

Hyme's Speaking and Speech Event Analysis in the Comedy Television Series: "Brooklyn 99"

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Abstract. This study investigated the occurrence of speech events in "BROOKLYN 99" comedy series (Season #1, Episode #1) to probe such phenomena in media discourse. This study presented not only a sample of spoken discourse about those speech events which were more frequent, but a sample of native speakers' cultural norms. The results of the study showed that some typical speech events, due to the situational and contextual context of language, were more frequent than others; in the selected sample, the most recurring event in a partner-work relationship was found to be confiding one's secrets or personal affairs and problems with one's friends and asking them for help, consultation, and sympathy. At the same time, there were some speaking factors affecting each speech event which are in line with Hymes' speaking model.

Keywords: ethnography of speaking, Hymes' speaking factors, speech events.

Introduction

Speech is used in many different ways among different groups of people and each group has its own norms of linguistic behavior. In order to analyze the language of specific groups, it is necessary to rely on some clearly defined frameworks for ethnographical study of speech. Hymes (1974) proposed three levels of analysis, namely, *speech situation*, *speech event* and *speech acts* that 'speech event' analysis is the most important one dealing with particular instances of speech exchanging, like exchange of greeting, enquiry and etc. (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). In order to analyze speech events, some factors should be considered. One of the most comprehensive lists of such factors is Hymes' SPEAKING term which is the abbreviation for setting, participants, ends, act sequences, key, instrumentalities, and genre; what is important here is that almost few studies have probed to see whether such factors are represented in the speech of media discourse in general, and in TV series in particular.

The following study aimed to do an ethnographical study of discourse in the first episode of the first season of the internationally popular sitcom "BROOKLYN 99". This episode has been chosen as a sample of the whole series which in turn might be a representation of speech among particular groups in American society.

To fulfill the purposes of the current study, the following research questions were proposed: (1) What speech events are observed in the first episode of BROOKLYN 99 series? (2) How are Hymes' SPEAKING factors observed in each speech event in the intended BROOKLYN 99 episode?

Literature Review

According to the dictionary of anthropology, ethnography is the systematic description of the single contemporary culture often through fieldwork (Barfield, 1998). In general, ethnography refers to the description of people and their culture (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979). Ethnography is the practice of anthropological research based on direct observation of and reportage on a people's way of life. For the ethnographer there are

two stages, the first of which is fieldwork, which is the process of observing and recording data. The second stage is the production of a written description and analysis of the subject under study.

Agar describes ethnography as an ambiguous term that can refer to a process and a product. As a process, it involves a set of techniques for the description of a culture from community members' point of view. As a product, it is a monograph that takes into account many different aspects of social life of a particular group (Agar, 1980, as cited in Agar, 1996: 53).

Borrowing its underlying principles from anthropology, Ethnography of Communication, an approach from within Linguistic Anthropology (LA), has typically been concerned with challenging assumptions about cultural homogeneity through a focus on language use in interaction. Hence, Herman, Sinurat and Sitio (2019: 43) stated that ethnography of communication is an approach to discourse, which is based on linguistics and anthropology. It focuses on a wider range of communicative behavior whose forms and function can represent different ways of life. The aim of ethnography of communication is to describe the knowledge that participants in verbal interaction need and display in order to communicate successfully with one another (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005).

Pioneers of the *Ethnography of Speaking* (e.g., Malinowski, 1923; Hymes, 1964, 1972; Bernstein, 1971; Cook-Gumperz, 1975; Whorf, 1956) were usually formally trained in sociolinguistics whose main interest is social context. As a result, other methods than ethnography have been integrated into ethnography of communication, especially discourse analysis and conversation analysis (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005). Common point among these fields is the focus on the use of language in the conduct of social life. What differentiates ethnography from the other two is its emphasis on speaking as a social and cultural system in specific context of different speech communities (Philipsen and Coutu, 2005). Ethnography of speaking focuses both on cultural practices of the community in which language is directly involved and on differences of these practices and their meaning among different communities. An important point is that the work of analyst does not stop at the level of description, (s)he should seek the answer to the question of *why* particular events occur and *why* they have the particular characteristics (Cameron, 2001).

Hymes who is well known for criticizing both linguistics, for not making ethnography the starting point for the analysis of language use, and anthropology, for insufficiently drawing upon linguistics to understand and describe culture and context states that: "...it is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed..." (Hymes, 1974: 4).

