speaking centers its attention upon an entirely new order of information, bridging the gap between what is conventionally found in grammars on the one hand and ethnographies on the other: its subject matter is speaking, the use of language in the conduct of social life. (1975, pp. 95–96).

As Hymes wrote in reacting to Chomsky's (1965) definition of competence, a theory of language, as it is used by normal people in their daily lives, must go beyond the mere description of grammatical sentences:

> We have . . . to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish

a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language with the other codes of communicative conduct (Hymes, 1972b, pp. 277–278)

It is this more sophisticated competence, that is, the ability to interpret and use language in socially and culturally appropriate ways, that Hymes has called 'communicative competence'[4] (see also Gumperz, 1981).

Within the ethnographic approach, the basic unit of analysis for the study of language use in a given speech community is the communicative event. The traditional trend of taking linguistic concepts to analyze social interaction or social structure is thus reversed[5] by adopting a social unit or, rather, a sociocultural construct, the event, as a unit for studying speech.

SPEECH SITUATIONS AND SPEECH EVENTS

An understanding of everyday language implies an understanding of the kinds of activities in which speech, in its various forms and contents,

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[4] Hymes' definition of the scope of linguistics as the study of communicative competence is actually close to that of other linguists. Thus, for instance, Fillmore wrote "I take the subject matter of linguistics, in its grammatical, semantic and pragmatic subdivisions, to include the full catalogue of knowledge which the speakers of a language can be said to possess about the structure of the sentences of their language, and their knowledge about the appropriate use of these sentences. I take the special explanatory task of linguistics to be that of discovering the principles which underlie such knowledge" (1971: p. 1).

[5] For linguistics students it might be necessary to mention a few names and concepts to briefly illustrate the tremendous impact that linguistics has had on anthropology in the last 30 years or so. Pike's (1954) distinction between emic and etic, a dichotomy derived from the terms phonemic and phonetic, soon became a key word in American cultural anthropology, as attested by the rapid flourishing, in the 1960s and early 1970s, of the so-called ethnoscience or new ethnography, an approach to the study of cultural systems strongly influenced by linguistic terminology and techniques, above all componential analysis (Eastman, 1975; pp. 85–104; Langness, 1974, pp. 115–117; Tyler, 1969). Lévi-Strauss' debts to structural linguistics, mainly through Jakobson, are probably well known to almost everyone. A quotation from one of his early books, however, might well illustrate the supremacy of linguistics over anthropology, at least as perceived by one of the leading figures in contemporary social anthropology: "Although unquestionably one of the social sciences, linguistics has a very special place among them. It is not a social science just as the other, but that which has by far made the greatest progress; the only one, in fact, which can claim the name of science and which has succeeded, at one and the same time, in formulating a positive method and in knowing thoroughly the nature of the facts subject to its analysis" (Lévi-Strauss, 1964, p. 40).

is used by speakers in the context of daily interaction. A systematic ethnographic analysis of particular activities (Levinson, 1979) or communicative events (Hymes, 1964a) gives us an account of those features of communicative competence that are relevant for the study of discourse patterns in the conduct of social life.

Within the larger class of communicative events, Hymes (1972a) proposed to distinguish between speech situations and speech events.

Although there are many human activities in which speech occurs, only in a subclass of them does speech or, more specifically, the rules for verbal interaction define or constitute the interaction itself. In a class lecture, a trial, a Ph.D. defense, an interview, or a phone conversation, speech is crucial and the event would not be said to be taking place without it. Hymes calls this kind of event a 'speech event'. In many other cases, speech has a minor role, subordinate to other codes or forms of interaction. Hymes refers to the latter type of event as a 'speech situation'. Examples of speech situations are most sports events, a bikeride with a friend, going to the movies, and demonstrating in front of an embassy. Of course, there is a lot of variation, and speech can (and, in some cases, must) be used in all of these events, but speech does not define them. On the other hand, in such events as a class lecture, a trial, or an interview, talk must occur in order for the interaction to be considered an occurrence of such event types.

The distinction between speech situation and speech event can also be found within what might otherwise be viewed as the same event. Thus, one might want to distinguish between the speech situation 'train trip', which may or may not involve verbal interaction, and the specific speech events that might occur within such a situation, like, for instance, a conversation between passengers, the telling of a joke or story, the exchange of greetings at the beginning and end of the trip, or an exchange of compliments.

I propose eliminating the term 'speech situation' and using 'speech event' as a theoretical notion, referring to a perspective of analysis rather than to an inherent property of events. The perspective I am referring to is that of an analyst looking at a strip of social interaction from the point of view of the speech in it. This view may not be a new one. Gumperz' statement that "the speech event is to the analysis of verbal interaction what the sentence is to grammar" (Gumperz, 1972a, pp. 16–17) can be interpreted as meaning that speech events are abstract entities that exist only in the analyst's descriptive framework. They are, like sentences, types, not tokens (Lyons, 1972). This means that we should not expect to find speech events out there in the real world in the same

way in which we should not expect to find sentences, or predicates, or adverbs in texts (we only find linguistic signs that can be classified in terms of such analytical notions). We do expect, however, to use the notion of speech event to make sense out of discourse patterns found in verbal interaction.

Given the ethnographic perspective adopted here, I assume that the event units identified by the analyst have a psychological reality for the actors (i.e., speakers) and are culturally recognized or recognizable units. How they can be recognized will be discussed below in the sections on ends and on spatiotemporal boundaries.

The notion of speech event presented here must be seen as an intended bridge between the macro- and the microlevels of sociocultural analysis. In the same vein, the order of things that I deal with represents in most part an intermediate level between the two poles of sociocultural order, namely, the modes of production, transaction, and exchange that characterize a particular society, and some particular processes of interpersonal communication, namely, daily verbal interaction. Social anthropologists would argue that it is important not to confuse "the surface forms manifest in a social universe at a particular historical moment with the structural principles that give rise to them" (Comaroff & Robert, 1981, p. 32). It is a basic goal of an ethnographic approach along the lines indicated in this chapter to try to make sense out of this complex, certainly problematic relationship. The speech event, discussed hereafter, seems a good candidate, although not necessarily the only one, for such an enterprise.

