

Language in Action

In the Field, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, Early 1990s

"Excuse me," the young man interrupted, as Dr. Stirland and I approached the campus parking lot. "I heard you talking, back there, to Mr. Means, and I wanted to introduce myself."

We turned to face the young man. He looked young, perhaps in his twenties. His glossy black hair was tied back into a low ponytail, and he was wearing beads around his neck.

"My name is Harold," the young man continued, "and I just wanted to say that I thought your description of disease in pre-Columbian times in England was really interesting. I'm so glad I got to hear you discussing it with Mr. Means."

"Thanks," said Dr. Stirland. A human skeletal biologist from England, she was visiting Kansas State University as part of a lecture tour. As it happened, the noted Native American activist Russell Means was also on campus at the same time. Dr. Stirland and I had attended his lecture, and after the lecture she had spoken with him at length about her research. She had also mentioned that she was on her way to present that research at a conference in Toronto. Now here we were, in a parking lot, talking to a young Native American student about that conversation. Or so it seemed.

"Toronto is a nice place to be going," said the young man. "My family lives in upstate New York," he continued, "but I haven't seen them for a while. I think of them often, though, especially at this time of the year, when the weather is so nice. . . ." As the young man continued, discussing his family and how much he missed them and how much he had learned from them, it dawned on me that he was asking Ann if she could drop him off in New York on her way to Toronto.

I waited patiently until the young man had finished his narration, and then I said, "It was nice to meet you. But Dr. Stirland isn't driving to Toronto; she'll be flying. I'm taking her to the airport tomorrow morning."

"Oh, I hope you have a nice trip," responded the student with a smile. "It was a pleasure to meet you. Good luck at the conference." And he strolled off into the pleasant March afternoon.

"How did you know he was asking for a ride?" asked Ann, incredulously.

"I had just read an article about Native American indirection as a speech style," I replied, "so I guess I was hyperaware. It's kind of a Kansasism too, compared to my more direct New York style, so I've been working at learning to recognize it recently. Plus, it's a nice example of how words and sentences can mean different things in different situations," I said, trying not to switch into lecture style with my former student and current friend.

HJO

USING LANGUAGE: CULTURE, ETHNICITY, GENDER, STATUS, AND STYLE

Learning to use a language means learning much more than how to pronounce sounds, construct and recognize words, and produce grammatical phrases and sentences. It means learning how to use those words and sentences in actual situations: how to hear intended meanings as well as outright ones and how to use the right words in the right ways at the right moments. It means identifying and negotiating issues of gender, ethnicity, status, and culture as you speak.

The young man asking for a ride never used the word *ride*. Instead, he described his family and where they lived and how he hadn't seen them in a while and how nice it would be to visit them. It was up to us, the listeners, to sort out the fact that if we were driving from Kansas to Toronto, we would probably pass by where the young man's family lived. This meant that we could give him a ride, if we had room in our car, or we could explain why we couldn't give him a ride. We might have also been able to ignore his request altogether. On the other hand, had he asked us outright for a ride he could have put us into the potentially embarrassing situation of having to refuse. The young man was using a speech style often associated with Native American cultures. It's called **indirection**, and it involves making a request without directly asking. One point of indirection is to avoid putting people into potentially embarrassing situations. One difficulty with indirection is the fact that not every group of speakers uses it or understands how it works.

Here's another example of indirection. A Japanese student who was studying anthropology at my university came to me one day to ask about how to ask for salt in English. He had been eating in the student cafeteria one day and had decided that his food needed salt. There was no salt on

the table at which he was sitting, however. This meant he would have to get up and go to another table to get a saltshaker. He looked around for a table that had two saltshakers, located one some distance away, and went over to it to get one of the saltshakers. When he returned, his companions wondered why he hadn't just asked the people at the next table to lend them their saltshaker. They also wondered why he hadn't just asked one of them to reach over to a neighboring table to get a saltshaker. He hadn't thought of any of these strategies and had, in fact, taken the trouble to go to a distant table for salt just because it seemed that it would be rude to take a saltshaker from a table that had only one. I asked the student what he would do in Japan if he needed salt in such a situation. He thought about that for a moment and then told me that he would suggest that the other people at his table should taste his food. Having tasted his food, his companions would recognize that it needed salt and would then procure salt for him from a nearby table with extra salt. He asserted that he would do the same for his companions. But asking outright for salt seemed rude to him. It was just too direct, and it put people into awkward or embarrassing positions, requiring them to do things that they might not want to do.

And here's a slightly different kind of example. In the Comoro Islands admiring an item is an indirect way of asking to have that item. I learned this the hard way when I complimented a friend on a ring she was wearing. You can imagine my surprise and embarrassment when she removed the ring from her finger and gave it to me! No amount of protesting could undo the deed. It was a dramatic lesson in indirectness and I have never forgotten it. Eventually, I learned that the way to admire something that someone else was wearing was to ask how much it cost. Asking how much something costs is a much more direct approach than I am used to and it feels rude and nosy to me, but it is the polite way to compliment someone on their possessions. I had to learn to do it if I was going to communicate successfully with my Comorian friends.

Indirection is not limited to making requests. It can also be used to decline and accept offers. In many cases it is essential to know how to say "yes" or "no" in culturally appropriate ways. Many Americans understand that *I need to wash my hair* is a polite way to turn down an invitation to a date. A student who traveled to the Comoros with us learned, after some false starts, that the equivalent statement there is *I don't have time*. Both of these statements are indirect ways of saying *no* and they work if the hearers expect indirectness and know how to interpret it. Indirectness is common in situations where the speaker doesn't want to hurt the hearer's feelings (see Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.1: Corn Pudding). Again, it's a case of helping someone to avoid embarrassment. The problem with indirect *no*, both cross-culturally and within a single culture, is that sometimes hearers can claim that the indirectness of the *no* is actually interpretable as a *yes*. Or not a strong enough *no*.



Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.1

CORN PUDDING

A student from Kansas went to visit her fiancé's family in Boston and was served corn pudding for dinner. It turns out that corn pudding is one of her least favorite dishes, and she avoids eating it whenever possible. But she wanted to be polite, so she ate what she was served. When she was asked how she liked the corn pudding she said, "It's good corn pudding." In Kansas, this kind of answer means something like, 'Well, I guess it's fine, but it's not my favorite dish and I'd appreciate not having to eat it anymore'. Her hosts, however, not knowing this Kansasism, interpreted the phrase to mean 'I like your corn pudding a lot and would be pleased if you would prepare it for me every time I come to visit'. Of course, this was the opposite of what she had intended to communicate and, much to her dismay, she ended up eating corn pudding at every subsequent visit!

HJO

After all, *I need to wash my hair* doesn't actually have the word *no* in it. So it is important to be sure that indirectness is called for and will be properly interpreted in a situation where it is really important to convey *no*.

Is there such a thing as an indirect *yes*? Indeed there is, and an excellent example comes from a Czech student of mine who was spending a year studying in the United States. Whenever his American hosts would offer him dessert after a meal he would start out with a polite *no thank you* (for him this was an indirect *yes*) and then he would wait for his hosts to urge him to reconsider. But his American hosts, unfamiliar with this kind of indirectness, usually never made any second offers. A confirmed dessert-lover, my student had to learn that if he was ever going to get dessert, he was going to have to learn to say *yes* on the first offer. Although he worked hard to get used to this more direct approach, it always felt a little rude to him to be accepting an offer right away. (For a similar experience with indirect *yes* see Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.2: Ukrainian *No*.)

In all of these situations, words are being used in ways that go beyond their dictionary definitions. *Taste my food* does not sound anything like *Please pass the salt*, but that is what it means in this situation. *I miss my family in New York* does not sound anything like *Can you please give me a ride to New York?* but that is what it means in this situation. *It's good corn pudding* does not sound anything like *I'd prefer not to have to eat this corn pudding*, but that is what it means in this situation. *I like*



Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.2

UKRAINIAN NO

Dr. Boyko (name changed), a Ukrainian ethnographer, was starving. He had been in Canada now for three days and so far he had not eaten a decent meal. The small supply of emergency food that his wife had thoughtfully packed for him was getting low and he was rationing it carefully. He wasn't sure what he would do when it was gone. This one-year teaching exchange had seemed like a great idea in the beginning but now he was beginning to wonder whether he would survive the experience.

Dr. Allen (name also changed), his host professor, had welcomed him at the airport three days ago and had taken him to a guest apartment in the dormitories, leaving him alone to unpack and settle in, and reappearing a few hours later to ask if he was hungry and did he want to go somewhere to eat?

"No, thanks," he'd responded, politely.

"Okay, fine. See you tomorrow then," Dr. Allen had replied.

The same exchange, more or less, had been repeated morning, noon, and evening every day since then. Dr. Boyko was beginning to wonder whether he would ever get a *real* invitation to eat. Now it was time to swallow his pride and confess his hunger to his host!

"Why didn't you say something?" asked Dr. Allen incredulously.

"I didn't want to be a greedy guest," replied Dr. Boyko. "In Ukraine, it is not good manners to accept food as soon as it is offered. You should always say *no* once or twice, and sometimes even more, depending on the relative status of the individuals involved."

"I understand, and I really do think you should get something to eat," said Dr. Allen.

That evening, over dinner, they coined the phrases "Ukrainian *no*" and "Canadian *no*" so that the next time Dr. Boyko turned down an invitation to eat Dr. Allen could ask him, "Is that a Ukrainian *no* or a Canadian *no*?" to find out if he was being polite, Ukrainian style, or if he just wasn't hungry. And Dr. Boyko resolved to work on learning to say "Yes, thank you" when offered food by his Canadian colleagues and friends. It made a great story to tell back home, too, about language in context and the different practices of different speech communities.