Even the ethnographies that we have, though almost never fully focused on speaking, show us that communities differ significantly in ways of speaking, in patterns of repertoire and switching, in the roles and meanings of speech (Hymes, 1974: 33). For Hymes, what was needed was a general theory and body of knowledge within which diversity of speech, repertoires, and ways of speaking take primacy as the unit of analysis. Hymes' argument was that the analysis of speech over language would enable social scientists to articulate how social behavior and speech interact in a systematic, ruled and principled way. This view became articulated in the ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1962) and later the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974) to describe a new approach to understanding language in use. In doing this, Hymes aimed to move away from considering speech as an abstract model and toward investigating the diversity of speech as it is encountered in ethnographic fieldwork.

After Chomsky's (1965) introduction of the concept of '*linguistic competence*' which is the native speaker's underlying knowledge of rules of grammar, Hymes (1972) proposed the concept of '*communicative competence*' which is underlying knowledge of the rules of speaking. They are the rules that allow the native speaker to speak appropriately. He offered three relevant units to be analyzed in ethnography of speaking which are hierarchically ordered.

The highest-level unit of analysis is the '*speech situation*', the social situation in which speaking takes place. It takes into account all the features of the situation. Some of them may not be linguistic. By speech situations, Hymes means socially-contextual situations like 'ceremonies, fights, hunts, meals, lovemaking, and the like' (Hymes, 1972: 56). In a family meal situation, in addition to talking other activities such as eating, drinking, and feeding infants are taken into consideration.

Next level is '*speech event*'. Ethnographers of communication hold that 'the speech event, constituted by the interaction of several components of which language is only one, is the basic unit of every day communication, not clause or sentence' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005: 342). Speech events are constituted by the use of language. Use of language should be crucial to the social practice to be called speech event. Duranti (1985: 201) elaborates it as follows:

'In a class lecture, a trial, a Ph.D. defense, an interview, or a phone conversation, speech is crucial and the event would not be said to be taking place without it. Hymes calls this kind of event a *speech event*. In many other cases, speech has a minor role, subordinate to other codes or forms of interaction. Hymes refers to the latter type of event as a *speech situation*'.

Hymes (1972: 56) states that "the term *speech event* will be restricted to activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech. An event may consist of a single speech act, but will often comprise several".

The lowest-level unit of analysis is the '*speech act*'. "Speech acts are the constituent parts of speech events. Speech act theory has to do with the functions and uses of language, so in the broad sense we might say that speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we *do* when we speak" (Schmidt and Richards, 1980: 129).

To recap, Hymes (1972) offers the example of 'a party (speech situation), a conversation during the party (speech event), a joke within the conversation (speech act)' to illustrate the three terms.

While all the above-mentioned levels are important, it is agreed on that the most important one is *speech event* to which the rules of speaking apply. Hymes (1974) also proposed that these speech events have components that should be taken into account to produce a satisfactory description of any particular speech event. He offers the mnemonic device of SPEAKING grid as a heuristic for the various factors he deems to be relevant. Such factors are 'setting', 'participants', 'ends', 'act sequences', 'key', 'instrumentalities', and 'genre'. This set of components is referred to as the 'speaking grid' and its purpose is to help the analysts to put their analysis in some kind of order as follows:

'*S*' for *Setting and Scene*: Setting refers to the time and place which is the concrete physical circumstances in which speech takes place. Scene refers to the abstract psychological setting, or the cultural definition of the occasion. A particular bit of speech may actually serve to define a scene, whereas another bit of speech may be deemed to be quite inappropriate in certain circumstances. Within a particular setting, of course, participants are free to change scenes as they change the level of formality, or as they change the kind of activity in which they are involved.

“Hymes’ scene subcomponent can be integrated with what Goffman (1974) has called spatial and temporal boundaries, and the subcomponent setting with what I call ‘boundary markers’. Such boundaries should be taken to be universal features of social events across societies, their existence (or psychological realities) being crucial for the participants to conduct themselves in the interaction and for the analysts to isolate the object of their inquiry” (Philips 1977, as cited in Duranti, 1985: 206-207).

External temporal boundaries refer to the beginning and ending of the event, and internal ones refer to potential division of the event into parts or episodes. External spatial boundaries delineate the space within which the event takes place or the way participants perceive or represent it to themselves with respect to the outside. Spatial boundaries that participants define with respect to one another are called internal.

‘P’ for Participants: It includes various combinations of speaker-listener, addressor-addressee or sender receiver. They generally fill certain socially specified roles. A two-person conversation involves a speaker and hearer whose roles change.

