

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING

Anthropology 461b/661b

Spring 2008

Tuesday, 1:30-3:20PM

10 Sachem 212

Instructor: Bernard Bate

10 Sachem, Room 214 (Yale ID needed to enter building)

Off.Hrs: Mon 4-5, Thurs 3-4:30

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Course Description:

This seminar outlines the theory and methodology of the study of language use in social context. Readings will focus on the interrelationships between verbal form, social function, and cultural meaning in varying modalities of communicative interaction. In addition to weekly written assignments, participants will propose and carry out an ethnographic investigation into an aspect of language use and provide an analysis of discursive interaction tied to its larger social, cultural and historical contexts of production.

Requirements:

***NB:** Be sure to deposit electronic copies of all written work for this class in your Drop Box on the ClassesV2 Server to ensure there is no mistake in accounting for the work you do.*

A. *Seminar Participation (20%).* Participants will thoroughly engage the assigned readings for each class session and be prepared to discuss them critically.

Following the first few weeks, selected participants will be responsible for a presentation to the seminar and leading the discussion for that session.

B. *In-class Assignments (40%):* Each week, beginning in Week II, participants will come to class having completed short analytical or practical assignments based on the readings and/or in preparation for your fieldwork. The assignments due for that seminar session are listed on the syllabus.

***NB:** You will submit a total of ten (10) assignments. The late or non-completion of an assignment will result in a grade reduction as a proportion of 40% of the overall grade. **There will be no exception to this rule.** Should extraordinary circumstances prevent you from completing your assignment on time, please provide a **Dean's excuse.***

C. *Individual Term/Research Papers (40%):* Each participant will complete a 15-20 page term paper based on a topic to be agreed upon in consultation with the instructor. A rough draft – or thesis statement and detailed outline – will be due **Tuesday, 4 March, in class**; and a final draft will be due on the final session for the semester, **Tuesday, 6 May**, during which time we will have an informal presentation and discussion of the work we did over the semester.

Participants are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me prior to the first draft submission in order to discuss topics and goals. The paper will primarily involve first-person linguistic ethnographic research in which you will collect some swath of real-time discourse, provide a coherent interlineal transcription, and analyze the text according to the principles of contemporary linguistic anthropology. As this research will involve fieldwork with human subjects, you may need to submit a methodological prospectus to the **Human Subjects Committee**. You will also be asked to provide a first draft of an interlineal transcription of the text to be analyzed in your paper. Though you may use outside materials, the paper topic and analytical apparatus should be drawn largely from the readings assigned and covered in class. The idea is to expand upon one or more of the issues that are raised in the seminar and provide a coherent discussion of text production in social context.

*NB: The amount of preparation for the rough draft or prospectus is entirely up to you. But bear in mind that this is an opportunity to receive detailed feedback from me and your colleagues prior to receiving a grade. The more you do initially, the more feedback I can give and the less you will have to do at the end of the semester. I will set aside time during the week following the break to review your work and discuss it in detail, if you wish.*

*NB: As you begin thinking about your fieldwork, please consult the following materials on ethics in anthropological fieldwork: <http://www.aaanet.org/ar/irb/index.htm>*

- [AAA Code of Ethics](#) (1998),
- [AAA Statement on Confidentiality of Field Notes](#) (2003),
- [AAA Statement on Ethnography and Institutional Review Boards](#) (2004).

*You will also want to explore the AAA's excellent [Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology](#); it contains particularly illuminating case studies.*

Primary Texts (Labyrinth Books, York Street, New Haven):

- Bauman, Richard 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies in Oral Narrative*. New York: Cambridge University Press. [ISBN: 0-521-31111-x].
- Briggs, Charles L. 1986. *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ISBN: 0-521-31113-6]
- Culler, Jonathan 1986. *Ferdinand de Saussure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press [ISBN: 0-8014-9389-7]
- Goffman, Irving 1997. *The Goffman Reader*. Edited by Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. [ISBN: 1-55786-894-8]
- Goffman, Irving 1981. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. [ISBN: 0-8122-1112-x]
- Tannen, Deborah 2007. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*, Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ISBN: 978-0-521-86890-7]

All other assigned articles are available on the ClassesV2 Server.

## CALENDAR OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

**Session 1      The Ethnography of Speaking: Theory and Method**  
January 15

Course overview and discussion.

**Session 2      Structure and Form: Basic terms in Saussure and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Linguistics**  
January 22

Bonvillain, Nancy, 'The form of the message,' Chapter 2 in *Language, Culture and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp. 7-45.

Culler, Jonathan 1986. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 'Saussure's Theory of Language' and 'The Place of Saussure's Theories,' in *Ferdinand de Saussure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 27-104.

Assignment I: Please discuss the concept of the phoneme in relation to Saussure's concept of value (*valeur*). In addition to the concept of the phoneme, be sure you understand basic terms in linguistics such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and prosody. Be sure, too, you understand basic Saussurean concepts such as *langue*, *parole*, signified and signifier, paradigmatic sets and syntagmatic chains, synchrony and diachrony.