HJO

your ring doesn't sound like *Would you give that ring to me, please?* and *I have to wash my hair* doesn't sound like *I'd rather not go out with you* but that is what they mean in the situations in which they are spoken. And finally, *no thanks* definitely does not sound anything like *I'd love some dessert but I know it's not polite to say so and I hope you'll ask me a second time so I can say yes*. In each of these situations the words mean very different things than what they seem to mean, and in each case their interpretation depends on the people who use them and the situations in which they are used. The important thing to understand is that words and phrases can take on very different meanings in different situations or contexts.

The idea that situations affect the meanings of words is an important one in linguistic anthropology. Anthropologists, and linguistic anthropologists in particular, have been aware of this aspect of language for a long time, beginning at least with the early observations of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942). Malinowski researched culture in the Trobriand Islands (in the southwest Pacific Ocean) during World War I. During two extended visits, in 1915–1916 and 1917–1918, he participated fully in Trobriand daily life and culture, becoming fluent in the Trobriand language. Perhaps because his focus was on cultural and social relationships and not specifically on the structure of the language, and perhaps also because he saw the various aspects of culture as closely and complexly interrelated, when Malinowski wrote about language he also wrote about the situations in which language was used. He wrote about how difficult it was to translate between languages, even when you knew the “dictionary” meanings of all of the words. Translation, he argued, meant more than just substituting words from one language for words in another language. Instead you needed to understand the *context*—the cultural and social situation—in which the words were being used in order to understand what was being said. The situation in which you were using the words could signal the difference between asking and telling, between reporting and bragging. According to Malinowski, analyzing language led ultimately to analyzing all of the other aspects of a culture. Language, in short, took on much of its meaning from its culture and, in particular, from the situations in which that language was used.

Applying this insight to the previous examples, we learn that important clues for interpreting requests are embedded in the contexts in which people are making those requests. Furthermore, we learn that requests and refusals are *made* differently in different cultures. So it is not possible to translate a request directly from one culture to another. You need to understand both the culture and the situation in order to know whether you are being asked for a ride, or to pass the salt, or to understand someone's dislike for corn pudding, or to know whether someone is accepting or refusing an offer. Being sensitive to the fact that context affects meanings helps you to become more aware of how to use

language to interact socially in the most appropriate way for the culture and situation you may find yourself in.

This chapter shows you some of the key insights that linguistic anthropology provides into the ways people use language in real situations. It also gives you some skills for learning how to understand and interpret different situations and how to develop your skills in cross-cultural communication. You will learn how anthropologists approach the task of describing language use in different cultures, and you will learn some specific techniques that have been developed for analyzing specific examples of language use. Finally, you will learn to identify situations in which members of different cultures may miscommunicate because of their different cultural expectations about language use in specific situations, and you will learn how to apply your new descriptive and analytic skills to understanding how to resolve cross-cultural miscommunications.

COMPETENCE WITH LANGUAGES

Linguistic Competence: Ideal Speakers and Listeners

The term **linguistic competence** was defined in 1965 by theoretical linguist Noam Chomsky (1965, 4), to describe a speaker's underlying ability to produce (and recognize) grammatically correct expressions. It is important to note that the kind of speaker that Chomsky had in mind was an ideal speaker-listener living in a completely homogeneous community of speakers and having perfect knowledge of the language of that community. This meant that the ideal speaker would not be distracted by anything in his or her environment when speaking or judging actual sentences. So linguistic competence is all about *grammatical* correctness. Real situations are defined as "distractions" by scholars studying linguistic competence.

Most anthropologists have difficulty with such a narrow concept of linguistic competence. They know, having read Malinowski and having lived in various field situations and learned various languages, that language varies a lot from speaker to speaker and from situation to situation. They also know that words, as well as utterances, vary in meaning from speaker to speaker and from situation to situation. The word *bad* can mean either 'bad' or 'good', depending on who is using it and in what setting. The word *yeah* can mean either 'yes' or 'no', depending on who is using it and in what setting. Do you know the joke in which an English teacher tells the class that, although two negatives should make a positive, two positives never can make a negative? "Yeah, yeah!" comes a negative-sounding voice from the back of the room, thus proving that words take on different meanings in different situations and that speakers need more than just linguistic competence to communicate successfully.

Take, for example, *tu* and *vous* in French, or *tu* and *usted* in Spanish, or *ty* and *vy* in Czech, or *du* and *Sie* in German. In terms of the grammar and dictionary of each of these languages, the first of each of these pairs of words (*tu*, *ty*, *du*) means 'you-singular' (like the now obsolete English *thou*) and the second of each of these pairs of words (*vous*, *usted*, *vy*, *Sie*) means 'you-plural' (like *y'all*, as used in the southern part of the United States). In each of these languages, the verbs change their forms to match the particular pronoun used. So it is possible to say *vous voulez* 'you-plural want', and *tu veux* 'you-singular want', but *vous veux* would be judged to be grammatically incorrect. An equivalent in Standard English might be something like saying *he want* instead of *he wants* or *you wants* instead of *you want*. (The verbs in Old English changed forms by the way: the singular form was *thou wantst*, the plural form was *you* (or *ye*) *want*.)

A linguistically competent person would know how to put the correct verb forms with the correct pronouns, but as anyone who has attempted to learn French, Spanish, Czech, or German knows, there is much more to speaking correctly than getting the grammar right. First of all, there is the degree of formality involved in choosing between the two pronouns for 'you'. What we are calling the plural form of 'you' is actually also the preferred form to use between individuals who do not know one another well. It conveys a sense of formality, and perhaps also a degree of respect, that seems more appropriate when people first meet or when students address their professors or when shopkeepers and waiters converse with customers. The singular form, on the other hand, expresses friendship, informality, and occasionally also solidarity and seems more appropriate when parents speak with children or professors address students. It is also appropriate among close friends and groups of students. In essence, you use the plural/formal 'you' with acquaintances and the singular/informal 'you' with friends. But how do you know when you have crossed the line from acquaintance to friend?

One of my Comorian friends once complained that I only seemed to know the French *vous* 'you-plural/formal' form because I never used the *tu* 'you-singular/informal' form with him. He felt insulted and wondered when I would learn to *tutoyer* him 'address him using *tu*'. Weren't we good enough friends yet? Greetings in French can be equally slippery. An American linguistic anthropologist I know recently discovered that *bonjour* 'good day' was not the all-purpose greeting she (and I) had thought it was when she said *bonjour* one afternoon to a French colleague of hers. "But you've already said *bonjour* to me today!" responded her colleague, surprised. Intrigued by this, my friend asked several other French anthropologists about her experience and was told that how and when you use *bonjour* during the course of a day "depends," which of course means that it depends on the situation in which you are using the word (Margaret Buckner, private communication).

These kinds of examples show clearly that just knowing the grammar and dictionary of a language is not enough for using that language in everyday life. Linguistic competence alone will not help you to negotiate the complexities of formal and informal address terms, nor will it alert you to when words change their meanings or uses according to the situations you use them in. In order to use language successfully in a variety of social and cultural contexts you need something more. You need *communicative* competence.

Communicative Competence: Real People Using Real Language

The term **communicative competence** was coined in 1966 by linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes in order to develop a more inclusive way to think about and describe the way people use language in real situations (Hymes 1972a, xxxv, xxxvi; 1972b, 277; see also Bourdieu 1977). Designed to go beyond the restrictive definition of linguistic competence, the concept of communicative competence refers to a speaker's ability to speak a language well in a variety of social situations. Communicative competence means knowing how grammar and vocabulary and even accent can change depending on who you are speaking to and in what situation. It means knowing about status and power relationships and how they affect what you can say and how you can say it. It means knowing how your ideas and stereotypes about gender, ethnicity, social class, and more can affect the way you speak to people you perceive as different from you.

Developing communicative competence in a language empowers you in important ways. It helps you to understand how to make your voice heard in a conversation and how to make it heard in such a way that people will pay attention, acknowledge your contribution, and give you credit for your ideas. It helps you to know how to address friends as well as strangers and to greet people appropriately. It helps you to learn how to ask for favors and how to accept or reject invitations. The idea of communicative competence provides an important tool for understanding and describing how real language functions in real situations.

Communicative Competence and Symbolic Capital: Language and Power

Related to the idea of communicative competence is the idea of **symbolic capital**, a term coined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1991). If you think of money as a kind of economic capital, then you can think of communicative competence as a kind of symbolic capital. Just as you can accumulate economic capital (money), you can also accumulate symbolic capital (communicative competence). Once you have either kind of capital you can spend it as you wish. Economic capital buys you MP3 players and textbooks and nice clothing and so on. Symbolic capital

“buys” you (or establishes your claim to) position and power in social and cultural contexts. Economic capital involves cash and perhaps also borrowing power. Symbolic capital involves every aspect of language, from pronunciation (accent) and word choice and grammar to styles of speaking (or signing). Symbolic capital even includes spelling and writing style. One way to think about symbolic capital is that having a lot of it means that people will assume you also have the right to be listened to in a conversation and they will assume that what you say actually matters. This is important because the right to be listened to is a crucial source of power and influence in any given situation.

