DELL HATHAWAY HYMES

Dell Hymes, President of the Linguistic Society of America in 1982, one of the principal organizers of the modern social-scientific study of language, succumbed in his eighty-third year to kidney failure on November 13, 2009, in Charlottesville, Virginia, after several years of declining health due to Alzheimer's disease. At the time of his death, he was Commonwealth Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and of English at the University of Virginia, where he had been a faculty member from 1987 until his retirement in 1998.

From early in his professional career, Hymes was an energetic and indeed ubiquitous figure in a range of enterprises that shaped many of the specific scholarly areas of sociolinguistics: organizing symposia and conferences, presiding over supervisory committees and organizational boards, consulting in every corner of language-affiliated academia, editing field-defining and -transforming volumes, and founding and for two decades editing an interdisciplinary journal, *Language in Society*. In 1975, he took on the Deanship of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, where, over the next twelve years, he infused an applied linguistics and ethnography perspective into research and curriculum there and more widely. At the same time, Hymes pursued his own agenda of research and publication that, over the decades, spanned a wide range: history of Native American languages, especially those of Sapir's 'Penutian' stock (centered in the American Northwest of Hymes's youth); the ethnography of speaking or ethnography of communication, theorizing how discursive events (broadly seen) should be studied in their sociocultural contexts—a perspective that he essentially called into being in collaboration with John J. Gumperz; the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of North American linguistics and anthropology, seeking (with his Penn co-author John G. Fought) both to stimulate and to render historiographic justice to earlier schools of linguistic thought; and—perhaps with deepest commitment and greatest pleasure—especially from mid-career onward, 'ethnopoetics', the recuperative restudy of the textual organization of originally oral literary forms of Native Americans and other peoples so as to make patent and to explicate their rhetorical power as verbal art.

Hymes was born in Portland, Oregon, on June 7, 1927, to Howard Hathaway and Dorothy (née Bowman) Hymes, the first of two sons in a family soon hit hard by the Depression. After attending public schools in that city, in 1944–45, at the age of seventeen, he matriculated at Reed College, where his studies were interrupted after a year for a two-year service in (South) Korea with the U.S. Army's 7th Infantry Inspector General's office. Resuming studies in 1947 on the G.I. Bill, he eventually received a bachelor's degree in 1950 combining anthropology and English, having begun a long association with the anthropologist David H. French (1918–1994), a Reed figure of notable influence who introduced Hymes to the Kiksht (Chinookan)-speaking people of the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon (see Koffman 2008, Moore 2008).

Hymes intended to pursue a Ph.D. in anthropology and folklore, for which he wound up at Indiana University precisely at a time when Bloomington was a great intellectual crossroads of innovative, non-Bloomfieldian American and European currents in lin-

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guistics in relation to the social and behavioral sciences. First psycholinguistics (Osgood & Sebeok 1954) and then sociolinguistics (Lieberson 1967) were, in a real sense, born in Bloomington from conferences, faculty seminars, and courses at LSA Institutes held there in the summers of 1952, 1953, and 1964 (see, inter alia, Paulston & Tucker 1997). Charles F. ('Carl') Voegelin (1906–1992), then the chair of Indiana's Department of Anthropology and editor of the *International Journal of American Linguistics*, steered Hymes toward linguistics for his M.A. (1953) and Ph.D. (1955), and was the first of a series of distinguished patrons and influences in this next phase of his life. For example, Hymes served as note-taker and audiotape-transcriber for the famous Conference of Anthropologists and Linguists of July 21–30, 1952 (Levi-Strauss et al. 1953), giving him early career prominence as a rising star.[1] In the summer of 1953 he took a course from noted poet and critic Kenneth Burke (1897–1993), beginning a decades-long close relationship with this sympathetic iconoclast and man of the American Left.