A SPEECH EVENT MODEL

On the basis of Jakobson's (1960) model of six constitutive factors in any speech event,[6] Hymes proposed, in successive versions (Hymes, 1962, 1964a, 1972a, 1974), a more extensive list of possible components of a speech event to be taken into consideration in analyzing language use. Such a list was originally conceived as an 'etic' grid, a tentative universal set of features that would provide a salient way of defining the interaction between language and sociocultural context. It was meant to allow for comparison within and across societies, leaving open to each ethnographer the task of making the original scheme into an 'emic' de-

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[6] The original six factors or components are (1) addresser, (2) addressee, (3) message, (4) contact, (5) context, (6) code. To each of them corresponds a different function of language: (1) emotive, (2) conative, (3) poetic, (4) phatic, (5) referential, (6) metalingual. See Lyons (1977) for an historical account of the introduction of these notions in linguistics.

scription that would capture what was relevant to the participants in the event under discussion.[7]

A total of 16 components of speech events was grouped by Hymes into 8 main entries, to be remembered by using the word SPEAKING, as illustrated in the following scheme:

S	(situation)	1.	Setting
		2.	Scene
P	(participants)	3.	Speaker, or sender
		4.	Addressor
		5.	Hearer, or receiver, or audience
		6.	Addressee
E	(ends)	7.	Purposes—outcomes
		8.	Purposes—goals
A	(act sequence)	9.	Message form
		10.	Message content
K	(key)	11.	Key
I	(instrumentalities)	12.	Channel
		13.	Forms of speech
N	(norms)	14.	Norms of interaction
		15.	Norms of interpretation
G	(genres)	16.	Genres

As can be seen from the scheme, in making his descriptive framework more suitable for the complexity of daily verbal interaction, Hymes was forced to abandon the elegant one-to-one correspondence established by Jakobson between components of speech events and functions of language.

In my discussion of the speech event model, I rearrange and redefine some of the components listed above, using some recent contributions to a sociocultural understanding of discourse organization and discourse structure.

DEFINITION OF A SPEECH EVENT

The very characterization of one or more strips of social interaction as an event unit presupposes at least two things: (1) an understanding

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[7] In fact, as pointed out by Philips (1977), researchers have usually assumed that their descriptions of speech events were done according to the native's point of view. Such an assumption, however, has not always been substantiated by the details of the descriptions.

of the type of activity of which the event is an instance, and (2) a spatiotemporal definition of the activity.

Ends

As pointed out by Levinson (1979), among others, to define a social activity we must have an understanding of its goals or ends (see also Castelfranchi & Parisi, 1980).

A distinction must be made, however, between the system's (or societal) goals (e.g., why does the system want me to use titles when I refer to or address certain people) and the actor's purposes (e.g., why do I address certain people using a title in some particular context?). Such a distinction is an old one in the social sciences. In sociology, the contrast between the study of the system's purposes as opposed to the actor's purposes can be epitomized by the contrast between a materialist perspective, that is, seeing the institutions working behind the backs of the actors (the so-called blind forces of society), and Weber's 'method of understanding' (*verstehen*), which was, at least in principle, to look at social actions and their functions in terms of the subjective intentions of the individuals who acted out those actions (see Gerth & Mills, 1946). In cultural anthropology, the most extreme trend in looking at the social and cultural patterns of a community from the perspective of an individual has been represented by the life history approach (Langness & Frank, 1981).

Whereas (British) functionalist anthropologists tended to pay more attention to the system's reasons for a given cultural phenomenon, failing thus to recognize a difference between functions and motives (Langness, 1974, p. 81), contemporary linguists, philosophers of language, and cognitive scientists have tended to couch their discussion of goal-oriented behavior in terms of the individual's goal(s), or, rather, his alleged intentions. Austin's performance analysis and Searle's speech acts theory are emblematic examples of this perspective.

Psycholinguists studying discourse (Castelfranchi & Parisi, 1980) and sociolinguists interested in how to define situation (Brown & Fraser, 1979) have followed a similar trend by adopting cybernetic models, like the 'hierachy of goals' proposed by Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1960). According to this model, a given task is seen as a set of different goals that are embedded in one another. The act of hitting a nail with a hammer is a subgoal of a higher goal, that of hammering the nail in the wall. The act of asking a question like *Do you have the time?* is seen as serving the higher goal of requesting information about the time.

When extended to naturally complex human interaction, however, the hierarchic model is likely to encounter several problems.

For one thing, the hierarchic model blurs the problematic but important distinction drawn by Searle (1965) between the actor's intentions in doing (in this case, with words) something and the conventional meaning of his actions and words. More generally, it is not clear how the hierarchy-of-goals model could recognize the same activity as having different goals according to whether we look at it from the perspective of the actors' interpretations and understanding of their own doings or we look at it from the standpoint of the social and cultural system in which the actors operate (unless we were to decide that, say, individual goals are always embedded in societal goals). In a hierarchy-of-goals model, multireadings are cooccurrent interpretations are possible only if hierarchically ordered. Thus 'talking to the receptionist' must be a subgoal with respect to the more global goal of 'seeing the doctor' (Brown & Fraser, 1979). But such a classification is not always as obvious as it looks. We can easily imagine someone falling in love with the receptionist and going to see the doctor in order to see the receptionist. In this case, we would want to differentiate between the particular goals of the actor and the conventional goal structure of the event 'going to the doctor', with respect to which 'seeing the receptionist' can still be seen as a subgoal of (or a condition for) 'seeing the doctor'. Other, more problematic cases can be found.