So how do you “get” symbolic capital? One important way is to demonstrate communicative competence, or the ability to speak acceptably and “correctly” in any given social or cultural situation. Here’s an example of how it works. You learn a particular way of speaking, including pronunciation, word choice, grammar, style, and so forth, as you grow up, and if what you learn happens to be the same way of speaking that is used by the “in” group in your culture, or the way of speaking that is encouraged in school, then your teachers and other powerful people in the group will respond to you in very encouraging ways. You may have communicative competence, and therefore symbolic capital, in a more “marginalized” group, but if you come to school speaking like a member of that group then your teachers will not respond to you the same way as they do to children who learned the “in” group way of speaking. Most of us are not consciously aware of how differently we respond to different ways of speaking. But respond we do. And more and more studies show that children who already speak in ways that their teachers value do better in school, while those who speak differently are soon “turned off” by how their teachers (unconsciously) respond to them. The ideas of communicative competence and symbolic capital explain why my father, a child of immigrant parents, continually insisted that I speak a “standard” kind of English and not the colloquial New Yorkese that I was surrounded with. I learned very early to say *you* and not *youse guys* or to say *ask* and not *aks*. I suppressed a lot of my competency with New Yorkese in the process and many of my friends accused me of trying to sound “uppity,” but I understand now that my father was trying to help me to accumulate enough symbolic capital to do well in school. If only he had known that I needed symbolic capital both in school and among my peers. But more about that in Chapter 9.

Linguistic Communities and Speech Communities

You can see that communicative competence and symbolic capital do not operate in a vacuum. Both are closely linked to the fact that language is used in specific situations and by specific groups of people. To describe these kinds of groups and situations we use the terms linguistic

community and speech community. A **linguistic community** is a group of people who share a single language variety, and the rules for using it in everyday communication, and who focus their identity around that language. Perhaps the people who speak Basque, and who focus their identity on the speaking of Basque, could be considered a linguistic community, although many Basque speakers also speak Spanish as well as other languages. Perhaps the people who build their identity around the fact that they speak a revived Native American language could be considered a linguistic community, but again, most Native Americans speak other languages such as English, French, Spanish, and more. You can see that it is difficult to define a linguistic community with precision.

A **speech community**, in contrast, is a group of people who share one or more varieties of language and the rules for using any or all of those varieties in everyday communication. While a linguistic community is, by definition, monolingual, a speech community can be multilingual and multidialectal. When I lived in the Comoro Islands, I was part of a speech community in which individuals had access to (and shared) as many as eight different languages and dialects, including Shinzwani, Shingazidja, Shimwali, and Shimaori (the four language varieties of the Comoro Islands themselves), KiSwahili, Malagasy, French, and Arabic. Although I could not speak all of these languages, many individuals could and many were quite proficient at codeswitching and language hopping, carefully restricting themselves to the linguistic resources of whatever social group they happened to be in at the moment and paying attention to aspects of communicative competence in each situation. I was always impressed at how individuals were able to navigate through all of those different languages and competencies without becoming confused, but from the standpoint of linguistic anthropology one of the most important things to learn from this example is that there are indeed places where—unlike in the United States—multilingualism is the norm and is highly valued.

Communities of Practice

Related to the idea of a speech community is the concept of a **community of practice**, or a group of individuals who interact regularly, developing unique ways of doing things together (Lave and Wenger 1991). Groups like this may develop around specific activities, such as a choir group that rehearses together regularly or the members of a team that plays together, or they may develop around specific memberships, such as the members of a family group or the members of a sailing club or the members of a Star Trek fan club. They may be limited to a particular time frame, such as the group of individuals that participate in an archaeological field school together or the language-creating group that you might have joined as a member of a linguistic anthropology class or even

the conversation-partner dyad that you were assigned to as a member of the same class. Or they may be ongoing, like an email discussion list or a virtual bulletin board or a blogspot (LeBlanc 2005). Members of a community of practice may stay in touch for years or may never see one another again after the particular activity that they were involved in has been completed. The point is that communities of practice exist in which individuals establish ways of speaking together, at least for a time, and that it is important to understand language use within such communities, as well as within the larger speech community that such individuals also belong to.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION: AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE IN ACTION

In the 1960s, Dell Hymes began to develop an effective fieldwork methodology for studying language in its social and cultural contexts. The new methodology, called the **ethnography of speaking**, was designed to be an ethnography that focused on describing and analyzing the ways that people use language in real situations. If, as Malinowski had suggested, all aspects of a culture were intertwined anyway, then an ethnography that focused on language would provide significant insights into other aspects of a culture as well. Also called the **ethnography of communication**, Hymes's methodology inspired several generations of linguistic anthropologists to go beyond the dictionary-and-grammar approach to learning languages and to pay attention to how language was used in everyday situations in different cultures. It encouraged scholars to pay closer attention to specific situations and to try to analyze how they are defined and how access to different situations is also defined (Bourdieu 1977, 1991). As the study of language broadened to incorporate research into the social and cultural settings of language use, anthropologists began to develop a much better understanding of the impact of social and cultural contexts on language use. In fact, most of our contemporary understandings of the connections among language, gender, ethnicity, and social power have come from ethnographies of communication.

Doing an Ethnography of Communication: Analyzing Communicative Competence

How do linguistic anthropologists learn the basics of communicative competence in a new speech community? The same way they learn the basic structure of a language or a culture—by doing fieldwork, by living

with a group of people and learning not only how to pronounce words and string them together into meaningful sentences but also the situations in which those words and sentences make sense or are appropriate or even when they are not appropriate. Living in another culture and paying attention to how that culture influences the ways in which people use their language is the best way to understand the kind of communicative competence that Dell Hymes was talking about and to appreciate the ways that communicative competence leads to the acquisition of symbolic capital. The resulting report, written up for others to read, becomes an ethnography of communication—a description of what communicative competence means and how symbolic capital works in the speech community you are studying.

S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G: An Acronym to Guide Research

Hymes suggested that students and fieldworkers attend to seven basic areas of research: setting, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres. Together they form the acronym **S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G**. Exploring the depth and range of each of these areas should give you a good sense of how language is used in specific speech communities. Although each aspect is complexly interrelated with all of the other aspects, we will go through them one by one, pointing out some of the interactions. You will probably be able to think of other examples from your own experience.

Setting/Situation **Setting/situation** refers to the place in which the conversation is taking place in its broadest sense and the overall psychological feeling of the place. Where are we? In a house, in a lecture hall, at a Quaker meeting, in a noisy bar? All of this will make a difference in how we speak. In each possible location, a speech community will have specific and unwritten ideas about what is “normal” conversation or discourse, what can be said, what is appropriate or not appropriate, who should be granted entry into the location, who can speak, who should listen, and so on. In a North American classroom, for example, it is generally assumed that the professor will lecture or engage the students in a discussion and that the students will not interrupt the lecture or each other; nor will they shout obscenities in the middle of the lecture, nor will they get up and walk out of the classroom midway through the lecture, nor will they arrive late. Further, the professor will be prepared and will not mutter incomprehensible aphorisms, nor will he or she burst into song. Setting and situation can also affect the specific kinds of responses people are likely to make. The answer to “How are you?” will be different, for example, in a doctor’s office than in almost any other location. Also, the meaning of an utterance can change depending on setting and situation. For example, if your friend exclaims “Whew! It’s

hot!" outdoors, she might just be trying to start a conversation about the weather, while if she says the same thing indoors, she might making an indirect request for the air conditioning to be turned on. A consideration of the setting or situation will help you to figure out which meaning to assign to the words you hear.

Some of these seem like obvious expectations, but some may not be. For example, what about students' ability to ask questions? Can they interrupt as needed when they are confused, or must they wait until the professor asks for questions? I have had the experience of teaching exchange students from Japan who do not ask questions out loud in the classroom but, rather, save them for the end of class. These students generally come to the front of the room to ask me their questions after class has ended. I thought these students were just shy until they explained to me that it is considered impolite and wasteful of the other students' time to ask individual questions aloud in Japanese classrooms. Individual questions are not seen as potentially helpful to other students who might have the same questions but, rather, as personal failures to understand, and so they are saved for the end of class and brought to the professor on an individual basis. North American students in classrooms in Japan would probably find themselves being hushed by other students or treated as rude interrupters if they were to try to ask questions American-style. On the other hand, in Koranic schools in the Comoro Islands students are expected to read aloud, at their own pace, while the instructor circulates around in the classroom listening to the different children to see how well they are reading, and pausing to help or correct students who need specific kinds of help.

Participants **Participants** refers to who can or should be involved in various speech events or conversations and what is expected of the various individuals. Again, this is closely correlated with a number of other aspects. Who is speaking, as well as who is being spoken to, may affect the conversation. In North America, children, even when present, are generally expected not to contribute to adult conversations, as expressed in the folk saying, "Children should be seen and not heard." In addition, in the same speech community, adults often are careful about what they say when there are children in the room, not so much as to avoid offending the children, but to avoid having the children repeat what they hear in other contexts. This concern is reflected in the saying "Little pitchers [meaning the little children] have big ears [meaning that children, even those who are politely silent, are often listening to the adults conversing]." (See Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.3: *Fais Do Do*.)