‘E’ for Ends: It refers to the conventionally recognized and expected outcomes of an exchange as well as to the personal goals that participations seek to accomplish on particular occasions. A trial in a courtroom has a recognizable social end in view, but the various participants, i.e., the judge, jury, prosecution, defense, accused, and witnesses, have different personal goals.

‘A’ for Act sequence: It refers to the actual form and content of what is said: the precise words used, how they are used, and the relationship of what is said to the actual topic at hand. Psychologists and communication theorists concerned with content analysis have shown a similar interest. Early works of the field concentrated on the study of different ways of saying the same thing. Lavandera’s (1987) work demonstrated that perfect paraphrases exist under rare circumstances, and change of form is related to the change of message being communicated that is directly related to the sociocultural context of speech in a given speech community. Defining content could be problematic due to the fact that different disciplines may vary very much in their assessment of the content.

‘K’ for Key: in the course of social interaction, participants offer each other cues as how to interpret the message content. It refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which a particular message is conveyed: lighthearted, serious, precise, pedantic, mocking, sarcastic, pompous, and so on. The key may also be marked nonverbally by certain kind of behavior, gesture, posture, or even deportment. When there is a lack of fit between what a person is actually saying and the key that the person is using, listeners are likely to pay more attention to the key than to the actual content.

‘I’ for Instrumentalities: It refers to the choice of channel such as oral, written, or telegraphic, and to the actual form of speech employed, such as the language, dialect, code, or register that is chosen. Formal, written, legal language is one instrumentality; spoken Newfoundland English is another; code-switching between English and Italian in Toronto is a third; and the use of pig Latin is still another. One may employ different instrumentalities in the course of a single verbal exchange of some length: first read something than all a dialect joke, then quote Shakespeare, and then used an expression form another language, and soon.

‘N’ for Norms of interaction: Hymes assumed that speech is a rule- governed behavior and that their searcher’s task is to infer such rules from systematic observation and recording of spontaneous verbal interaction. It refers to the specific behaviors and properties that attach to speaking and also to how these may be viewed by someone who

does not share them, like loudness, silence, and gaze return and so on Duranti (1985: 218) believes that 'norms of interaction involve different levels of competence, from the very basic rules of constructing process able sequences of words to the use of appropriate code or register'.

'G' for Genre: It refers to clearly demarcated types of utterance; such things as poems, proverbs, riddles, sermons, prayers, lecture, and editorials. These are all 'marked' in specific ways in contrast to casual speech. Of course, in the middle of a prayer, a casual aside would be 'marked' too. While particular genres seem more appropriate on certain occasions than on others, such as sermons inserted into church services, they can be independent: we can ask someone to stop 'sermonizing'; that is, we can recognize a genre of sermons when an instance of it, or something closely resembling an instance, occurs outside its usual setting.

Material and Methods

The data used for analysis in this study included natural conversations in the first episode of 'BROOKLYN 99' popular comedy series which was chosen from Season #1 as a representative sample of the whole series. *BROOKLYN 99* is an American sitcom created by Dan Goor and Michael Schur, which aired on Fox from September 17, 2013 until now. The series featured nine main characters throughout its run, with many other characters recurring throughout all five seasons. *BROOKLYN 99* received positive reviews throughout most of its run, becoming one of the most popular sitcoms of all time. The series won many awards and was nominated for 63 Primetime Emmy Awards. The series, an instant hit from its debut, was also very successful in the ratings, consistently ranking in the top ten in the final primetime ratings.

Accordingly, to find answers to the intended research questions of the study and as Hymes puts it 'one good technique for getting at speech event, as other categories, is through words which name them' (1962 as cited in Philipsen and Coutu, 2005: 359), those speech events were identified and labeled by the researchers and then were listed. Moreover, each speech event was followed by its transcript; and since most of the speech events were divided into several scenes, the researchers put all the related scenes together to give readers a clear view of speech event.

Analysis Examples:

Speech event: Cold Open

In this speech event *Jake* and *Amy* investigate the crime scene.

Setting and Scene: the setting of this speech event is Electronic Store in Brooklyn

Participants: *Jake*, *Amy*, and *Ahmed*

Ends: *Jake* and *Amy* investigate the store that hit by a crime.

Act Sequence: *Jake* is doing a drama inside his job, not focus on his job. Then *Amy* is interrupting *Jake* to do his job well.

Key: the tone is joking and serious.

