

## **The Ethnography of communication**

### **1. The Shift from Linguistic Structure to Language Use**

Coulthard highlights that earlier linguistic traditions, influenced by figures like Chomsky, concentrated on grammar and the ideal speaker-listener. In contrast, the ethnography of communication—pioneered by Dell Hymes—focuses on how real people use language in daily life, considering settings, participants, and purposes.

### **2. Communicative Competence**

The chapter discusses Dell Hymes' vital concept of communicative competence. This refers to the ability of speakers not only to form grammatically correct sentences but also to use language appropriately in various social situations. Hymes underscores how communicative competence is learned through participation in a community's communicative practices.

### **3. Speech Communities**

it is defined as a group sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. He explains that these shared norms include what can be said, how, and to whom, and that these vary across communities, even among speakers of the same language.

### **4. Speech Events and Speech Acts**

A significant portion of speaking is devoted to the difference between speech community, speech situation, speech events (like a lecture, a conversation, or a church service) and speech acts (individual communicative actions, such as questioning, promising, or greeting). Hymes emphasizes that the context of the speech event influences the interpretation and acceptability of speech acts.

## **5. Hymes' SPEAKING Model**

Coulthard introduces Hymes' SPEAKING model as a tool for systematically analyzing communicative events. The model's components—Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre—help researchers break down and compare different communicative situations.

### **S – Setting and Scene**

**Setting:** The physical time and place where the communication takes place (e.g., a classroom, a church, a café).

**Scene:** The psychological setting or cultural definition of the occasion (e.g., festive, formal, relaxed).

### **P – Participants**

The people involved in the communication, including the speaker(s), addressee(s), audience, and any other relevant individuals.

### **E – Ends**

The purposes, goals, and outcomes of the communicative event. This includes both the expected outcome and the actual result.

### **A – Act Sequence**

The actual content and order of the communicative acts, including what is said and how it is said (the structure and flow of the conversation or speech).

### **K – Key**

The tone, manner, or spirit in which something is said (e.g., serious, sarcastic, joking, respectful).

### **I – Instrumentalities**

The channels of communication (spoken, written, signed, electronic) and the forms of speech or

language varieties used (dialect, standard language, jargon).

#### **N – Norms**

The social rules and conventions governing the communicative event and participants' actions. The the actions and interactions of interlocutors in the speech event. (e.g., turn-taking rules, norms of politeness, what is considered acceptable or taboo).

#### **G – Genre**

The type of speech event or communicative act (e.g., narrative, lecture, conversation, interview, prayer, joke).

**Example: A Classroom Lecture**

**Setting: University lecture hall, Monday morning**

**Participants: Professor (speaker), students (audience)**

**Ends: To inform and educate students about a topic**

**Act Sequence: Greeting, introduction, main lecture, questions and answers, closing remarks**

**Key: Formal but engaging**

**Instrumentalities: Spoken English, projector slides**

**Norms: Students listen quietly, questions reserved for the end**

**Genre: Academic lecture**

### **6. Rules of Speaking**

Dell Hymes stresses that every community has its own “rules of speaking,” which determine what is appropriate or inappropriate. These rules are culturally transmitted and can apply to everything from greeting rituals to the organization of stories and the use of silence.

### **7. The Role of Ethnography**

Hymes explains the importance of ethnographic methods (e.g., participant observation) in documenting and understanding communicative practices. He warns against imposing external

categories and urges analysts to reconstruct speech events from the participants' own perspectives.

#### **8. Significance for Communication**

Hymes concludes by emphasizing that understanding the ethnography of communication is crucial for communication. Without considering the social rules and cultural context, analysts risk misinterpreting the function and meaning of language in actual use.