Finally, all the above mentioned approaches assume that someone's (either the actor's or the observer's) interpretations of certain actions and words will be not only unique but also constant over time. The latter assumption can be rejected on several grounds. Goodwin (1981), for instance, has shown that, in spontaneous conversational interaction, the illocutionary force of an utterance as projected by the speaker's words and intonation can change during the utterance itself. Thus, for instance, in one of the examples he discusses, when one of the participants realizes that the intended recipient of her utterance is not attending and, in fact, is already engaged in some other recognizable activity, she then modifies the illocutionary force of the on-going utterance to make it suitable to the new recipient. An original offer of information to someone who does not know the rules of a card game is changed into a request for verification from someone who already knows how to play (Goodwin, 1981, pp. 150–151). One could not simply say, however, that the speaker has completely changed her goal in the middle of her utterance—something that could still be handled by the hierarchy-of-goals approach. We must instead recognize that the speaker is reorienting her utterance to make it suitable

for a new recipient while also maintaining its relevance for the original one.

A truly sociocultural perspective on goal-oriented behavior must handle the tension between verbal interaction as a cooperative achievement by all the participants and verbal interaction as social activity that can be understood only through the acceptance and interpretation of independent social norms and cultural expectations (Cicourel, 1974). Hymes' original distinction between societal goals and individual goals must then be preserved, although some refinements seem necessary.

Spatiotemporal Organization of an Event

The very definition of a speech event presupposes the possibility of determining when and where such an event takes place. Further, anyone who has ever looked at actual events from the point of view of the verbal interaction that goes on in them knows that the internal spatial and temporal organization of an event is always relevant to speaking patterns within the event (Philips, 1977; Yamamoto, 1979).

The two subcomponents 'setting' and 'scene' were introduced to deal with such temporal and spatial aspects of events. Both of them refer to the time and place of a verbal interaction, with setting capturing the actual physical circumstances of the interaction (e.g., at 10 o'clock in the morning, at the ticket counter of United Airlines at the L. A. airport), and scene referring to the psychological, culturally bound definition of the setting (e.g., buying a plane ticket for a business trip).

Although both the actors and the observers must assume the existence of some physical dimensions of an event, it should be clear that, by having to represent them through natural language and conventional ways of defining time and space, we are always very likely to end up with culturally bound descriptions. What is 'afternoon' for one culture, might be 'evening' for another; what could be described as 'the front door' by the member of one society might be described as 'the back door' by a member of another society. Finally, even within the same community, we might find differences according to whether, for instance, we take as a point of reference the common person's knowledge or the expert's knowledge.

Hymes' scene subcomponent can be integrated with what Goffman (1974) has called spatial and temporal boundaries, and the subcomponent setting with what I call "boundary markers." Such boundaries should be taken to be universal features of social events across societies, their existence (or psychological reality) being crucial for the participants to

conduct themselves in the interaction and for the analysts to isolate the object of their inquiry (Philips, 1977).

Such boundaries should be defined from the perspective of the members of the society one is describing. Attention to boundaries and their conventional markers should help us provide accurate classifications of different types of events within and across societies.

Types of Boundaries and Boundary Markers

A few distinctions are necessary within the two general categories of temporal and spatial boundaries. First of all, we must distinguish between external and internal boundaries. External temporal boundaries refer to the beginning and ending of the event and correspond to Goffman's (1974, pp. 255–261) opening and closing temporal boundaries. Internal temporal boundaries I take to refer to potential division of the event into parts or episodes (Goffman instead reserves the same term for "time outs").

External spatial boundaries define the space within which the event takes place or, rather, the way in which participants perceive or represent to themselves spatial organization with respect to the outside. Spatial distinctions that participants make with respect to one another are defined by internal spatial boundaries. Thus, for instance, in the event 'class lecture', one would want to distinguish between the external spatial boundaries, corresponding to the boundaries of what is considered the classroom, outside of which there is no event 'class lecture' going on, and the internal spatial boundaries, such as the different areas allocated for the students to sit and the teachers to stand or sit or move around while they are talking.

Finally, one needs to distinguish between boundaries and boundary markers (with only the latter corresponding to what Goffman calls "brackets"). The distinction is meant to separate abstract, psychological, and cultural dimensions of experience (boundaries) from the overt, conventional ways of signaling the existence of such dimensions (boundary markers). In a class lecture, for example, one may say that the external spatial boundaries are conventionally marked by the walls of the room and the door or doorway (if the door is left open), and the internal spatial boundaries are usually marked by the teacher's desk area, the area in front of the blackboard, that is, the area not occupied by the students.

External temporal boundaries, that is, the beginning and closing of an interaction, are usually marked by conventional markers, which can be either verbal or nonverbal or a combination of the two. Thus, for instance, at many grocery stores in the United States, the cashier signals the beginning of the interaction with a particular customer through direct

eye gaze and a conventional *Hi!* The interaction is concluded with a conventional *Have a nice day!* Any attempt by the customer to interact with the cashier outside of those boundaries runs the risk of being ignored.

The relation between spatial and temporal boundary markers is also important, given that, for instance, spatial positioning can be used to mark temporal boundaries and temporal boundaries can redefine spatial dimensions. Merritt (1980) discusses how, in service encounters, "the customer's entrance into the service area, and particularly his positioning himself at the service post, is the first step in the initiation of a service encounter." She further remarks that the use of spatial arrangement "is important to the overall structure of the service encounter and the continuities it preserves with respect to norms of social interaction generally" (p. 97).

An emblematic example of the culture-specific complexities of spatial and temporal arrangements in social interaction is provided by Frake's (1975) discussion of how to enter a Yakan house:

> Unlike our own culture, in which we have special settings for many kinds of events—classrooms for classes, churches for religious rites, law courts for litigation, concert halls for music—among the Yakan a single structure, the house, provides a setting for a great variety of social occasions. But a house, even a one-roomed Yakan house, is not just a space. It is a structured sequence of settings where social events are differentiated not only by the position in which they occur but also by the positions the actors have moved through to get there and the manner in which they have made those moves. (p. 37)

To move on from a descriptive grid toward an explanatory model, we must examine the possible correlates between boundaries and some specific discourse features.