As well, Hymes (and his future wife) studied with Edward Sapir's (1884–1939) noted successor in Athabascan studies, Harry Hoijer (1904–1976), an opportunity decisive for his subsequent career. Having married fellow student Virginia (née Dosch) Wolff in 1954 (who survives him, as do their four children), after a summer of fieldwork at Warm Springs Hymes and Mrs. Hymes took up fellowships with Hoijer at UCLA during 1954–55, during which time Hoijer was instrumental in securing for him the Instructorship in Linguistics at Harvard's Department of Social Relations, arranged by Hoijer's Navajo studies colleague, Clyde Kluckhohn (1905–1960). Hymes hastily undertook a 'positional analysis' dissertation outlining the morphology of one of the Chinookan languages, Kathlamet, excerpting the data in Franz Boas's (1858–1942) 1901 *Texts*, finishing just in time to receive the requisite degree before the 1955–56 academic year.

Hymes's Harvard years as Instructor and Assistant Professor, 1955–1960, including especially one year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (1957–58), were central to shaping his massive editing project that became *Language in culture and society: A reader in linguistics and anthropology* (1964b). No mere compilation of colleagues' articles, its masterfully organized xxxv + 764 pages include 129 cumulative bibliographies in particular areas of interest as well as a thirty-nine-page general bibliography, in addition to some sixty-nine papers or book excerpts[2]—organized into ten thematic sections, each introduced and conceptually shaped by the editor. Hymes makes his goal clear:

> [T]he present book is intended as something of an argument and ostensive definition … The purpose is to show that there exists … a broad, complex, and significant field of linguistic problems—one that intersects almost every concern of the anthropologist, as well as of students of related behavioral and humanistic disciplines; and to show that the field has a noteworthy history, a lively present, and a future of promise. (1964b:xxii)

Indeed, 'The red book', as those of us in the field came to call it, became such an influential classic that ten years later, after much discussion, ultimately Hymes demurred (to my expressed relief, among others') from revising and 'updating' it for the publisher.

[1] Voegelin and Sebeok note in their preface (Lévi-Strauss et al. 1953:vi), '[W]e had our memory of the Conference sessions refreshed by the sensitive notes written by Hymes which were however something less and, also, something more than a verbatim account …'.

[2] The median year of original appearance is 1953. The earliest contributions, by Franz Boas (1858–1942), date from 1911, followed by two dating from 1923 by Antoine Meillet (1866–1936) and Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). Two contributions, by Hymes's then Berkeley elder Yakov Malkiel (1914–1998) and by Paul Thieme (1905–2001), were in fact written specifically for the volume and published there for the first time.

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With A. L. Kroeber's (1876–1960) enthusiastic support for the move, for five years Hymes was based at the University of California, Berkeley as Associate and then full Professor (1960–1965), among a lively crowd of trans-departmentally located age cohorts enthusiastically working on language both at the center and at the discipline's edges, where linguistics meets other fields: Susan Ervin-Tripp, John Gumperz, Sydney Lamb, John Searle, Erving Goffman, Ethel Albert; and at Stanford Charles Frake, Roy D'Andrade, and others. Out of their Saturday discussion group emerged a symposium on 'The ethnography of communication' organized by Gumperz and Hymes at the 1963 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco. Hymes introduced the resulting publication (Gumperz & Hymes 1964) with a fresh reworking (1964c) of his summons—by then several times published with slightly different emphases (see e.g. Hymes 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964a, 1966)—to bring this field into being: calling for an empirical focus on the diversity of languages-in-use in their functional matrix of different sociocultural valuations of linguistic and other kinds of communication.