In some cultures nonhumans are also considered to be conversational participants. In the Comoro Islands, for example, ghosts and spirits are thought to speak through individuals who have entered into a state of trance, and one can have conversations with them. Sometimes

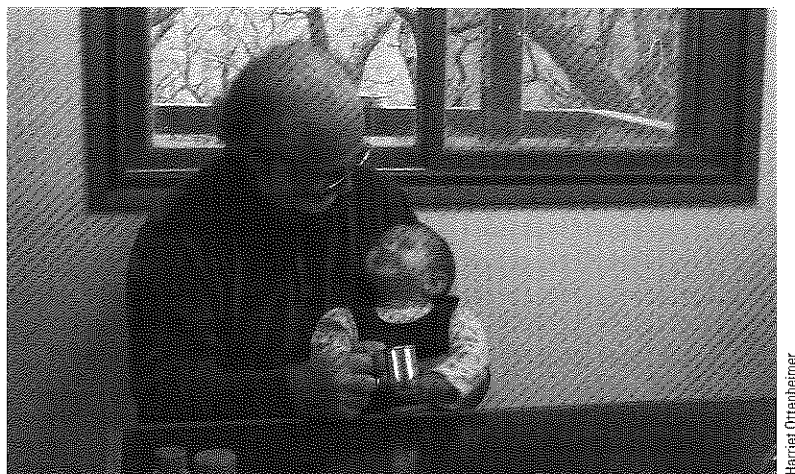


FIGURE 5.1 This grandfather encourages his granddaughter to become a participant in the conversation.

the spirits are consulted for help with diagnosing illnesses or suggesting remedies. Deities are also thought to speak through individuals in several west African religious settings, as well as in some African-derived religions in the Americas. Most of the time, the individuals through whom deities, ghosts, or spirits communicate are in a state of religious trance when they serve as mediums of this sort, and they generally claim not to remember what they have said when they awake from their trance. Another example comes from New Guinea, where bird songs are thought to represent the voices of spirits of the dead (Feld 1982/1990).

Sometimes expectations about the participants in a speech situation affect the ways in which hearers understand what is said. In a famous experiment, sixty-two undergraduate native speakers of American English were asked to listen to a lecture that had been tape-recorded by a native speaker of American English from central Ohio, while viewing a slide of the "lecturer." Half of the students were shown a slide of a European American woman lecturer. The other half were shown a slide of an Asian woman lecturer. Both "lecturers" were shown in the same setting and pose, both were approximately the same size, and both wore their hair in the same style. The students who listened to the lecture while viewing the Asian "lecturer" tended to report that the lecturer had an Asian accent, and many of those students scored lower on tests of comprehension of the lecture (Rubin 1992). Stereotypes about men and women also seem to affect how they are actually heard. Although many Westerners buy into the popular idea that men's and women's speech styles are different (men speak less, women speak more, men speak more directly, women are more sympathetic and indirect) most recent research suggests that men and women are *heard* as speaking differently because

 Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.3

FAIS DO DO

In New Orleans, graduate students brought their children with them to dinners and parties and settled them into a separate room from the main action, checking on them from time to time to make sure they were playing quietly or dropping off to sleep as the evening wore on. The practice was referred to as *fais do do* from the French Cajun, and the expression meant something like 'put to sleep'; and since we were in Louisiana we all learned to get along with having children around, even at large gatherings. The children would come into the central gathering place if they needed anything, and they would "interrupt" just enough to get the attention of one of the responsible adults, who would then take them back to the children's room and take care of their needs and check on the other children. I liked this idea and adopted it readily, only in part because it promised to save money on babysitters. But a few years later, I was disappointed to discover that it did not transfer easily to my new community in Kansas, where children were expected to stay at home while their parents went out. It only took a few tries to discover the discomfort that my new friends expressed with having young children around as even marginal participants in various events where conversation might be taking place.

HJO

they are *expected* to speak differently, not because they actually do speak differently (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Cameron, 2007). Clearly, expectations of and attitudes about participants in a speech event can affect the way people hear the speech that is presented to them.

Ends *Ends* refers to the reasons for which the speech event is taking place, or the goals that people have in speaking in a particular situation. For example, in some cases a shopper might try bargaining for the purpose of getting a lower price, but in plenty of cases bargaining is seen as a way of establishing a social contact between shopper and seller—establishing an actual purchase price is a secondary consideration (see Doing Linguistic Anthropology 5.1: Bargaining in Mexico).

The young man who engaged Dr. Stirland in conversation, in the story that opened this chapter, had a specific end in mind; he wanted to ask for a ride. Understanding the ways in which people use language to achieve various ends is an important skill. If your goal is to ask for a fa-



Doing Linguistic Anthropology 5.1

BARGAINING IN MEXICO

Two anthropology professors from the United States were shopping at a crafts market in Mexico City. They had just completed an intensive Spanish course and wanted to practice their language skills. They spotted some small saddle-shaped leather stools and inquired, in Spanish, about the price. The shopkeeper gave them a figure and, while they were thinking, another couple of tourists inquired, in English, about the price of the little stools. When the shopkeeper quoted them a price, the English-speaking tourists promptly paid it, selected a pair of leather stools, and thanked the shopkeeper warmly. The shopkeeper turned to the professors and said, in Spanish, something that sounded like "Stupid gringos. They don't ever take the time to bargain." The professors took this as a suggestion that they should "take the time to bargain," and when they did so they found that the shopkeeper became very much more friendly toward them, joking and teasing about the cost of his materials and the state of the world economy. By the time they had settled on a price, they felt like they had not only gotten an excellent price but they had made a friend. As a bonus, they had also gotten a lesson in communicative competence and a recommendation for an inexpensive restaurant nearby.

HJO

vor, you need to know how best to make your request, given the specific culture and the specific situation. Should you hint at the favor or come right out and ask for it?

The same cautions apply in asking for directions and giving directions. You might think that asking for directions is a fairly clear-cut situation: you're lost and you need someone to tell you how to get where you want to go. Likewise, giving directions should be equally clear cut: Either you can provide directions or you can't. Yet most New Yorkers I know will give you directions whether they know the way or not. Your target might be three blocks to the west, but they will happily send you four blocks to the east. What's going on here? Well, most New Yorkers do not want to seem ignorant. You've asked for directions, so they give you some. *Your* goal may be to get information and to get to your destination, but *their* goal is to appear knowledgeable. They know you will ask someone else around the corner, and someone else again, until you find your destination. Clearly, the ends in this situation are very different for the different participants.

Another example of differing ends in a speech situation comes from research done by linguistic anthropologist Deborah Tannen. Tannen suggests that there are two types of speech styles: "rapport-style" and "report-style" speech. In rapport-style speech, individuals are talking to establish rapport. People may insert words of encouragement throughout or end one another's sentences to convey how much "in tune" they are with each other. When they tell each other similar stories, they do so to provide encouragement to one another (saying things like "that happened to me, too"). In report-style speech, individuals take separate turns to speak. They rely on eye contact to know when each turn to speak begins and ends. When they tell each other similar stories, they do so in a somewhat competitive environment (saying things like "I did something like that, but even better"). Of course, each style of speech has different ends, but you can imagine how uncomfortable each type of speaker would be in a conversation with the other type. Report-style speakers tend to feel interrupted by rapport-style speakers and don't quite understand why the stories all sound like "more of the same." Rapport-style speakers miss the encouraging insertions and don't quite understand why the stories seem designed to be "better" than theirs.

Some scholars think that the more competitive-seeming report-style is more characteristic of men's speech in the United States, while others argue that it is associated more generally with individuals who have, or are attempting to gain, access to power and status, and that it has little or nothing to do with gender. In fact, the relationship between gender and power is complex, in the United States as well as elsewhere, and it is interesting to see the degree to which language can be used to convey these details. I am reminded of a joke in which a young woman comes home from grocery shopping, trudges up the three flights of stairs to her apartment with two of the grocery sacks in her arms, and informs her young computer-hacker husband that there are many more sacks of groceries downstairs in the car. According to the joke, the young husband takes his wife's comment to be informative, rather than a request for help. The joke is supposed to be about the literal mindedness of computer hackers, but it also reveals our ideas about how men and women attempt to communicate with one another. Tannen's 1990 article "Who's Interrupting?" is a classic description of the kinds of misunderstandings that occur when people with these different speech styles converse, and although it focuses on gender differences in the use of the two styles, it also addresses issues of ethnicity and power and the complexities of assigning a style to a group of people.

Act Sequence **Act sequence** refers to the actual sequence of events. What words are used? By whom? Who begins? Who continues? How are turns taken? What exactly gets said? A classroom in which the professor starts off by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, . . ." will have a different

tone than one in which the professor begins with, "Good morning, everyone!" I have attended lectures in which the speaker begins with a rousing "Good morning!" or "Good evening!" and expects the audience to respond loudly with a similar greeting. In fact, if the audience does not respond loudly enough the speaker will repeat the greeting a few times, coaching the audience on the "proper" response. Speech act scholars call these kinds of greeting and response exchanges "adjacency pairs."

Hymes and others use the term **speech acts** to describe the specific utterances that people make, and some analysts even classify speech acts with reference to the intentions of the speakers (to command, to promise, to apologize, and so forth). "Do your homework!" and "eat your veggies!" are commands, for example, while "I promise to do my homework after supper" or "I'll eat my veggies if you eat yours" are more like promises. "I'm so sorry I didn't do my homework" is an example of an apology. Is "I'm so sorry, but the dog ate my homework" also an apology? Or does it need to be assigned to a different category, like "excuse"? Of course, intentions are not always clear from the actual words used, as you know from reading about indirection.

The term **speech event** has been used to refer to one or more speech acts involving one or more participants and can include everything from exchanging greetings to making apologies, telling jokes, delivering speeches, ordering meals, having conversations, and more. Much research has gone into analyzing the rules and conventions that different groups of speakers have for how speech events can unfold in different situations. Finally, the term **speech situation** refers to the entire setting or situation in which people speak. For example, a classroom, a conference, a party, a graduation ceremony, a rafting trip, or any other situation you can think of where language might be used could be considered a speech situation. These three concepts—speech act, speech event, and speech situation—provide additional focus and specificity for analyzing language in real situations.