First of all, the very idea of looking at speech events as discourse units defined by spatial and temporal boundaries allows for a new classification of events or, rather, event types. We should then look at the nature and content of boundary markers to see the extent to which participants use them to define or redefine their own interaction or, to ask with Goffman, "What's going on here?" Ritual events or formal events, for instance, might be characterized by highly elaborated and relatively long boundary markers (in some cases, the boundary markers might even be seen as events in themselves). More generally, events that are conceived of as different from other everyday activity, for example, sacred events, might need particularly elaborate external boundary markers. Thus, spatiotemporal demarcation or seclusion is typically used in ritual events for symbolizing differentiation from the ordinary or transition from one status to another (Durkheim, 1915; Leach, 1976; Turner, 1974; Van Gennep, 1909).

One might want to investigate the extent to which discourse patterns around as well as within boundary markers are different from the rest of the interaction. Thus, Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) study of telephone conversations suggest that speakers need more cooperative work to close than to open a conversation. In my own work on the Samoan *fono*—a political and judiciary assembly of title holders in a traditional village— I found that whereas the beginning of the event is sharply marked and highly predictable in its format and content, the end is less predictable and generally more open to negotiation. This asymmetry is reflected, at the discourse level, by the use of a well-defined oratorical speech genre at the beginning of the meeting and by a gradual return to more ordinary conversational style toward the end (Duranti, 1981). Irvine's (1974) discussion of Wolof greetings similarly suggests that the beginning salutation is more predictable and generally less open to individual variation than the rest of the interaction. The tendency for beginnings to be more predictable than endings appears to be characteristic across societies and certainly something worthwhile considering for further study.

Let us look now at some other dimensions of the speech event that seem relevant for the study of discourse within a sociocultural perspective.

Participants

As apparent in the scheme reproduced above, Hymes did not think that speaker and hearer would be sufficient for describing verbal interaction (as opposed to, say, speech). Consequently, the traditional speaker–hearer dyad was expanded into four categories of participants: speaker, addressor, hearer, addressee (see also Goffman, 1976).

In the social life of any speech community we can easily find instances of verbal interaction in which we need more than the two participants (speaker and hearer) to adequately describe what goes on. Let me illustrate this with a few examples.

In many societies, mothers often speak for young children. In middle-class American society, for instance, when an adult meets a friend with a child, it is considered appropriate to show interest in the child and engage in a brief conversation with him even if he is too little to talk. "What's your name?" people often ask while looking straight into a baby's eyes. At the point, the accompanying caregiver is expected to speak for the baby and answer the question. As described by Schieffelin (1979), among the Kaluli people of Mount Bosavi, in Papua New Guinea, speaking for a young child is a common type of activity in which mothers engage as a conscious way of teaching the child to speak and as a less-

conscious strategy for directing older siblings to see infants as social beings with already developed identities, ideas, and intentions.

> Within a week or so after a child is born, the mother acts in ways that seem intended to involve the child . . . in dialogues and interactions not only with her but with others as well. Mothers hold the infant up, faced outward to other people, and while moving the child as if it were conversing with a third person, speak for the child in a special, high-pitched, nasalized register. (Schieffelin, 1979, p. 106)

In order to understand how such an interaction proceeds and how we can make sense of its linguistic features (e.g., the high pitch, the content of what is said), we must see the mother as only the speaker of the message and the baby as the addressor. Failing to recognize this interaction as one involving three participants—the speaker (the mother), the addressor (infant), and the addressee–hearer (usually an older sibling)—would impinge on our ability to describe what is going on and to relate this type of speech event to other aspects of Kaluli verbal behavior in particular and to their cultural system in general. Thus, for instance, the high pitch and the nasalized voice are used as keys (see below) to convey the metamessage that the mother is speaking for the baby; at the same time, the syntax and lexicon of the mother's utterances are not in baby talk (Ferguson, 1977), but are rather more like those of an older sibling (a three- or four-year-old). How can this be explained? First of all, we learn from Schieffelin that Kaluli speakers do not have baby talk as part of their repertoire; the absence of baby talk turns out to be not uncommon among the languages of the world (Ochs, 1982; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1982). Second, speaking somewhat like a three- or four-year old means to speak like the most common addressee of this kind of event, namely an older sibling. The imitation of some of the features of the addressee's speech is often used across languages to suggest and invoke solidarity as well as to improve understanding. It would also seem that in this case the mother uses this strategy as a way of establishing a bond between the two siblings.

Further examples of interactions in which one needs reference to a more complex network than the speaker–hearer dyad include talk to or from the dead (Feld, 1982; Keesing, 1979), spirit possessions (Schieffelin, 1981), and so-called mother-in-law (Dixon, 1972) or brother-in-law languages of Australia (Haviland, 1979a, 1979b), traditional oratory (see the papers in Block, 1975; Sherzer, 1974). In many societies, for instance, it is common to think of professional orators as speakers who often act on behalf of some higher-ranking individuals (e.g., chiefs). In such cases, like the Kaluli mother mentioned before, the orator is the speaker but not the addressor. A clear example of this kind of situation is offered

by Firth's description of the selection of speakers at a Tikopia public assembly (*fono*):

> In general Tikopia chiefs do not orate or address public assemblies; they give instruction to their maru [the chief's main executive] to speak for them. They "hand over the speech" to their mouthpiece, and commonly are not even present at a fono where their orders are promulgated. (Firth, 1975, p. 35)

According to Firth, this procedure introduces a systematic ambiguity in the act of speaking and its possible consequences: the speechmaker cannot be held completely responsible for what he says and the chief avoids public face loss by not directly witnessing possible criticism or murmurs of dissent.

