

of thunder may in some cultural contexts be considered to be a communicative act (as in the case of the Ojibwa reported by Hymes, 1974b: 13), or that certain types of communication are permitted to men in some contexts while proscribed in others, such as the disciplining of children (as reported by Philipsen, 1975).

In an attempt to build a descriptive framework of how language is used in different contexts, Hymes, drawing on anthropologists such as Malinowski (1923, 1935), developed a series of categories to map out the relevant contextual aspects to language use, such as speech event and speech community.

Speech Event

This is a category (after Jakobson, 1960) that reflects the idea that all interaction is embedded in sociocultural contexts and is governed by conventions emerging from those contexts. Examples of speech events are interviews, buying and selling goods in a shop, sermons, lectures, and informal conversation. The speech event involves a number of core components identified by Hymes, which are signaled in his mnemonic device SPEAKING. [See Table 1].

Speech Community

While the term speech community was not coined by Hymes (the most notable earlier use being that of Bloomfield, 1933), Hymes’s elaboration of the term certainly contributed to its prominence in sociolinguistic approaches to the study of language.

The acquisition of communicative competence takes place within speech communities: speech communities are constituted not just by a shared variety or language, but shared sets of norms and conventions about how those varieties can and should be used. Through everyday interaction with others in a speech community, a child learns how to use language appropriately, that is, according to the norms of any given speech community. Some events inevitably involve people from different speech communities, which may create tensions: as in for example school classrooms where participants share a common language but may not be members of the same speech community (Hymes, 1972c).

Diversity

Acknowledgement of diversity and variety between and across language use, in communities and individuals, is a basic position in Hymes’s work and is a central tenet in sociolinguistics. Such diversity manifests itself in countless ways: the very existence of language varieties, both as languages and varieties within languages; the range of conventions

Table 1 SPEAKING – acronym invented by Dell Hymes (1972b) to specify relevant features of a speech event

S-settings and scenes	Setting refers to time, place, physical circumstances. Scene refers to the psychological or cultural definitions of the event: for example what ‘counts’ as a formal event varies from community to community.
P-participants	Who is involved, as either speaker/ listener, audience.
E-ends	Ends can be defined in terms of goals and outcomes. Goals refer to what is expected to be achieved in any event: outcomes refers to what is actually achieved. Goals and outcomes exist at both community and individual participant level: for example, the conventional goal of a wedding ceremony may be marriage, however, individuals within that event may have other goals.
A-acts	Speech events involve a number and range of speech acts, particular types of utterances such as requests, commands, and greetings.
K-keys	The tone, manner, and spirit in which acts are done, for example, serious or playful. Specific keys may be signaled through verbal or/and non-verbal means.
I-instrumentalities	The particular language/language varieties used and the mode of communication (spoken, written).
N-norms	Norms of interaction refer to rules of speaking, who can say what, when, and how. Norms of interpretation refer to the conventions surrounding how any speech may be interpreted.
G-genres	Categories or types of language use, such as the sermon, the interview, or the editorial. May be the same as ‘speech event’ but may be a part of a speech event. For example, the sermon is a genre and may at the same time be a speech event (when performed conventionally in a church); a sermon may be a genre, however, that is invoked in another speech event, for example, at a party for humorous effect.

governing the use of such varieties in different contexts (such differences have been documented in relation, notably, to social class, ethnic group, gender); the different values attached to particular usages (for example, the values attached in different communities to such phenomena as silence, eloquence, and interruptions).

Privileging diversity as a universal of language shifts the emphasis away from any differential status attached to varieties, or the notion that difference signals deficiency in any way. All varieties are seen