**Session 3      Structure and Discourse: Saussurean and Post(?) -Saussurean Approaches to Language, Culture, and Society**  
January 29

Boaz, Franz 1911. 'Introduction' to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*. Sections I (pp. 5-14) and IV (pp. 59-73). Smithsonian Institution Bureau of Ethnology, Bulletin No. 40. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. [Also In Ben Blount, ed. 1995 [1975, 1921, 1911] *Language, Culture and Society: A Book of Readings*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp 9-28.]

Caton, Steven C. 1986. "'Saalam TaHiiya": Greetings from the highlands of Yemen.' *American Ethnologist* 13(2):290-308.

Sapir, Edward. 1995 [1974, 1927]. 'The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society.' In Ben Blount, ed., *Language, Culture, and Society: A Book of Readings*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp. 29-42.

Sherzer, Joel 1987. 'A Discourse-Centered Approach to Culture.' *American Anthropologist* 89(2):295-309.

Assignment II: Provide brief examples from *both* Caton and Sherzer and describe their relationship to the theory provided by Saussure. Be sure you fully understand the elements of a Saussure's theory of language as well as a basic linguistic anthropological use and transcendence of his theory (as demonstrated by Caton and Sherzer).

**Session 4 Foundations of the Paradigm – I: The Poetic Function of Language and the Definition of Speech Events [Jakobson, Hymes, Sherzer]**

February 5

- Jakobson, Roman 1960, 'Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics' (in Thomas A. Sebeok, *Style in Language*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1960, p. 350-377).'
- Hymes, Dell 1962, 'The Ethnography of Speaking'. In Blount, Ben G., ed. *Language, Culture and Society: A Book of Readings* (Second Edition). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp. 248-82.
- Sherzer, Joel 1987. 'A Diversity of Voices: Men's and Women's Speech in Ethnographic Perspective.' In Susan U. Philips, Susan Steele, and Christine Tanz, eds., *Language, Gender, and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 95-120.

Assignment III: Look closely at Jakobson and Hymes' constituent elements of discursive interaction and their functions. Please a) reproduce diagrams from both of them and briefly indicate their differences; and b) provide very brief examples of each constituent element and function drawn from your own interactions with friends, from literature, or your imagination.

**Session 5 Foundations of the Paradigm - II: Poetry, Poetics, and Poetic Tension within Linguistic Anthropology [Paul Friedrich, Michael Silverstein]**

February 12

- Bauman, Richard and Charles Briggs 1990. 'Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59-88.
- Silverstein, Michael 1976. 'Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description.' In Basso, Keith and M. Selby, eds., *Meaning in Anthropology*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 11-56.
- Friedrich, Paul 1979. 'Poetic Language and the Imagination: A Reformulation of the Sapir Hypothesis.' In *Language, Context and the Imagination: Essays by Paul Friedrich*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 441-512.

Key Background Readings:

- Sapir, Edward. 1995 [1974, 1927]. 'The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society.' In Ben Blount, ed., *Language, Culture, and Society: A Book of Readings*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp. 29-42.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee 1941. 'The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language,' in his *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. John Carroll, ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 134-59.

Assignment IV: Both students of Jakobson, both writing at about the same time, Friedrich and Silverstein offer two very different approaches to language, especially in their understanding of poetics and poetry itself. How would you characterize their differences? Can we talk about the different 'feel' for the study of language? What kinds of objects do they take for their analysis? What, ultimately, is the difference

between the poetic function and a poem, and what does that say about our approaches to language and the human condition generally?

**Session 6      Methodological Considerations – I: Ethnography and Interviews**  
February 19

- Briggs, Charles L. Chapters 1-3, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-60.
- Duranti, Alessandro 1997. Chapters 4, *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 84-121
- Friedrich, Paul 1992. Interpretation and Vision: A Critique of Cryptopositivism. *Cultural Anthropology* 17(2):211-231

Assignment V: Begin sketching out ideas for your term project and submit a list of no less than three possible projects. Cite especially the problems that Briggs and Duranti have raised in their materials.

**Session 7      Methodological Considerations – II: Interviews and Transcription**  
February 26

- Briggs, Charles L. Chapters 4-6, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-125.
- Duranti, Alessandro 1997. Chapters 5, *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 122-61.
- Hill, Jane 1995. 'The Voices of Don Gabriel: Responsibility and Self in a Modern Mexicano Narrative.' In Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim, eds., *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 97-147.

Assignment VI: Model Transcription due from your proposed work. Begin considering transcriptional methodologies and formats in terms of principles outlined in the texts of sessions. 6 and 7.

**Session 8      Story, Performance, and Event in Oral Narrative.**  
March 4

- Bauman, Richard 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies in Oral Narrative*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

***Please submit your rough draft or outline and prospectus of final paper along with a proposed bibliography.***

***SPRING BREAK!***  
***8 – 23 March***

**Session 9      Goffman I: Dramas, Rituals and Frames**

March 25

Goffman, Irving 1997. Parts III and IV, *The Goffman Reader*. Edited by Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 95-261

Assignment VII: TBA

**Session 10      Goffman II: Footing and the Emergence of Context**

April 1

Goffman, Irving 1981. 'Introduction,' Chapters 2, 3, 4 in *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 1-4, 78-196.