The identity of the hearer–receiver–audience also often needs to be parted. In political speeches in western societies, for instance, speakers often tell their supporters and sympathizers what is meant for their political opponents (e.g., answers to criticism from the opposition, clarification of earlier statements). Similarly, according to Brenneis (1980), in Indo-Fijian political speech performances, one must distinguish between primary and secondary audience:

> The primary audience is composed of the individuals or group at whom the performance is chiefly aimed, that is, those whom the performer hopes to influence directly. The secondary audience includes others who are present. It is not merely a residual category, however, as the secondary audience provides both evaluation and an element of control. The spectators limit and shape the performance. (p. 8)

All of the above examples show that there are speech events for which we need subtler distinctions than speaker–hearer. Despite the several cases cited above and the many more that could be found, it is still worthwile considering whether the situation in which the speaker is the addressor and the hearer is the addressee should in fact be considered as the unmarked situation, and what kind of variation is found across events and societies. This is an aspect of verbal interaction that should be possible to relate to theories of personalities and of intentionality.

It is not uncommon, for instance, that even when there are some clear clues for the nonidentification of speaker with addressor (or that of hearer with addressee), some ambiguity still remains as to what extent the speaker is in fact also the addressor or as to what extent the hearer is in fact also an addressee. It is common to get angry at people who report bad news to us, and a fair amount of self-control and rationalization must be used not to see them as included in the party who sent the message. Although it seems fairly universal to see human beings as actors rather than as instruments (this is at least the case in the linguistic coding

of agency across languages; see Silverstein, 1976a), cultures vary with respect to the extent to which an individual is, across situations, considered liable for his own actions.

Act Sequences

Under the heading 'act sequence', Hymes grouped two aspects of verbal interaction: 'message form' and 'message content'. Saville-Troike (1982, p. 137) suggested interpreting act sequences as separate from form and content and as referring to sequential aspects of communicative events, namely, turns in conversation. In my discussion, I follow her suggestion.

Conversational Interaction

Since the early 1970s a great deal of research has been carried out on several aspects of the sequential organization of turns in conversation. Such research has represented a real breakthrough in our understanding of the mechanisms used by speakers in sustaining a conversational interaction (Goodwin, 1981; Psathas, 1979; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Schenkein, 1978). At the same time, conversation analysts have claimed to assume no predetermined social structure and have focused instead exclusively on the emergent structure of patterns of interaction. This method gives us very good insights into the kind of work that language performs in interaction, but it avoids relating the details of conversational behavior to other aspects of the social organization in which conversationalists participate. As Hymes once put it,

> Admittedly, it is fascinating to discover the richness of speech, coming from a disciplinary background that has neglected it [sociology]; but it is a bit absurd to treat transcribed tapes of interaction as if they were the Dead Sea Scrolls. When a society is gone, we must glean all we can from texts that remain. . . . But . . . it is a bit absurd to invent an amateur philology to deal with the life outside one's door. (Hymes, 1974)

Conversation analysis describes speakers as people who display an ideology and a practice of interaction in which gaps, overlaps, and errors must be avoided, with a preference for self-monitoring and self-control over other-monitoring and other-control. One might ask to what extent this notion of 'self' is part of the analyst's ideology and to what extent it is part of the participants' ideology. From an ethnographic perspective, it is also crucial to ask whether the norms defined by conversation analysts can be considered universals of conversational interaction across societies or should be reframed as culture specific. Philips (1983), for

instance, has argued that American Indians do not have exactly the same norms for turn-taking management that Anglos do:

> In everyday conversations the lesser extent of local management of topics is most apparent in Warm Springs Indians' responses to questions. While some questions are answered immediately, not all are. There does not seem to be the obligation that Anglos abide by to give some kind of response. Questions are often answered some time after they have been asked. There is accordingly less syntactic linking between a question and the utterance of the next speaker overall. (Philips, 1983, pp. 54–55)

Conversation analysis portrays overlapping in conversation as competitive (Sacks *et al.*, 1974). Brenneis (1982) has however suggested that overlaps in Fiji Indian gossip sessions should not necessarily be interpreted as jockeying for turns but rather as a strategy used to allow for a continuing flow of talk from speaker to speaker. We have here an example of something that, although similar from a structural or sequential point of view (both in English conversation and in Fiji Indian conversation overlaps are relatively rare and brief), turns out to be different in terms of its significance for the actors.

In Duranti and Ochs (1982), it is suggested that certain aspects of social structure may enter in the organization of other-correction or other-repair. In particular, we argued that in Samoan verbal interaction, across a number of different social contexts, there is a dispreference for higher-ranking parties to correct others. This aspect of verbal interaction seems consistent with the Samoan view of high-ranking individuals as the least mobile and generally emotionally distant participants. In fact, even in the village school, a student's mistake is usually not corrected by the teacher but by other students (prompted by the teacher).

Finally, another interesting case from a Polynesian society is represented by Besnier's (1982) study of the organization of repair in Tuvaluan informal conversation. Besnier points out that, in adult–adult interaction, despite the preference for self-initiation of repairs (Schegloff *et al.*, (1977), speakers often strategically invite the hearer's repair initiation as a way of adding drama and suspense, to stimulate the hearer's attention and involvement in the narrative, and, often, to emphasize the scandalous nature of what has been said (Besnier, 1982). Here are a couple of revealing examples:

(2)

K: ((whisper)) *Ae (muimui) hoki naa   a   te- te:* ┌ ((chuckle))
                and follow   also there Foc the the │

F: ((whisper, smiling))   └ *A ai?*
                                             Foc who

        (0.2)

K: ((high pitch)) *Afasene mo   Faaogaa.*
             Afasene and Faaogaa

Translation:

K: And then comes along uh the- the- ((chuckle))
F: Who?
    (0.2)
K: Afasene and Faaogga!

(3)

→   A: *((fast)) A (ko) ou ta(a)gata ne olo ki te ulugaa fonu.*
           And Foc your men Pst go to the pair-of turtles
        (0.8)

→   L: *A   ai?*
       Foc who
       (0.2)

A: *Haa   Teak(e). (0.1) Teake mo Filipo.*
    group Teake   Teake and Filipo

Translation

A: And they went to catch the two turtles.
    (0.8)
L: Who?
    (0.2)
A: Teake's group. (0.1) Teake and Filipo.

