

The Ethnographic Analysis of Speaking
ANTH 162 (64968) & ANTH 162W (64969)
Department of Anthropology
The George Washington University
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11.10-12.25
Funger Hall (FNGR) 222
Fall 2007

There is a story about a traveler spending the night in a small West Texas town who joined a group of men sitting on the porch of a general store. After several vain attempts to start a conversation, he asked, "Is there a law against talking in this town?" "No law against it," said one old-timer. "We just like to make sure it's an improvement on silence." From Richard Bauman's *Story, Performance, and Event* (vii).

Description

The ethnography of speaking emerged as the field that bridged gaps between scholars' grammars and ethnographies to ask how communicative practices fit into broader sociocultural contexts. Such practices range from talking nonsense in St. Vincent and telling tall tales in West Texas to exchanging dyadic greetings and engaging in multi-channel diplomatic negotiations. In fact, life's key social institutions – family, religion, government and law, education, and health care – depend on and are constituted by ideologies and practices of speaking in fundamental ways.

However, not all practices of speaking are the same or equal. In this course, we examine comparatively the phenomenon of verbal performance. Performance is a heightened and marked mode of communication that is framed in a special way and enacted or put on for an audience. In studying performance from the multiple perspectives of ethnographers of speaking, folklorists, and discourse analytic sociolinguists, we will consider classic and contemporary studies – and structural, rhetorical, and situational features – of this crucially important human phenomenon.

This course is part of GWU's Writing in the Disciplines (WID) initiative; hence, it offers both theoretical and hand-on experience with a significant writing component. We will gain hands-on experience in doing the ethnography of speaking by carrying out original research on uses of language in sociocultural contexts in Washington, DC. Students will select fieldwork topics and settings, and then will document, analyze, write up, and present to peers and faculty examples of verbal performance in everyday life.

Contact

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Requirements

Readings

There is no single textbook for this course. *Story, Performance, and Event* by Richard Bauman and *Framing in Discourse* edited by Deborah Tannen are classics in folklore and sociolinguistics, respectively. Muriel Saville-Troike's *The Ethnography of Communication* has a section that we will use in describing and analyzing patterns of communication. Other readings will be on reserve in Gelman Library, the Anthropology Department, and/or BlackBoard, if needed. Students are not expected to cover the whole syllabus, but they must complete assigned readings by the dates under which they appear on the course schedule.

Participation

ANTH 162/162W is a seminar-style course. Accordingly, attendance, presentations, and discussions of selected readings are core requirements. You should come to each class with two paragraphs of prepared notes that enable you to share ideas on the readings you are covering and your developing project. Participation by posting to our BlackBoard discussion forum also is mandatory. If you must miss any class due to illness, a family problem, approved university activity, or a similar circumstance, please try to inform me in advance of your absence.

One unexcused absence will be forgiven. After that, each unexcused absence will lower your course grade one increment (An A- will become a B+, a B+ will become a B, etc.).

Presentations of Readings

Students are required to give several twenty-minute presentations of readings individually and/or in teams. Very good presentations summarize readings and highlight points relevant to your interests in performance, and to those of your classmates. Please include an outline as a handout or PowerPoint presentation. Students are welcome to engage in constructive criticism and asked to conclude presentations with a question for discussion. Team and audience members are expected to respect different communication styles and contributions of others.

15-Page Course Papers

Students are required to write a research paper using spoken language data. Acceptable in theory are topics related to language use, broadly conceived, in any heightened or marked mode of communication. However, please remember that we are restricted by course format to do-able projects. A more complex project might begin with solid groundwork or a simpler discovery in ANTH 162/162W. More information on the projects/papers will be forthcoming in class, and evaluation of them will be based on deliverables:

Two-Page Proposals	10% of paper grades
Two Meetings with Maggie (progress reports/drafts)	25% of paper grades
Presentations to the Group/Peer Comments	25% of paper grades
Final Paper	40% of paper grades

Performance Criteria (Grading)

Presentations including in-class presentations (70%) and discussions (15%), and BlackBoard discussions (15%)	50% of course grades
Course Papers	50% of course grades

University's Disability Policies and Resources

Any student who may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Also, please contact the Disability Support Services office in the Marvin Center Suite 242 (202.994.8250) to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodation. For additional information, refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

University's Code of Academic Integrity

Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Research on Human Subjects

If students' projects conform to criteria discussed in class, they will fit with laws and ethics that regulate the conduct of anthropological research involving human subjects. Please contact me with any questions or concerns about these issues.