In the hopeful and expanding environment of rising government and foundation financial support for new interdisciplinary and problem-oriented directions involving language during the 1950s and 1960s, for linguistics and its various prefixed forms ('psycholinguistics', 'sociolinguistics', 'ethnolinguistics') this was an age of large conferences and great editing projects, many sponsored by the Social Science Research Council's (SSRC) Committee on Sociolinguistics (1963–1979), of which Hymes became chair in 1970. Along with figures such as Charles A. Ferguson (1921–1998), Joshua A. Fishman (b. 1926), and Thomas A. Sebeok (1920–2001), Hymes soon became one the age's masters of organizing and editing. In addition to the two works discussed above, he edited *The use of computers in anthropology* (1965), based on a Wenner-Gren conference in 1962; *Studies in Southwestern ethnolinguistics: Meaning and history in the languages of the American Southwest* (a Hoijer festschrift, edited with William F. Bittle, 1967); *Pidginization and creolization of languages* (1971), based on an SSRC conference in 1968; *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*, again with Gumperz (Gumperz & Hymes 1972; reissued 1986), expanding and reshaping their coedited 1964 publication; the 'anti-textbook' of anthropology's then mid-career political Left, *Reinventing anthropology* (1972; reissued 1999); *Functions of language in the classroom* (with Courtney B. Cazden and Vera P. John; Cazden et al. 1972); *Studies in the history of linguistics: Traditions and paradigms* (1974b), based on two earlier conferences sponsored by Wenner-Gren/NSF and The Newberry Library. As in his 1964 *Reader* (1964b), Hymes's editorial shaping is never perfunctory; his contributions include lengthy, ruminative essays that contextualize each of these areas in an analytic history of concepts and problems, and an envisaged program of research the volume should stimulate.

Over the years, serving as his own editor, Hymes produced five books that gathered and editorially integrated revised versions of his own scattered papers in his various research interests. His most comprehensive general statement of his point of view on a 'sociological linguistics' is *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach* (1974a). His contributions directed to educational themes are found in *Language in education: Ethnolinguistic essays* (1980), and in *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice* (1996). Two collections develop his most sustained work of almost forty years, on 'ethnopoetics'.[3] The first assembles and re-

[3] Hymes used this term in lively, sometimes pointed dialectic with other students of non-Western and indigenous literature such as Dennis Tedlock (see Tedlock 1972, 1977, 1983) and fellow poets such as Jerome

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works his Chinookan-focused papers of the 1960s and 1970s, *'In vain I tried to tell you': Essays in Native American ethnopoetics* (1981; reissued 2004); the second, *Now I know only so far: Essays in ethnopoetics* (2003), ranges far afield with theoretical reflections on the nature of textuality and illustrative textual analyses. Finally, a number of Hymes's historiographic papers appear in *Essays in the history of linguistic anthropology* (1983), complementing the volume on *American structuralism* originally written with John Fought as a chapter for Thomas Sebeok's massive compendium, *Current trends in linguistics* (Hymes & Fought 1975; reissued separately 1981).

Though linguistics, in particular, was attracting great attention through Noam Chomsky's (b. 1928) cogent universalist and cognitivist framing of formal theory, Hymes early on positioned himself as a sharp critic, calling instead for a sociological or ethnographic linguistics that would see language-in-use—rather than sentence syntax—as the fundamental fact to be explained. In this, he drew particular inspiration from the Praguean structural-functionalism of Roman Jakobson's (1896–1982) componential view of speech events and the 'poetic function' underlying message form.[4] But he reworked these ideas, again and again, in a conceptual vocabulary attuned to anthropology's particular interest in the diversity of cultures and of systems of social value and socialization, with an eye—in contradistinction to linguists' increasingly doctrinal views of universality in grammar associated with Chomsky, his coeval and counterpart—not so much to the universality of grammar as to the inequalities of power visible in language-in-use among human groups in various relations of politicoeconomic and global stratification. For some forty years, he constituted himself a kind of counterprophet for the study of such 'COMMUNICATIVE—not grammatical—competence' (see 1984, 1992), articulating as well the implications of his perspective for folklorists, applied linguists, educationists, sociologists, students of literature—all the fields in which he had significant scholarly concern and administrative responsibilities.

Hymes's longest academic affiliation (1965–1987) was with the University of Pennsylvania, though we can note how much of his program was shaped in the milieus of his earlier years for later realization. Restless from academic politics in the Department of Anthropology, he moved to the Departments of Folklore, Linguistics, and Sociology, before accepting the deanship of the Graduate School of Education. Hymes's role as a graduate-level mentor is associated with his Penn years, during which from the productive interaction of colleagues in linguistics, folklore and folklife, sociology, anthropology, urban studies, education, and so forth—Erving Goffman (1922–1982), William Labov (b. 1927), Ward Goodenough (b. 1919), John Szwed (b. 1936), and others—there emerged in a relatively concentrated period a distinguished cohort of folklorists, sociolinguists, and linguistic anthropologists (see Bauman & Sherzer 1974, 2nd edn. 1989) now coming to senior status in their fields. And it is during his Penn years that his multifarious disciplinary leadership was recognized by election to the Presidencies of the American Folklore Society (1973 and 1974); the Linguistic Society of America