The kinds of act sequences involved in greetings have received much study. Some are fairly restrictive, with formulas guiding who says what and in what order. Others are fairly loosely structured, with the only requirement being that the speech acts occur in pairs (someone offers a greeting and someone responds). As with almost any example of speaking, the degree to which one is expected to follow the formulas depends on the situation and the culture. In Japan, there are certain formulas for expressing condolences and it is widely preferred that people use those formulas. Trying to think of your own words to say to a bereaved family member, as many Americans seem to prefer, generally results in awkward and embarrassing situations (Yamada 1997).

In the Comoros, greetings tend to be formulized fairly extensively. Men and women use different strategies in greetings, as well. For example, on entering a room, a woman is expected to utter the formulaic

mungunahunusuru, which means something like 'may God bless this place', and the women in the room are expected to reply with *sontsi*, meaning 'for everyone'. Men generally say that they can't pronounce *mungunahunusuru*, claiming that it is too long a word, but every woman is expected to be able to do so effortlessly, and in order to fit into Comorian daily life I had to learn to pronounce the word and use it appropriately. Men use the much shorter word *kwez*, meaning something like 'respectful greetings to you', with one another; to greet a woman they might say *kwez bweni* 'greetings to you, ma'am'; and both women and men greeting another man can say *kwez mwenye* 'greetings to you, sir'. Beyond this, there is a range of exchanges in which people ask for 'news' (*habari*) and are told that the news is 'fine' (*njema*) or 'excellent' (*njema fetre*). One can ask for news about specific things, such as news of family, work, health, and so on. When I was still learning these formulas, one old man asked me for news of the world, and when I replied with the expected 'fine' he broke out into laughter. Of course, he had led me beyond the normal expected range of items one might ask about, but I hadn't developed enough competency with the language to know how to back out of the situation gracefully. (See Cross-Language Miscommunication 4.1: News of the World for a more complete accounting of this story.)

While in the Comoros greetings can convey information about the gender of the speakers, in Senegal, in west Africa, Wolof greetings seem to convey information about relative status. According to linguistic anthropologist Judith Irvine, among the Wolof when two people meet, the person of lesser status is expected to offer greetings to the person of higher status. This sometimes means that two people, each of whom wishes to be considered higher in status, may try to wait one another out, to see who will break down and begin the greetings. It is considered inappropriate and embarrassing, however, to meet someone and not immediately engage in greetings—the silence is too awkward. So one of the two individuals may try to solve the dilemma by offering a briefer-than-normal greeting and then asking the other person why he didn't greet him (Irvine 1974). This reminds me a bit of when I lived in New Orleans and everyone would rush to be the first to get and respond to a greeting. Often people would greet one another simultaneously with *alright* (as if someone had already asked how they were); but as far as I know, nothing was communicated about status in such exchanges, except perhaps to suggest how "hip" all of the greeters were.

Sometimes silence is the most appropriate form of greeting, and, as such, it should probably also be considered an act sequence. According to linguistic anthropologist Keith Basso (1972), silence is appropriate among Western Apache in Arizona, especially when you are interacting with strangers or initiating courtship or welcoming children home from school. In each of these situations, people prefer to remain silent, sometimes for extended periods of time, to give the other individuals time

to adjust to a new or changing situation. In the case of interacting with strangers or initiating courtship, one doesn't yet know how the new individual will act or want to be treated or spoken to, so spending some time in silence together is deemed a good way to gauge the situation and judge how well the two individuals may get along. Speaking too soon might be taken as a sign of being too pushy or demanding, and people tend to distrust people, especially strangers, who speak "too quickly." In fact, there is quite a bit of joking among Western Apache about the stereotypical "whiteman" who enters a room talking, asking intrusive questions such as "How are you?" and "How you feeling?" and ordering people around with phrases like "Come in" and "Sit down" (Basso 1972, 81-98). In the case of interacting with children returning home from school, parents want to allow their children some time to get readjusted to being at home, and they also want some time to assess how their children have changed before talking with them. You can probably think of how difficult it would be for individuals from cultures preferring silence to interact with individuals from cultures preferring immediate and elaborate greetings. On the other hand, sometimes you can find similar patterns in different cultures. One of my Kiowa students reported enjoying long periods of silent sitting with his Japanese conversation partner. Even though their task was to spend time conversing with one another, the silence seemed, to both of them, like a suitable way to get comfortable with each other. Analyzing speech acts and speech events has become the focus of methodologies such as Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis, both of which take much of their inspiration from early work in the ethnography of speaking. We will discuss Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis a little further on in this chapter.

Key Key refers to the mood or spirit in which communication takes place. A funeral in the United States is generally hushed and solemn, with people speaking in low tones. In contrast, some funerals in highland Ecuador involve loud wailing and crying, and there are communities in eastern Europe where professional mourners are hired to sing the loud wailing cries that are necessary to give a funeral the appropriate tone.

The language you use may also be different depending on the formality or informality of an occasion. An informal tone can be conveyed in English by contractions (ain't, goin' fishin'), by condensed pronunciations (coulda, gonna, hafta), by prepositional endings (Where you gonna be *at*?), and by word choice. A formal tone generally requires more "careful" speech.

Joking and teasing may be appropriate keys for communication among some individuals or in some situations. In the Comoro Islands, teasing is often used among close friends, and strangers may be teased to test their acceptability as members of a group. When my husband was first learning to speak Shinzwani, he was given an obscene word

and told—in apparent seriousness—that it was the word for ‘banana’. He was then instructed to go to the market to buy bananas. You can imagine the scene when he asked the women selling bananas in the market for something other than bananas! Both of us soon learned how to recognize when we were being teased (one clue is the mock seriousness used) and to respond appropriately. The example I mentioned earlier, of being asked to evaluate the ‘news of the world’, was probably an example of my being teased and tested early in my language learning.

Instrumentalities **Instrumentalities** refers to the channels that are used (speaking, writing, signing, signaling with flags, etc.) as well as the varieties of language that speakers use (language, dialect, register, etc.). Here we need to pause to define varieties of language. I have been deliberately using the word “variety” because it is a little vague, and it has saved me from having to define whether I am talking about a language, a dialect, or a register. But it is time to address the difficulties involved with using these three words.

The standard way to differentiate a “language” from a “dialect” is to test for what is called **mutual intelligibility**. If two or more ways of speaking are “mutually unintelligible”—in other words if the speakers can’t understand one another—then they are considered to be different languages. If I speak French to you and you speak Italian to me and we don’t understand one another, then we can be said to be speaking two different languages. If, on the other hand, two or more ways of speaking are “mutually intelligible”—in other words if speakers *can* understand one another—then they are said to be dialects of a single language. For example, if I speak New York English to you and you speak California English to me, and we understand one another, then we can be said to be speaking the same language. We would probably call this language English, and we would call our two varieties of English “dialects” of English. **Dialects** of a language are mutually intelligible varieties of that language.

The problem with all of this is that mutual intelligibility is not always so clear cut. Politics and attitudes can get in the way. Suppose I refuse to understand your California variety of English, deeming it not worth the effort to overcome the differences in pronunciation, word choice, and grammar. In that case, our two varieties of English would have to be considered different languages. There are some people who think that Czech and Slovak are different languages, and some who think they are dialects of a single language. Up until the 1800s, there were many people who thought that Spanish and Portuguese were dialects of the same language; they called the language Spanish and regarded Portuguese as a minor variation from the norm.

This brings up another aspect of the language-and-dialect difference. Many people act as if languages are real entities and that dialects are

lesser varieties of those entities, spoken primarily by splinter groups or lower classes or uneducated individuals, or some other group that varies in some way from "the norm." Generally, whatever is regarded as "the norm" is considered to be the "standard" way of speaking, and all other variants are called "dialects," or sometimes even "nonstandard dialects." Typically, the members of the out-group can speak and understand the variety that is considered standard, while the members of the in-group claim not to understand any variety that is deemed nonstandard.

Registers suffer from the same difficulty of definition as dialects. A register is a variety of a language that is appropriate in specific situations. For example, a language may have a formal register, to be used in making speeches, and an informal register, to be used in ordinary conversation. A language might also have a scientific register, to be used in discussing laboratory experiments, or a joking register, to be used in teasing and taunting. Some registers may enjoy more prestige than others, and some may be looked down on. Some people may be able to shift registers easily, and others may have difficulty understanding registers used by groups that they don't belong to. In some cases, people may actually talk about registers as if they are different, nonunderstandable languages. You can see why all of this makes it difficult to measure mutual intelligibility in real situations of language use and why it makes it so difficult to define such concepts as language, dialect, and register with pinpoint accuracy.

Nonetheless, it is specifically language, dialect, and register that the concept of instrumentalities is concerned with. What languages are being used? Are they spoken or signed or written? What dialects, registers, or other varieties of language are available for speakers to choose from? Especially interesting to anthropologists are questions about the attitudes people have about registers, dialects, and languages. What is being expressed when someone makes a choice among the varieties of language available to him or her? How do the choices that people make in language variety help to establish their social identity? How do people use these choices to establish authenticity or claims to symbolic capital? What impressions do we form about people based on the languages, dialects, and registers that they use? How do we recognize and respond to authenticity, communicative competence, and symbolic capital? And finally, what varieties of language are deemed appropriate to use in what situations and how do we react to inappropriate uses of language? We return to this discussion in Chapter 9. For the moment, it is important to focus on the fact that there are many choices available to us when we use our languages.