Course Schedule with Reading List (Subject to Revision)

Week 1 – Background

September 4 and 6

These readings are not absolutely required. Please start your readings for Week 2 immediately

Hymes, D. 1962. The Ethnography of Speaking. In *Anthropology and Human Behavior*. T. Gladwin and W. Sturtevant, eds. Pp. 13-53. Washington, DC: Anthropological Society of Washington (optional).

Hymes, D. 1964. Introduction. In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, eds. *The Ethnography of Communication*. *American Anthropologist* 66.6 (part 2) (optional).

Hymes, D. 1967. Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting. In J. Macnamara, ed. *Problems of Bilingualism. Journal of Social Issues* 23:2, 8-28 (optional).

Bauman, R. and J. Sherzer. 1975. The Ethnography of Speaking. In *Annual Review of Anthropology* 4. 95-119.

Week 2 – Background – Some Classics

September 11 and 13

Read two articles on the cultural patterning of speech and verbal performance in context

Basso, K. 1970. To Give Up on Words: Silence in Western Apache Culture. *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 26:213-230.

Frake, C. 1972. Struck by Speech: The Yakan Concept of Litigation. In *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, eds. Pp. 127-132. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Sherzer, J. 1974. Namakke, Sunmakke, and Kormakke: Three Types of Cuna Speech Event. In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. R. Bauman and J. Sherzer, eds. Pp. 263-282. London and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, B. 1975. A Parable in Context. In *Folklore: Performance and Communication*. D. Ben-Amos and K. Goldstein, eds. Pp. 105-130. The Hague: Mouton.

Week 3 – Background – More Classics

September 18 and 20

Read two articles on communicative competence, social roles, and speech communities

Abrahams, R. 1972. Joking: The Training of the Man of Words in Talking Broad. In T. Kochman, ed. *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*. Pp. 215-240. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Mitchell-Kernan, C. 1972. Signifying and Marking: Two Afro-American Speech Acts. In *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. Pp. 315-335.

Bauman, R. 1974. Speaking in the Light: The Role of the Quaker Minister. In Bauman, R. and Sherzer, J., eds. *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. Pp. 144-160.

Brice-Heath, S. 1982. What No Bedtime Story Means: Narrative Skills at Home and School. *Language and Society* 11. Reprinted in *The Matrix of Language: Contemporary Linguistic Anthropology*. D. Brenneis and Ronald H. Macaulay, eds. Pp. 12-38. Boulder, CO; Westview Press (required).

Week 4 – The Turn to Performance in Folklore

September 25 and 27

Bauman, R. 1977. Verbal Art as Performance. In *Verbal Art as Performance*. R. Bauman, ed. Pp. 3-59. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

Babcock, B. 1977. The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative. In *Verbal Art as Performance*. Pp. 61-80.

Note: Verbal Art as Performance also appeared in *American Anthropologist* 77.2 (1975).

Weeks 5 and 6 –Tools for Analyses

October 2 and 4

October 9 and 11

Tannen, D. 1989. Transcription conventions from *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Saville-Troike, M. 2002 [1982]. The Analysis of Communicative Events. In *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*. Pp. 88-143. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Tannen, D. 1993. What's in a Frame?: Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations. In *Framing in Discourse*. D. Tannen, ed. Pp.14-56. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goffman, E. 1981. Footing. In *Forms of Talk*. Pp. 124-159. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (optional).