Instrument: the channel is totally oral and the register is totally informal.

Norms of Interaction: in this kind of speech event it is usually the case that they do not say thing directly and as the tone is joking and sometimes sarcastic, the make wise cracks that are usually short.

Genre: Partner work talking.

Jake: This job is eating me alive. I can't breathe anymore. I spent all these years trying to be the good guy, the man in the white hat. I'm not becoming like them... I am them.

Amy: What are you doing, weirdo?

Jake: I'm doing the best speech from "Donnie Brasco." Actually---ten of me are doing the best speech from "Donnie Brasco."

Amy: Get it together, man. All ten of you. Store was hit about two hours ago. Perps disabled the alarm---

Jake: Sorry! My bad.

Amy: They mostly took tablets and cameras. I'd like a list of your employees, anyone who had access to the store. I'd also like to apologize for my partner. His parents didn't give him enough attention.

Jake: DO YOU BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER LOVE?---

Amy: Dude, seriously?

Jake: I know, not my first choice either, but it's stuck. Got any other songs, Ahmed?

Ahmed: No, is broken. You want it? One-fifty for you. Works perfect.

Jake: You literally jus said it was broken. I THINK THIS ROBB-RY WAS A SMASH AND GRAB / I REALLY BELIEVE IT WAS A SMASH AND GRAB, OH!!!

Amy: Really, cher? I think it was an inside job. Prove me wrong.

Jake: A challenge? Is this a challenge? I love challenges! The door and the register were both forced, and they tripped a motion sensor --- in example, not inside job.

Amy: Or it's an inside job meant to look like a smash and grab.

Jake: Sorry, we're looking for three white males, one of them has tattoo sleeves on both arms.

Amy: And how do you know that, dare I ask?

Jake: I had a confidential informant on the inside. He spent years right here, in this sale bin, watching, learning, waiting. His code name is... Fuzzy Cuddle Bear! And he's a nanny cam.

Amy: Ugh. You got lucky.

Jake: You know what they say: Luck is 95% talent, 5% being awesome.

Amy: No one's ever said that.

Jake: Whelp... we did it, Fuzzy. We got 'em. You can come home now.

Amy: All right.

Results and Discussion

The current study which was a sample of spoken discourse and a sample of native speakers' cultural norms tried to indicate the importance of ethnography of communication. It showed that some typical speech events, due to the situational and contextual context of language, were found more frequent than others; in the selected sample, the most recurring event in a partner-work relationship was found to be confiding one's secrets or personal affairs and problems with one's friends and asking them for help, consultation, and sympathy.

The result of the present study assigned the fact that the language in relation to the cultural and social sediment influences communication. The group solidarity and relationships were also found. The present study also indicated that social status as well as occupational status influenced by the language or mode of speaking, and variability of communication or perceptibility of communication is depended on those social/cultural traits. Language, communication and ethnography are interlocked with each other. These three issues have played a great role in human cultural space (HCS) to the society. Communication sometimes controls the individualism and the social status with group solidarity.

Conclusion

So, teachers and lesson planners can use the most frequent speech events in their teaching classes to make language learners familiarize with those events which are appropriate for specific contexts or situations. Language learners, having this knowledge, could improve their communicative competence and talk more appropriately in related contexts. As mentioned, ethnography is a method which is used in the field of anthropology to study the human cultures usually by means of participant observation to produce a kind of description of the given community culture, the ways it acts in the world and the ways it makes sense of the world, so, this research could be a sample for teacher to make language learners familiarize with culture which is an important part of language learning process.

The present preliminary study revealed that the study of ethnography in times and space played as cognitive devices to clarify human social/cultural identity. Ethnography of communication stated the rural simple way of life reflected through people's mode of speaking and their sentiment. On the other hand, urban settings stand their complexity nature to the mode of communication. Moreover, speech events usually start with greetings, go on, and finish with some concluding remarks in natural daily speech. In the movies and series, each speech event might start with greetings between participants or start with each new scene and end like that as well. In Friends series, as the name suggests, there are six close friends living together in one district in New York. Their intimate relationship is manifested in their attitude and behavior towards each other, especially their speech. As the data of this study showed, most of the speech events in the first episode of this series centers around what close friends usually talk about and expect their friends to do: confiding, expressing sympathy, telling off (narration), consulting, encouraging, and etc. the findings of the current analysis confirmed that each of these speech events, in turn were affected by SPEAKING factors as Hymes suggested.

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