Cousin Joe, a blues singer I worked with in New Orleans, was intensely aware of the ways in which choices could be made between standard and dialectal forms of English. When he narrated his autobiography into a tape recorder he switched speaking styles depending on

what he was talking about, using Standard English to describe events, but switching into dialect (particularly African American Vernacular English) to narrate conversations. By switching like this, he gave his characters a folksy down-home quality at the same time that he gave himself a more authorial tone, which seemed appropriate for him as the author of his intended book. Some of the time, he used different pronunciations to signal the difference (*going to* vs. *gonna*), some of the time he used different words to signal the difference (*father* vs. *daddy*), and some of the time he used different grammatical constructions (*you don't have* vs. *you ain't got no*) to signal differences in voice (Joseph and Ottenheimer 1987). (See also Cross-Language Miscommunication 2.2: Race, Place, and the Power of Frames, for an example of Cousin Joe's choice of language to frame a specific situation.)

Differences of pronunciation, word choice, or grammar can signal identity in a number of ways. In the Comoro Islands, for example, on the island of Anjouan, certain sounds are pronounced differently in different towns. In the town of Mutsamudu, on one side of the island, men produce a *v* sound with their upper teeth on their lower lips, and women produce a different-sounding *v* by bringing their lips close together. On the other side of the island, in the town of Domoni, everyone produces the *v* sound with both lips. This means that men from Domoni sound effeminate to speakers from Mutsamudu, and men from Mutsamudu are heard as having a different accent when they travel to Domoni. Women, in this case, can move easily between the two towns without encountering any difference in how they are heard.

Here is another example. Growing up in New York, I learned to drop my *r* sounds and stretch out my vowels so that the words *fourth floor* sounded like *fauth flaw*. This made me sound "in" with my peers, but as it turns out it also gave me a lower-class accent. Moving to Kansas, I discovered that people stretched their vowels and inserted *r* sounds so that *wash* ended up sounding like *warsh*. Most Kansans today avoid this *r* insertion and vowel stretching because they feel it makes them sound too "rural." In Boston, leaving out the *r* sound in words like *yard* (so that it sounds more like *yahd*) is a mark of upper-class status. It's actually fairly arbitrary which sounds are used to mark which kinds of things, but it's clear that people do pay attention to different pronunciations and connect them with differences of region, gender, ethnicity, status, degree of education, and much more.

Word choice is another way to signal differences in status identity, to display symbolic capital, or to signal something important about the situation you find yourself in. In Java, for example, people are expected to choose their words according to their social status, as well as the social status of the person they are speaking with. There are words for high-, middle-, and low-status speech (Geertz 1960, 248–60). In the

United States, someone might choose to say that something is *wonderful* or that it is *def*, thus imparting significant information about the identity of the speaker, as well as the formality or informality of the situation. Multilingual speakers might insert words from one of their languages into sentences spoken in another of their languages; often this is done because the inserted word is "just better" somehow, or because it expresses something otherwise inexpressible, or because the person wants to sound more worldly. If I decide to use a French word in my English sentence, and I take the trouble to give it an authentic (I hope) French pronunciation, I am probably trying to impress you with my knowledge of, and access to, French. One of the points of noting word choice as an element of instrumentalities is to note these kinds of social uses of language and the ways in which speakers take advantage of them or are constrained by them.

There are some interesting examples, too, of ways in which people use different grammatical patterns when they speak. Some Native American languages require that men and women form plurals differently from one another, for example. A study done in the 1950s by linguistic anthropologist John Fischer showed that English-speaking children in New England formed verbs differently according to gender: girls tended to use *-ing* endings on their verbs, and boys tended to use *-in* endings. He also discovered that degree of formality influenced verb endings as well: verbs that described informal activities received the *-in* ending more often than verbs that described more formal activities (*runnin*, *spittin* vs. *sitting*, *eating*).

Occasionally the instrumentalities chosen may be coded for secrecy. Pig Latins and similar play languages, where words are disguised by manipulating their parts, are often used by children to hide what they are saying from their peers or from their parents. A different example of coding for secrecy is the special language developed by Navajo Code-Talkers during World War II, in which English words were first substituted for other English words and then Navajo words were used instead of the substituted words. In this way, Navajo speakers could relay battle-sensitive information over the radio without fear of being understood. Enemy forces were never able to crack this Navajo code, partly because of the double level of substitution and partly because Navajo was not well known by the enemy decoders. Knowledge and use of Pig Latins and other forms of secret language also helps you to establish membership in "in" groups.

Of course speakers in multilingual communities have even more choices of speech varieties. An important goal of an ethnography of communication should be to document the conditions and situations in which individuals might choose one speech variety over another or might choose to mix elements of different speech varieties, and to

describe the effects of each of those choices socially and culturally. Paying attention to the instrumentalities that people use when they speak is a major part of understanding language use in real situations. Chapter 9 will discuss instrumentalities further, especially with regard to the choices people make about language varieties.

Norms Norms refers to the expectations that speakers have about appropriateness of speech use. Is it okay to use speech in a particular setting or is silence preferred? Who should speak? Who should listen? How loud is too loud? Should people speak up? Is it okay for specific people to use specific kinds of speech in specific kinds of settings? Are some kinds of language taboo in some situations? The norms attached to speech behavior also affect how someone's behavior is interpreted, judged, and understood in any given situation. In some kinds of religious settings, it is most appropriate to worship in silence, for example, while in others, responding to the preacher with shouts of encouragement is appropriate and expected. In still others, everyone is expected to chant the prayers aloud, each at his or her own pace, or to speak out "in tongues" as the spirit moves them or to take a turn "testifying."

In Madagascar, men are expected to use indirect speech whenever possible, while women prefer directness in speech and are therefore the ones who do most of the buying and selling in the marketplace, where direct speech is more highly valued (Keenan [Ochs] 1974/1989). In Texas, coon-dog sellers are expected to lie about the qualities and abilities of the dogs they are selling; stretching the truth is taken for granted by sellers and buyers alike. The story about corn pudding (see Cross-Language Miscommunication 5.1: Corn Pudding) is an example of how young people in the United States find ways to be polite without saying what they really mean. Is the young woman lying when she says, "It's good corn pudding"? If so, is lying justified when the norms of speaking emphasize being polite?

An important subject covered under norms is the question of taboos and avoidances. Are there certain words or expressions that cannot be said in certain situations or in the presence of certain people? Are there certain words or expressions that can't be used at all? In many cultures, children do not call their parents by name; they use kinship terms instead, such as *Mom* or *Dad*, or *Mother* or *Father*. In some places, young people are expected to use special terms of respect for their parents-in-law. In others, young people are expected to avoid talking to their parents-in-law as much as possible. As for outright taboos, many cultures taboo words referring to sexual functions and body parts; some cultures taboo the use of words for supernatural beings or powerful deities. Some cultures taboo the name of a person who has died, others



Doing Linguistic Anthropology 5.2

S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G IN THE CLASSROOM

I sometimes ask my students to do an impromptu ethnography of the speaking that goes on in our classroom. Here are the kinds of things they come up with. The setting/situation is fairly obvious, but sometimes we describe the physical setting of the room, including the technological gadgetry and the unfriendly “no food or drink” signs posted on the door, as well as the psychological setting, including how the time of day affects our general sleepiness or how an upcoming exam affects everyone’s level of tension. Of course, the participants are usually just the students and me, unless it is conversation partner match-up day. I sometimes joke that my ends are to open their minds and pour in vast quantities of information, while it seems their ends are to find out what will be on the next exam. Act sequences vary from day to day, but there is always a handing back of papers and the making of announcements before we settle down to covering the day’s material. The key is generally serious, although I sometimes crack jokes or tell stories to keep things lively and try to keep people awake and engaged. I tend to switch instrumentalities as much as I can, using my New Yorkese or my Shizwani to drive home points about choice. PowerPoint slides and workbook exercises add examples from other languages and channels of communication. Following the norms of a reasonably standard classroom experience can sometimes prove difficult for us because everyone wants to contribute an experience or an example, and we can get off track fairly easily. Students like to point out that we use a wide range of genres in the classroom, going beyond lectures to include personal narratives and the communal working out of workbook exercises. One of the things we discover by turning the lens of an ethnography of speaking onto ourselves is the degree to which our classroom itself has become a speech community. It’s a useful and interesting exercise.

HJO

name their children after people who have recently died, and still others name their children after individuals who are still living. In today’s global society, when we interact with individuals of many different cultures, it is important to understand the various norms attached to speaking by different groups of people.

Genres **Genres** refers to different kinds of speech acts or events. Although we can create a long list of genres, such as lectures, conversations, gossip, performances, sermons, jokes, riddles, lies, proverbs, and so on, it is important to be aware of the possibility that different cultures may include different genres in the list. Zen koans have elements of European proverbs, but are not exactly the same thing. Haiku poetry is a specific genre that is different from other genres of poetry. Two genres that people in the Comoro Islands would add to the list are *hale* and *hadisi*. Both are kinds of stories, but they are distinctly different from one another. *Hale* (pronounced ha-lei) are old stories that often have animal characters in them, often have imaginary or fantastic events taking place, and generally have morals at the ends. They begin with the formula *hale, hale, hoho*, which is a lot like 'once upon a time, a long time ago', and they are a little bit like European and American fairy tales but also include some tall tales as well. *Hadisi* are stories about historical or near-historical events and generally have human or heroic characters. They are more like European and American histories, but they might also include legends as well. An ethnography of communication should attend to the different kinds of genres that a particular speech community identifies and uses. (See Doing Linguistic Anthropology 5.2: S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G in the Classroom.)

OTHER APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE IN ACTION

Conversation Analysis

A slightly different approach to studying language in action, Conversation Analysis was developed primarily by sociologists in the late 1960s and early 1970s for analyzing talk-in-action. **Conversation Analysis** (often referred to as CA) takes as its focus the close study of actual conversational exchanges. You could think of Conversation Analysis as focusing on the Act Sequence part of Hymes's model. The focus is on how people take turns in a conversation, and much of the work is done by analyzing tape recordings of actual conversations to discover the most common turn-taking strategies in a language as well as to uncover power relationships between individuals who are conversing. It is painstaking research, but many interesting and important insights have come from such close work, helping us to advance our understanding of Act Sequencing in context.