Assignment VIII: TBA

**Session 11      Conversational Analysis – I**

April 8

Tannen, Deborah 2007 Chapters 1, 2, 3 in *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-101.

No assignment due, but come prepared to discuss your work in terms of Tannen's principles. Continue refining transcription techniques and approaches.

**Session 12      Conversational Analysis – II**

April 15

Tannen, Deborah 2007 Chapters 4, 5, 6 in *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-88.

Assignment IX: TBA

***There will be NO CLASS on April 22;  
We will have a make-up meeting on 6 May.***

**Session 13      Voice, Footing, Stance, and Context: Some Advanced Studies in the  
Ethnography of Speaking.**

April 29

Agha, Asif. 2005. 'Introduction: semiosis across encounters'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. Vol 15, No. 1 (June 2005), pp. 1-5.

Agha, Asif. 2005. 'Voice, footing, enregisterment'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. Vol 15, No. 1 (June 2005), pp. 38-59.

Kochelman, Paul 2004. 'Stance and Subjectivity.' *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14(2):127-50.

*Background Reading:*

Agha, Asif 2003. 'Social Life of Cultural Value.' *Language & Communication* 23: 231–273

Assignment X: TBA.

**Session 14      Final Paper Presentations and Discussion**

May 6

*Final Paper Presentations and Discussion*

Constitutive Factors and Functions of Language

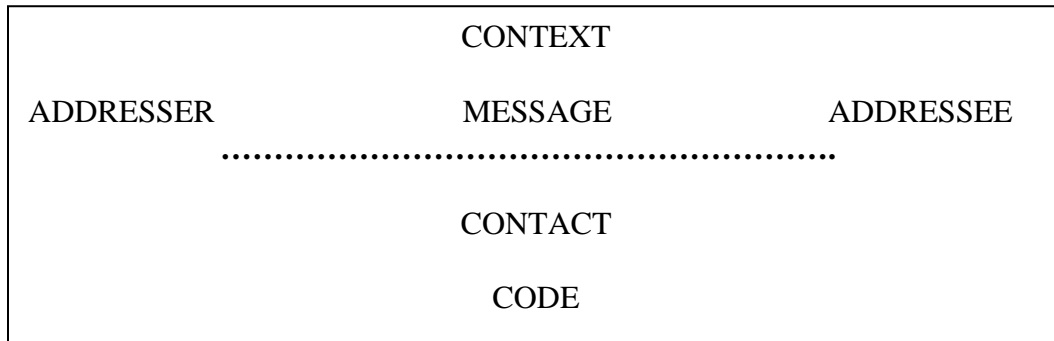


Fig 1: Schema of 'the constitutive factors in any speech event.' (Jakobson 1960:353)

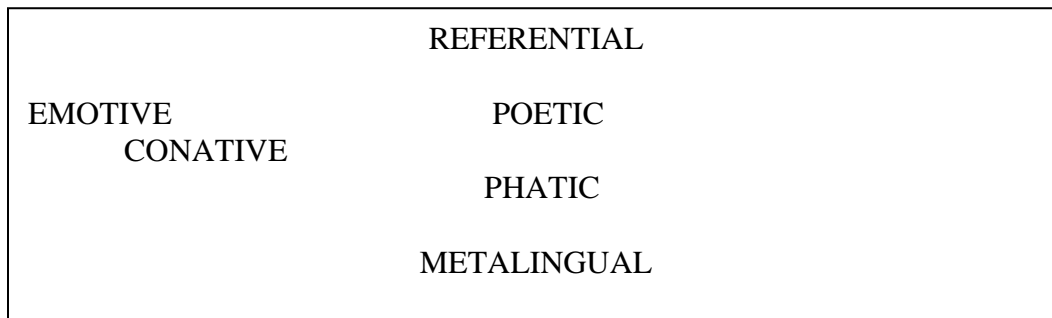


Fig 2: Schema of language functions corresponding to the constitutive factors (Roman Jakobson 1960:357; c.f. Hymes 1995[1962]: 257-69, for discussion and complications with this schema.)

'The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection [paradigmatic set] into the axis of combination [syntagmatic chain].' (Jakobson 1960:358).

'It may be argued that metalanguage also makes a sequential use of equivalent units when combining synonymic expressions into an equational sentence: A = A ('Mare is the female of the horse'). Poetry and metalanguage... are in diametrical opposition to each other: in metalanguage the sequence is used to build an equation, whereas in poetry the equation is used to build a sequence.' (Ibid)

Jakobson, Roman 1960. 'Concluding Statement: linguistics and poetics.' in *Style in Language*. T.A. Sebeok, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 350-75.

Hymes, Dell 1995[1962]. 'The Ethnography of Speaking.' In *Language, Culture and Society*. Ben Blount, ed. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, pp. 248-82.