A sociocultural approach to the study of discourse invites precisely this kind of detailed and extensive recording and transcription of verbal interaction accompanied by a genuine understanding of the actors' goals and practices. To those who might object to the risks of rich interpretation, one should point out that often enough similar signs carry with them different meanings and what appears to be the same on a transcript need not be the same in people's intentions and evaluations. The analyst's involvement with interpretive procedures is dangerous but inevitable. The important point is to be aware of the risks, rather than hide under the cover of objective knowledge and observable (on a transcript) facts.

Message Form and Message Content

The stress that Hymes placed on form seemed more directed toward anthropologists than toward linguists, who have made their profession almost entirely coincide with the study of message forms. This is so true that even the early work of Labov, one of the most influential American

sociolinguists, followed the structural linguists' trend by concentrating on the study of variable forms, that is, alternative ways of saying the "same thing" (Labov, 1969). We owe to Lavandera (1978) the first clear statement on the impossibility of extending such a study from phonological to syntactic variation. Lavandera's later work (1981, in press) demonstrated that perfect paraphrases exist only under very particular circumstances, if at all. In real life, change of form corresponds to change in the message being communicated. This means that a sociolinguistic study of discourse variants must rely on a study of the sociocultural contexts of speech in a given speech community. In normal social life, knowing what to say and knowing how to say it are intimately related (Hymes, 1972a, p. 59).

One could ideally interpret form as comprising everything one might want to read on a transcript of a given speech event. Such a definition, however, would not recognize that syntagmatic relationships (among the linguistic signs of a given text) are only a very small part of what one needs to know in order to move from form to content, the rest being embodied in the paradigmatic relationships between the existing (i.e., uttered) signs and their possible and impossible alternatives. For this reason, it is important to be aware of the need to always document a series of events, so that our reading of any transcript can be supplemented by the knowledge of a range of possible realizations and acceptable variants.

Content is even more problematic to define given that different disciplines, or even different orientations within the same discipline, can vary tremendously in their assessment of the content of a given sequence. Anyone who has ever participated in interdisciplinary seminars that involved reading a transcript should know this very well. Usually, in such settings, when the linguists think that they have said all there is to say about the content of some sequence, it is time for the cultural anthropologists to come in and start over. Some of the differences of opinion about what is being communicated might be intimately related to the problem of defining what the data are. An ethnographic approach does not define a priori what to study or where to terminate cultural analysis. Cultural interpretation is an inherently endless project (Geertz, 1973)— which, by the way, does not mean that generalizations cannot be made— and to stop in the middle of it is a conventional and often useful way of making our latest observations and speculations available to the scrutiny of others who are engaged in similar enterprises.

Key

In the course of social interaction, participants continuously offer each other cues as to how to interpret what follows or what is being com-

municated. The manner in which to perform or interpret speech is called "key." A change in volume, voice quality, intonation contour, dialect, and language being used are only some of the many key signals that are commonly employed to let others know that what we are saying should be interpreted literally, ironically, seriously, or playfully (see Gumperz' [1977, 1981] notion of 'contextualization cue'). Many nonverbal devices are also available to the participants in any speech event to confirm or change an existing key (Bateson, 1955; Goffman, 1974, Ch. 3; Hymes, 1972a, p. 62).

Key signals can be simple ones (e.g., sudden change of volume, overt clearing of the throat) or complex ones, (e.g., an opening speech may set the tone of an entire event, often by telling people whether they should enjoy themselves, express some serious concern, or be angry at some persons or institutions). Generally, complex key signals tend to occur at the external temporal and spatial boundaries of an event. More often they occur at the beginning, given that participants usually dislike ambiguity. A posteriori redefinitions of what just happened are possible (e.g., *I was joking*) but are relatively rare and potentially problematic.

There are several sentential phenomena ordinarily studied by linguistics that can be considered as keying devices. One of them is sentential stress, and, more generally, the devices used in languages to mark focus or new information. Another typical class of keys is constituted by so-called paralinguistic features, for example, whispery, breathy, husky voice, or laughing, giggling, crying while speaking (Crystal, 1969; Crystal & Davy, 1969). All these features tend to be classified by linguists as superimposed on other, more basic structures. And intuitively, this seems consistent with the idea of key signals as metamessages or framing devices (Bateson, 1955).

Instrumentalities

This component is divided into 'channels' and 'forms of speech'. Channel refers to the medium of transmission of speech (e.g., oral, written, telegraphic). It is important for a sociocultural study of discourse to consider the relationship between the channel being used and the form, uses, and content of verbal communication. It has become evident to researchers coming from different disciplines that channel and form of speech are closely related. Thus, for instance, the acquisition of literacy involves not simply a new medium for communicating (i.e., writing), but also a different form or style of communication as well as a different cultural concept of self and achievement (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1981; Duranti & Ochs, in press; Heath, 1981, 1982; Scollon & Scollon,

1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981). The appropriate patterns for the construction of a written text, once introduced, are not simply confined to the written language; they can influence and govern modes of oral communication as well. This discovery has consequences for the comparative study of discourse patterns across societies. Among other things, the researcher must be aware of the particular range of linguistic resources in any given community—what Gumperz (1964) calls repertoire—before assessing the social meaning as well as the appropriateness of a given discourse register to a given situation. This means, for instance, that one must be careful in using such concepts as 'formal' or 'informal' register without taking into consideration the entire repertoire of a speech community and the culture-specific meaning of particular choices within that repertoire. Thus, for instance, in traditional Samoan communities, the phonological register that characterizes writing is also used in certain formal settings such as classroom interaction and church services, but it is not used in the highly ritualized, oratorical speeches performed in the formal meetings of the village council (fono), where the same phonological register of casual household interaction is instead found (Duranti, 1981). Shore (1982) has suggested that the dichotomy between the two registers must be understood as an "opposition of Samoan culture as a whole with the introduced European sector of Samoan institutions, particularly those institutions related to technology and the Church" (p. 281). In Samoa, if one were to consider only, say, writing, family interaction, school instruction, and church services, one would miss this important aspect of the association of the writing register with western-related activities but not with traditional formal activities.