Contemporary conversation analysts often record and transcribe actual conversations to study act sequences and the ways that people use them. Linguistic anthropologist Deborah Tannen recorded a

Thanksgiving dinner conversation that she also participated in, and by analyzing exactly who said what and when and how they said it, she was able to see how instances of overlapping speech could be heard by participants as being cooperative rather than competitive. By showing this, she also was able to show that overlapping someone's speech (talking at the same time, adding words, completing other peoples' thoughts) was not necessarily the same thing as interrupting someone; it all depended who was speaking and in what situation. Linguistic anthropologist Donald Brenneis (1984) recorded gossip in Fiji, and by analyzing the transcriptions he was able to show how overlapping speech and the rhythms that people used to pace their turns helped to communicate relationships of solidarity among the speakers. Linguistic anthropologist Lanita Jacobs-Huey (2006) recorded conversations between hairdressers and clients in African American hair salons, and by analyzing the exchanges she was able to show how individuals negotiated positions of authority and expertise with regard to hair treatment at the same time that they created and reinforced personal, ethnic, and group identities.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis (often referred to as DA) is somewhat broader than Conversation Analysis, taking into account almost everything that an ethnography of communication might study. Like Conversation Analysis and like the Ethnography of Communication, **Discourse Analysis** takes real language in real situations as its focus and emphasizes understanding how authority and power are distributed and negotiated in verbal exchanges. Although the term was first used by the linguist Zelig Harris (1909–1992) in the 1950s (Harris 1952), the field that is known today as Discourse Analysis did not really develop until the 1960s and 70s, at roughly the same time as Conversation Analysis and the Ethnography of Communication. With a strong grounding in linguistics, Discourse Analysis often takes as its goal the discovery of rules that help to legitimate particular conversational practices as well as the ideas (or ideologies) that people have about languages and conversations. In some ways it might be said that the differences in approaches between the three approaches stem more from the different disciplines in which each one first started. Today all three approaches are used by a range of scholars, including linguists, anthropologists, linguistic anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, communication specialists, educators and more.

Discourse Analysts research a wide range of subjects, including sounds and intonation, gestures, syntax, words, style, meanings, speech acts, and so on. They examine different genres of discourse, such as how discourse is used in science, business, politics, education, the media,

and more. They look at the relations between how people talk and the contexts in which they talk. They look at how specific examples of sentence structure are formed by the situations in which people converse. They look at different kinds of interaction, and perhaps most important, they look at the relationship between discourse and power. You can see how there is significant overlap between Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, the Ethnography of Communication, and the idea of symbolic capital.



In the Field, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, Early 1990s

"Well, I started out at . . . where I assisted with . . . and then I was hired at . . . where I developed a program in . . . and then, um, and then I was promoted to . . . so now I was in charge of . . . and, oh yes, back when I was at . . . I also managed a special program in . . . and when I was at . . . I did something like that too, but I also have some experience with . . . and with . . ."

The candidate droned on, talking about his background, his career path, his skills, his accomplishments, and whatever else seemed to come into his head. There didn't seem to be any pause.

I looked around the table. My three colleagues on the interviewing committee sat in stunned silence. Their faces showed the same mix of concern and astonishment that I was feeling. At the start of the interview, one of us had asked the routine opening question, "So, tell us a little bit about yourself." Now, twenty minutes later, the candidate was still talking, going back and forth through his career history, filling in details and adding more depth, with no clear pause and no end in sight. We had interviewed three other candidates and nothing like this had happened to us. We were stumped.

And then, as often happens when I am stumped, the linguistic anthropologist in me took over and I was "in the field" again. I spent the next few minutes trying to observe the total scene, making mental notes about everything in it. It didn't take long before I noticed a pattern in the candidate's narration. Each "beginning" seemed to be preceded by a very tiny pause: "[pause] and then . . . [pause] and then . . . [pause] oh, and back when . . . [pause] but I also. . . ." I hadn't heard such tiny pauses since I had left New York City. Living in Kansas, where pauses are significantly longer, I had almost forgotten how to converse in "tiny-pause" style.

I decided to see if I could still use the style. "So!" I said, at the next tiny pause, "Can you give us an example of . . . ?" It was a question one

of the other committee members had asked the other candidates. And the candidate answered the question. Then, at the next tiny pause, I tried another committee member's question: "Have you ever had to deal with . . . ?" And then another one: "Can you discuss . . . ?" And so it went for the rest of the hour, with me asking all of the committee's regular questions and the candidate answering all of them in rapid-fire tiny-pause style. When the hour was up, the candidate took off for his next appointment and the committee gathered to prepare its report.

"How did you do that?" was my colleagues' first reaction.

"What?" I asked.

"Get a word in edgewise," they said. "How did you manage to do it?"

"I realized that he was using a different conversational style," I explained. "It goes faster than what we're used to in Kansas, and it has shorter pauses, but it's one I'm familiar with and can use. I'm only sorry it took me so long to recognize it."

HJO

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: ISSUES AND EXPECTATIONS

Sometimes you find yourself in the field when you least expect it. It's usually when something's "gone wrong" in a speech interaction. In the example, although we were all speaking English, it is clear that our candidate came from a different speech community than the one that we—the interviewers—belonged to. The fact that I had once belonged to a speech community similar to the candidate's made it easier for me to shift speech styles to accommodate to his way of talking. What happens when you don't already have access to different speech styles? What happens when you are not "multilingual" in this way?

When Things "Go Wrong": Understanding Cultural Miscues

Linguistic anthropologist Michael Agar has a useful answer for these kinds of dilemmas. Agar (1994) uses the phrase **rich point** to describe the kind of moment in which things "go wrong" in a speech situation. Anyone who moves between speech communities is liable to encounter rich points. Interestingly, rich points can't always be predicted. As Agar points out, rich points depend largely on the contrast between the cultures in question and between the expectations of the speech communities

involved. This is partly why most of the examples I have given throughout this chapter are so personal. They are rich points that occurred because of the contrast between my particular expectations, learned in my particular speech community, and other individuals' expectations, learned in their speech communities. It is entirely possible that anyone else reading this book would not have encountered the same rich points that I did. Rich points are a fairly personal thing.

Of course, each person is a member of a culture, and a speech community, and there is a strong possibility that most members of a particular speech community will have the same expectations about speech situations. That's why it's possible to write books and articles about "how to communicate with the X people" or "how people from X and Y cultures misunderstand one another." Books like that can serve as useful starting points, but it is possible to be misled by them as well. It's far better to rely on your own skills in identifying rich points. You will always bring something of your own culture to every experience, but you are still an individual, with individual understandings of your culture and speech community's expectations. That's why it's so difficult to write about rich points. It's just as difficult to write about cultural and linguistic relativity.

Using Linguistic Anthropology to Develop Communicative Competence

According to Agar, some people react to rich points by ignoring them and hoping they will "go away." Others react by assuming that the other person is behaving incorrectly and that nothing needs to be done, except perhaps for the other person to learn how to communicate better. In the case of the interview, everyone who met that particular candidate reacted more or less in this way, saying things like "I don't know what was wrong with that person; he didn't let me get a word in edgewise." People who know something about linguistic anthropology, however, can do better than this. Linguistic anthropology provides you with the tools to do field work, to analyze the rich points and to use them on your way to developing communicative competence in a new speech community.

How do you analyze rich points? Agar describes the process as taking three essential steps. He sums up the steps with the acronym **M-A-R**, which stands for "mistake," "awareness," and "repair." Let's take each of these concepts in turn.

Mistake refers to recognizing that a rich point has occurred. Something has gone wrong and communication has broken down somehow. In the case of the interview, the rich point occurred when I recognized that we weren't getting our questions answered because—it seemed—the candidate wasn't letting us talk. When I realized that twenty minutes had gone by since our first question, I knew that something was

definitely “wrong.” In the case of the young Native American asking for a ride, at the beginning of this chapter, the rich point occurred when I recognized that Dr. Stirland and the young man were “talking” to one another but not really communicating; he was telling her about his family, who lived over a thousand miles away, and she was smiling and nodding, and I was beginning to wonder what the point of the conversation was going to be. Was he going to ask her about her research? It didn’t seem so; he just continued telling her about his family. As I stood there in the warm Kansas sun, wondering what to do next, it struck me that we were in the middle of a rich point and that I was going to have to take steps to resolve the difficulty.

Awareness refers to recognizing that different expectations have caused the rich point to occur. The expectations may involve ideas about settings, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, genres, or anything else that is covered in the range of communicative competence in a particular speech community. Different expectations provide different “frames of reference” through which we might view our worlds; becoming aware of these different frames of reference is an important step in understanding the rich point, why it occurred, and what to do about it (see Chapter 2 for more about frames). Awareness makes it possible for you to recognize your own speech community’s expectations as just one of a range of possible ways of doing things. In the case of the interview, awareness occurred when I recognized the difference between the candidate’s pause style and ours. We expected longer pauses than we were getting. He expected questions in the pauses he was giving us. In our mostly white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant speech community, we took turns slowly, with minimal overlap and plenty of space between turns. (Sometimes I wonder about the extent to which this style was influenced by interaction with Native Americans in the region.) Our candidate was also white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, but had been raised in Germany and New York and (just as I had adopted Kansas speech styles) had picked up elements of the speech styles associated with speech communities in those places. In particular, he appeared to have picked up the overlapping tiny-pause style that is often associated with Jewish Americans in New York. It is also worth noting that overlapping speech is more often associated with women than with men, yet our candidate was male and our search committee members were all female.