Rothenberg and Hymes's Reed ('51) and Indiana friend Gary Snyder. It combines the prior member *ethno-* that modifies its lexical head, *poetics*, to give the double sense of '[study of] the oral poetics of indigenous peoples and their literary monuments'.

[4] These ideas, infused with an enthusiastic general nod to information and communication theory (on which see Van de Walle 2008), were presented before the young Hymes in Bloomington both in 1952 and, more elaborately, at the famous Style in Language conference of 1958 (see Jakobson 1960). Of course, they also formed a continuing leitmotif of Jakobson's teaching and publication during Hymes's overlapping years at Harvard as a junior colleague linked by Clyde Kluckhohn, who directed the Russian Research Center from its founding in 1948.

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(1982); the American Anthropological Association (1983); and the American Association for Applied Linguistics (1986–87)—as well as by such honors as Guggenheim (1969) and NEH Senior (1972–73) Fellowships, and election as Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1974). (In 1991, he was as well elected as Foreign Honorary Fellow of the British Academy.)

Stepping down from the deanship in 1987, Hymes moved to the University of Virginia and—as he himself was to note autobiographically—returned to work at the interface of anthropology and English, as in his undergraduate days at Reed. As he handed over his journal editorship in 1992—to William Bright (1928–2006), who had been the organizer of the very first captioned 'sociolinguistics' conference on May 11–13, 1964 (published as Bright 1966)—his attention turned almost exclusively to developing ethnopoetics as the line–verse–stanza–etc.-based analysis of narrative discourse (see the appendices in Hymes 2003:429–39 for data on the range of materials so treated). Concluding a 2004 oral history interview that he granted for Reed College (Scollon 2004), in fact, Hymes attested to the pleasure that textual analysis gave him:

> I feel rewarded when I find out how one of these texts works. … If Keats's poems were [printed] in paragraphs, you'd be missing something. And Mrs. Howard's knowledge [of Clackamas Chinookan narrative art] and all these other people—there are certain things you use in telling these stories. … There are little ways of building up to the next part, and so forth. It is not invisible. Pretty straightforward once you realize what's going on. But you're missing the narrator's 'narrative grammar' [if you don't see this].

From a very early stage of his life, Dell Hymes had a reflexive sense of his place in a larger and longer sweep of scholarship and of its societal matrix. The figure of Edward Sapir loomed large as a professional ego-ideal, someone who modeled the combination of linguistic anthropology and poetry. From the time of his Army service Hymes saw the world through the critical yet meliorationist faith of the Marxist intellectual as well as through that of the most liberal expressions of denominational Christianity (to which he returned in later life). In his writings and his personal interactions, he always summoned us to the same.

Not a great lecturer, his pedagogy was best revealed in seminars and in consultative contexts as also in his acts of personal kindness to students, recapitulating, perhaps, his own early experience. His correspondence with myriad colleagues was voluminous, intense, forthright, and argumentative.[5] Hymes's editorial style at *Language in Society* was to lead, in the slow motion of a print journal, a virtual seminar in which his contributing authors spoke to and through him to their readership. In all these ways, during his most active decades he was indeed a forceful shaper of the sociolinguistic enterprise, which would have a very different institutional shape were it not for Dell Hymes's singularly productive career. [MICHAEL SILVERSTEIN, *University of Chicago*.]*

[5] Hymes donated his professional papers to the manuscripts division of the American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, one of the major repositories (anchored by the Boas Collection) for the history of American and especially Americanist linguistics. There is an excellent finder's aid for the collection, 'Dell H. Hymes Papers 1947–1992 Mss.Ms.Coll.55'. An extensive and calendared archive of Burke–Hymes correspondence about poetry, politics, and life is located in the Special Collections of the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

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