The potentially dynamic relationship between different registers must also be addressed. An ethnographic approach cannot a priori favor a particular register, channel, or genre (see below) over another. In this respect, Bloch's (1976) criticism of the ethnography of speaking as giving too great a place to ritual and artistic speech is appropriate. It is important, as he suggests, to pay attention to "the study of mundane ordinary speech intercourse in different cultures" (p. 233). One must also be aware, however, of the fact that ritual speech and conversation should not be seen as two discrete categories, necessarily independent from one another. Rather, it is increasingly apparent that ritual, formal, poetic, and other types of speech that characterize verbal performance across societies (Bauman, 1977) often share several features with casual, informal speech. As pointed out by Irvine (1979), one cannot predict exactly which linguistic features are going to be used to mark a certain style or genre as formal. There have been in fact some suggestions that the language of ritual may be in some respect quite mundane (Sherzer, 1977) and that within formal

settings, such as the courtroom, participants may communicate in a much more direct and confrontative manner than in daily, supposedly casual interaction (Brown, 1981). Finally, Sherzer (1982) has suggested that the same unit, the line, could be used for describing both poetic and conversational speech.

Norms

Hymes' ethnographic approach is based on the assumptions that speech is rule-governed behavior and that the researcher's task is to infer such rules from the systematic observation and recording (in the form of handwritten notes, audio- or video-taping) of spontaneous verbal interaction. The researcher should also make use of techniques usually employed by social and cultural anthropologists (e.g., participation in the community life, discussion with members) and by linguists (e.g., elicitation of native speaker's judgments, creation of paradigms and crucial counterexamples, collection of texts).

Norms for interaction involve different levels of communicative competence, from the very basic rules for constructing processable sequences (e.g., possible word-order patterns in the particular language) to the use of the appropriate code or register (Andersen, 1977; Ferguson, 1975, 1977; Gumperz, 1964; Sankoff, 1972, 1980). Norms for interaction also include strategies for making apparent mistakes, such as, for instance, stopping in the middle of a word or sentence and starting a new sentence (Goodwin, 1981; Schegloff, 1979) or simply speaking as if one were "incompetent" (Albert, 1972).

Norms of interpretation, as pointed out by Hymes, assume cultural analysis. To know what was said as well as how and why means to know how the participants interpreted the form and content of the messages. This is where the explanatory power of our account is tested. An adequate account of a speech event must explain the choice among alternative forms, registers, or codes and the participants' cultural interpretation of it. This is one of the many places where discourse analysis coincides with ethnography, at least in its classic definitions of taking the perspective of the native (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25) and describing "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to (the) members" (Goodenough, 1964) of a given speech community.

The central issue for an ethnographically oriented study of discourse is the manner and the extent to which one can compare norms across societies. The most extensive study of verbal strategies for social interaction across societies is Brown and Levinson's account of politeness phenomena (Brown, 1979; Brown & Levinson, 1978; Levinson, 1977). Using Goffman's

(1967) notion of 'face'—the public self-image that everyone wants to claim for himself—and Grice's (1975) maxims for cooperative interaction, Brown and Levinson have proposed putative universals for strategic (verbal) interaction. Their work is based on the assumption that human beings are rational beings who ideally would want to exchange information in the most efficient way, namely, by being sincere, informative, relevant, and clear (Grice, 1975).[8] They argue that politeness is "a major source of deviation from such rational efficiency, and is communicated precisely by that deviation" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 100). Their approach is somewhat reminiscent of interpretive science, as apparent from the similarity between the way they use the notion of 'norm' and Schutz' idea of normal form typifications (I am borrowing this quotation and the following one from Cicourel, 1974):

> as I confront my fellow-man, I bring into each concrete situation a stock of preconstituted knowledge which includes a network of typifications of human individuals in general, of typical human motivations, goals, and action patterns. It also includes knowledge of expressive and interpretive schemes, of objective sign-systems and, in particular, of the vernacular language. (Schutz, 1964, pp. 29–30)

Brown and Levinson's approach, however, lacks at times the awareness of the observer's role in the interpretive process that characterizes other interpretive approaches and does not distinguish between the participants' subjective intentions, the observer's reading of such intentions, and the culture-specific norms that precede the actors' interaction and their subjective motivations. To quote again from Schutz:

> The observer's scheme of interpretation cannot be identical, of course, with the interpretive scheme of either partner in the social relation observed. The modifications of attention which characterize the attitude of the observer cannot coincide with those of a participant in an ongoing social relation. For one thing, what he finds relevant is not identical with what they find relevant in the situation. (Schutz, 1964, p. 36)

The amount of data, from several speech communities, that Brown and Levinson are able to classify and explain within their framework is, however, unprecedented. For this reason and for the fine details of their analyses, their work deserves careful attention from ethnographers of speaking involved in different speech communities around the world.

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[8] The alleged universality of Grice's (1975) maxims is challenged by Keenan's (1976) work on the Malagasy, who constantly violate Grice's 'be informative' norm. This leaves open the question of whether Grice's maxims define dimensions of universal relevance to ways of speaking or actual tendencies or principles (see also Hymes, 1980).