Complications like this are instructive because they remind us that speech styles and competencies can be fairly fluid, that you can develop multiple competencies, and that your gender, ethnicity, culture, and class status do not bind you irretrievably to one specific style of speaking. They do communicate a lot about who you are, and people do make assumptions about you depending on how they hear you speaking, but the interconnections between status and speaking style can be misleading

if you leap to conclusions based on stereotypes. We will have more to say about this in other chapters, in particular in Chapter 10.

For the moment, the important thing is to recognize that when you have encountered a rich point you know that your next step is to use what you have learned about the ethnography of communication to develop your awareness of the contrasting speech community expectations that the individuals in question are using. In this case, I was lucky. Because I already had communicative competency in two different speech styles, it was easier for me to switch into recognition mode. I could simply identify the two speech styles and the expectations that went with each. I was also lucky in sorting out the contrasting expectations in the case of the young man asking for a ride because I had read an article describing the differing speech styles and could recognize an instance of what I had read about.

In the case of the Japanese student whose food needed salt and of the young woman who detested corn pudding, I didn't know the speech community expectations involved and I needed to spend time with each of these students asking for details about the situations, participants, ends, acts, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and even genres, in order to get enough of a picture of the different speech communities involved and the expectations that worked in each one. In essence, I needed to help each of these students to do a microethnography as we sorted through the rich points, what had happened, and what they could have done about it (or what kinds of repairs they might try in future situations).

Repair refers to developing new sets of expectations to use in communicating. Once you have become aware of the differences in expectations between speech communities, you can begin to experiment with shifting your own repertoire of expectations, adding new ones to your set of communicative skills, and trying new ways of communicating. This doesn't mean that you have to abandon your old set of expectations, any more than learning a new language means you have to give up the one you grew up speaking.

It does mean that you have to try new speech styles, however, and this can be a little intimidating at first. Rest assured that the people you are speaking with will generally be receptive to your efforts. In fact, most of the time they will be relieved that you are beginning to speak more "normally." In the case of the interview, the candidate was visibly relieved when I switched into tiny-pause style to ask him more questions. We spent the rest of the hour in a rapid-fire give-and-take of questions and answers. From time to time, one or both of us would look at the other three interviewers to see if they had any questions and—probably because I had shifted my frames of reference and my expectations along with my speech style—I was a little surprised to see them just sitting there and watching us. On the other hand, I could empathize with

their frustration, having been stuck in a rich point myself for the first twenty minutes.

Students sometimes ask whether switching speech styles to accommodate to the styles of others will be taken as "mocking" rather than as accommodation. I think the answer lies in the "key" area of the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G model. The tone you adopt in trying out your new style is important. You should be seriously interested in speaking in a manner that fits in, not in a manner that obviously is humorous or makes fun of a different manner of speaking. As you test the water and attempt to develop competency in a new speech style, you need to pay attention to the reactions from members of that speech community. If you fail in some way, then you need to go back through the M-A-R steps and make further adjustments. Keep adjusting until you understand the expectations of the speech community in question and the frames of reference that guide the ways in which language is used in that speech community. It is a never-ending process, of course, and it is one that anthropologists make use of every time they enter a new field situation. The rewards are great as you build your repertoire. The more varieties of language that you learn, the more people you will be able to converse with and the more points of view you will have access to. Just remember that learning a language includes more than learning how to form words and sentences correctly. It means learning how to *use* that language, in all of its varieties, in all kinds of situations, and with all kinds of speakers.

SUMMARY

Learning a language is more complex than merely learning sounds and forming grammatically correct sentences. To really learn a language, you need to learn how the language is used in real situations, by real people. You need to learn how social and cultural contexts can affect the way a language is supposed to be used. Knowing how to form grammatically correct sentences is known as linguistic competence; knowing how to speak appropriately in real situations is known as communicative competence. One of the goals of linguistic anthropology is to describe and analyze communicative competence in different cultures and languages.

Bronislaw Malinowski was an anthropologist who described the contexts of language use in the early part of the twentieth century. Building on the work of Malinowski and others, Dell Hymes took the lead in the 1960s in developing a framework for describing language in social and cultural contexts. Known as the ethnography of speaking, Hymes's framework focuses attention on seven key aspects of language in context: setting/scene, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres. He proposed the mnemonic S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G to sum up

the range of elements that a researcher should attend to in developing a complete description of language use in a community. Contemporary research into communicative competence often focuses on the details of actual conversations or on issues of how symbolic capital is deployed in discourse in order to analyze how language communicates gender, ethnicity, and power in subtle ways.

Understanding cultural expectations about language use is essential for knowing how to use a language. Misunderstanding those expectations can lead to cross-cultural and cross-language mistakes in communication. Anthropologist Michael Agar has described such mistakes as rich points. Learning how to repair rich points is a key step in developing communicative competence in a new language, as well as enabling you to develop a more cross-cultural awareness of language differences and similarities.

KEY TERMS

act sequence
 awareness
 communicative competence
 community of practice
 context
 Conversation Analysis
 dialect
 Discourse Analysis
 ends
 ethnography of communication
 ethnography of speaking
 genres
 indirection
 instrumentalities
 key
 linguistic community
 linguistic competence
 M-A-R
 mistake
 mutual intelligibility
 norms
 participants
 register
 repair
 rich point
 setting/situation

S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G

speech acts
 speech community
 speech event
 speech situation
 symbolic capital

 FURTHER READING

About Malinowski's Ideas Regarding Language in Context

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1935/1978. An ethnographic theory of language and some practical corollaries. Supplement to *Coral gardens and their magic*. New York: Dover. This is a reasonably readable discussion of the ways in which language takes on meaning in specific situations.

About Linguistic and Communicative Competence

Chomsky, Noam. 1965. *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. This contains Chomsky's discussion of linguistic competence.

Hymes, Dell H. 1972b. On communicative competence. In *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings*, ed. J. B. Pride and J. Holmes, 269–93. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin. This contains Hymes's discussion of communicative competence.

About the Ethnography of Communication and Conversational Analysis

Brenneis, Donald, and Ronald K. S. Macaulay, eds. 1996. *The matrix of language: Contemporary linguistic anthropology*. Boulder, CO: Westview. This is an excellent collection of recent articles on language as social practice, with special emphasis on issues of gender, ethnicity, culture, and power.

Gumperz, John J., and Dell H. Hymes, eds. 1972. *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. In particular, appendix 2, "Outline guide for the ethnographic study of speech use," by Joel Sherzer and Regna Darnell, is an excellent and accessible introduction to the methodology.

Hymes, Dell H. 1974. *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. This is one of Hymes's classic presentations of the approach.

Moerman, Michael. 1988. *Talking culture: Ethnography and conversational analysis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. This is a good presentation of the field of conversation analysis, with examples from Thai and U.S. conversations.

Saville-Troike, M. 1989. *The ethnography of communication: An introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. This is another good introduction to the ethnography of communication.

Tannen, Deborah. 1984. *Conversational style*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. This book includes Tannen's engaging analysis of a Thanksgiving dinner among friends.

About Culture, Ethnicity, and Language

Basso, Keith. 1979. *Portraits of the whiteman*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. This is a well-written introduction to Native American views of Anglo speech behavior.

Condon, John. 1985. *Good neighbors: Communicating with the Mexicans*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press. This is about Mexican-U.S. intercultural communication.

Scollon, Ron, and Suzanne Wong Scollon. 1981. *Narrative, literacy and face in interethnic communication*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. This book includes interesting material on Athabaskan-Anglo communication.

Yamada, Haru. 1997. *Different games, different rules*. New York: Oxford University Press. A highly readable introduction to the ways that Japanese and Americans misunderstand one another, from the point of view of linguistic anthropology.

About Gender and Language

Cameron, Deborah. 2007. *The Myth of Mars and Venus: Do men and women really speak different languages?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. This delightful book uses ethnographic insights to explore the role of stereotypes in attitudes toward communication.

Eckert, Penelope, and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 2003. *Language and gender*. New York: Cambridge University Press. This is a thorough introduction to issues in language and gender studies.

Tannen, Deborah. 1990. *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York: William Morrow. This is one of the most widely read books on the subject.

About Status, Power and Language

Irvine, Judith. 1974. Strategies of status manipulation in the Wolof greeting. In *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*, ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, 167–91. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. This provides an excellent example of using the ethnography of communication to understand a specific situation.

Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. 1990. *Talking power: The politics of language*. New York: Basic Books. This is a readable book about how language differences can be attributed to differences in social identity.

About Rich Points

Agar, Michael. 1994. *Language shock: Understanding the culture of conversation*. New York: William Morrow. This is an engaging, well-written introduction to the idea of rich points: how to recognize them and what to do about them. This is also an excellent survey of the history of linguistic anthropology and a good introduction to the field of conversation analysis.



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Readings

The workbook/reader for this book has readings that can help you to further explore and understand the issues introduced in this chapter, in particular regarding ethnicity, gender, culture, and language use in different speech communities.

Exercises

A set of writing exercises in the workbook/reader will assist you in understanding the issues introduced in this chapter and in further exploring the intersection among ethnicity, gender, culture, and language.

Web Exercises

The companion website for this book has a series of links designed to help you explore and better understand the complex intersection of ethnicity, gender, culture, and language in greater depth. The website also contains study questions that will help you to review important concepts.

Guided Projects

If you are creating a language, this is the time to develop a social distinction in your group and to mark it using the language. If you are working with a conversation partner, your instructor may assign a writing project to explore issues of language in action. Your instructor will be your guide.