Week 7–Tools in Analyses 1

October 16 and 18

Catch up and read an article on framing and discourse as a resource in key institutions

Tannen, D. and C. Wallat. 1993. Interactive Frames and Knowledge Schemas in Interaction: Examples from a Medical Examination/Interview. In *Framing in Discourse*. Pp. 56-76.

Sarangi, S. and C. Roberts. 2002. Discoursal (Mis) Alignments in Professional Gatekeeping Encounters. In C. Kramsch, ed. *Language Acquisition and Language Socialisation: Ecological Perspectives*. Pp. 197-227. London: Continuum.

Extra activity - Film: *Multiracial Britain: Crosstalk*, produced by J. Gumperz and others for British Broadcasting Corporation Films.

Smith, F. 1993. The Pulpit and Women's Place: Gender and the Framing of the 'Exegetical Self' in Sermon Performances. In *Framing in Discourse*. Pp. 146-175.

Harding, S. 1987. Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamentalist Baptist Conversion. *American Ethnologist* 14.1 (Frontiers of Christian Evangelism). Pp. 167-181.

Week 8 –Tools in Analyses 2

October 23 and 25

Read one or two more articles on framing and discourse as a resource in everyday life

Hoyle, S. 1993. Participation Frameworks in Sportscasting Play: Imaginary and Literal Footings. In *Framing in Discourse*. Pp. 114-145.

Straehle, C. 1993. "Samuel" "Yes Dear": Teasing and Conversational Rapport. In *Framing in Discourse*. Pp. 210-230.

Tannen, D. 2004. Talking the Dog: Framing Pets as Interactional Resources in Family Discourse. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 37.4:399-420.

Assignment due - Rich analysis: Prepare a very focused analysis central to your study to share with the class. You might focus on a single speech event, the participant(s) roles and footings in the setting, a particular form of discourse and its framing, etc.

Week 9 – Verbal Art in Context 1

October 30 and November 1

Bauman, R. 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Read the Introduction (Ch1), "Any man who keeps more'n one hound'll lie to you": A Contextual Study of Expressive Lying (Ch 2), and "We was always pullin' jokes": The Management of Point of View in Personal Experience Narratives (Ch 3).

Week 10 – Verbal Art in Context 2

November 6 and November 8

Bauman, R. 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Read "Hell, yes, but not that young!": Reported Speech as Comic Corrective (Ch 4), "I go into more detail now, to be sure": Narrative Variation and the Shifting Contexts of Storytelling (Ch 5), and the Conclusion (Ch 6).

Week 11 – Politics 1

November 13 and November 15

Selections from

Silverstein, M. 2003. *Talking Politics: The Substance of Style from Abe to 'W'*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Week 12 – Politics 2

November 20

Duranti, A. 2006. Narrating the Political Self in a Campaign for US Congress. *Language in Society* 35.4.467-497.

Note: We will schedule a make-up class for the one cut on November 22nd (Thanksgiving), at which we will share feedback on near-final drafts of course papers.

Week 13 – Globalization and Professional Performers 1

November 27 and 29

Selections from

Donaldson, V. 1997. *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the 20th Century*. Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Film: Umm Kulthūm: The Voice of Egypt or Umm Kulthūm: A Voice Like Egypt

A symbol of the aspirations of Egypt and, ultimately, those of the Arab world, Umm Kulthūm had “the musicality of Ella Fitzgerald, the public presence of Eleanor Roosevelt, and the audience of Elvis Presley”. www.arabfilm.com

Week 14 – Globalization and Professional Performers 2

December 4 and 6

Selections from

Alim, H. Samy. 2006. *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Film: Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme by DJ Organic

Clips of French Hip Hop Artists from Samy Alim’s colleague, Samir Meghelli

Course papers are due in electronic and hard copy by 5.00 pm on December 11. They should have formats of products using AAA, APA, or LSA styles acceptable in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Online help with APA style is available at www.stylewizard.com. The Writing Center in Rome 550 (801 22nd Street N.W.) is a free service for students seeking help with sharpening ideas and organizing arguments.