Genres

Speech genres are traditional units of discourse analysis in the study of verbal performance (Bauman, 1977; Cardona, 1976). Some researchers, particularly those engaged in the analysis of American Indian verbal art (Gossen, 1974) and of Black American speech performances (Abrahams, 1976; Kochman, 1972), have identified speech genres with speech events. In some cases, the terminological distinctions provided by the participants in a given community can be used for classifying ways of speaking even in other communities that do not use such terminology (Abrahams, 1976, p. 45). The underlying (or psychological) reality of these native classifications seems a better way of defining events than the researcher's own hypothesis about the goal of the activity (see the end of the preceding sections of this chapter). At the same time, we must be aware of the possibility of genre variation across events. As pointed out by Hymes,

> Genres often coincide with speech events, but must be treated as analytically independent of them. They may occur in (or as) different events. The sermon as a genre is typically identical with a certain place in a church service, but its properties may be invoked, for serious or humorous effect, in other situations. Often enough a genre recurs in several events. . . . A great deal of empirical work will be needed to clarify the interrelations of genres, events, acts, and other components. (Hymes, 1972a, p. 65)

Thus, for instance, in Samoa, the ceremonial speech genre *laauga* exhibits considerable variation in its form and content across social events. A careful speech-event analysis shows that such variation can, in fact, be explained by taking into consideration other components of the event in which the ceremonial speech is performed, such as the purposes of the event (viz., ends), the relative time at which the speech is delivered, the range of participants in the event, and, finally, the extent to which the speech is considered in the domain of performance (Duranti, 1983).[9]

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have discussed the notion of speech event as an analytical tool for the study of discourse from a sociocultural perspective. I have shown how discourse is part of the speakers' cultural construction of reality and must then be understood as relating to and defining such reality. Let me briefly summarize some of the main points.

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[9] The relation between genre and social contexts is also a recurrent theme in Gossen's (1974) work on Chamula verbal performance.

I have suggested that a speech event can be identified as a unit (and therefore analyzed and compared to other similar or different events or activities) on the basis of two main features or sets of features: (1) the ends (or goals) of the event, and (2) its spatiotemporal organization. I have pointed out how, in both cases, we are concerned with the cultural definitions of those features. We assume that meaningful human interaction is always goal oriented. We must distinguish, however, between the system's or societal ends of an event and the participants' ends. The spatiotemporal organization of an event can be handled by adopting Goffman's (1974) notion of 'boundary.' After defining possible types of boundaries and after distinguishing between boundaries and boundary markers, I have indicated certain tendencies, across societies and events, in the relationship between boundaries and verbal interaction. Speech within boundaries is often used to define the type of activity embedded by the boundary markers. Speech at the opening boundaries is usually more predictable than speech at the closing boundaries. In any case, what constitutes the boundaries of an event as well as what are recognized as its ends or goals are cultural definitions, to be identified through ethnographic work. Generalizations and cross-cultural comparison are possible only after detailed emic descriptions.

In the section entitled Participants I have pointed out how the very definitions of speaker–addressor and hearer–addressee are also culturally bound and must be related to the particpants' understanding of a given event and their socioculturally defined ends. In the case of the Kaluli mothers talking for their young children, as well as in the other cases discussed, the correct identification of the different roles of speaker, sender, hearer, and addressee (audience) is dependent upon the cultural significance of the speech event. The meaning of the verbal interaction can be captured and properly decoded only after having assigned the culturally appropriate participant roles.

Within the section on Act Sequences I have discussed the organization of turns and the problematic message form and message content components of Hymes' model. I have stressed the need, from an ethnographic perspective, to relate the mechanisms of turn management to other dimensions of social (and, more specifically, verbal) interaction. The interest in the cooperative, emergent structure of conversational interaction should not prevent us from seeing (or looking for) the possible connection between the local organization of roles (viz., conversationalists) and its wider context (e.g., type of social organization). Finally, I have suggested that interpretive procedures are inevitable and the only way of avoiding imposing the analyst's ideology upon the actors' doings is to make such interpretive procedures explicit.

After a brief discussion of key and key signals, which are related to Bateson's notion of 'frame' or 'metamessage' and to Gumperz' notion of 'contextualization cue', I discuss the relevance of the channel or form of speech to discourse analysis. The notions of 'formal' and 'informal' speech are not only culture specific but are also influenced by the range of linguistic resources and channels available within a given speech community. Written language, for instance, can influence oral discourse, as in the Samoan case discussed by Shore (1982) and by Duranti and Ochs (in press).

In order to describe the norms through which participants perform and interpret speech in social interaction, discourse analysts must take the perspective of the participants. Brown and Levinson (1978), however, on the basis of Goffman's work on face and sacred self and Grice's maxims, have attempted a cross-linguistic, cross-cultural analysis of politeness phenomena that captures a vast array of clearly similar strategies in the use of certain classes of message forms and message contents across different speech events. Their work deserves careful consideration from ethnographers and students of discourse patterns concerned with the interaction of language structure and strategic interaction.

Speech genres are also another dimension for the study of systematic variation in speech performance and culturally defined discourse patterns. The rich literature on this subject, reviewed by Bauman (1977) and Cardona (1976), can offer important suggestions on the interpretation of discourse from the point of view of native taxonomies. Furthermore, the study of genre variation provides useful insights into the interaction of different components of speech events.

Throughout this chapter, I have pointed out several ways in which sociocultural knowledge and the interaction between speech and social context are relevant to the analysis of discourse. The approach advocated here should not be considered as an alternative to other differently oriented approaches, but rather as a body of knowledge and methods that needs to be integrated with current models and theories of discourse structure and discourse types within and across societies.

The ethnographic approach has been criticized for paucity of generalizations. It is apparent that the lack of universal claims characteristic of the ethnographic approach goes hand in hand with the cultural relativism that underlies the work of most contemporary cultural and social anthropologists (Leach, 1982). In my view, such a culture-specific approach to the study of discourse should not be fought or put aside. Rather, we should find a way of exploiting the explicit reference that such an approach makes to a vast range of sociocultural dimensions of verbal interaction and discourse structure. Models and theories tend to force data on a

Procrustean bed. The open-endedness of the ethnographic approach defines its limit but also its force. If we see the study of discourse as qualitatively different from the study of sentences in isolation—and this seems to me the meaning of discourse analysis—then we are committed to relating discourse to sociocultural context, speech to cultural beliefs, verbal strategies to social order, people as speakers to people as social actors. If so, we cannot but engage in the kind of interpretive enterprise that has characterized the history and methods of modern anthropology and bear the risks that go with it.

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