

First, an ethnographic correction (at least from the point of view of the present writer) that both Hanks and his reviewers seem to have missed. On p. 54 of the ms. sent to me, just following Figure 2 “Kinship in home” Hanks uses the Spanish term *compadre* where he plainly means *padrino*. (He would be *compadre* to Manuel, not to his youngest son.)

Herewith my own proposed comment.

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In this important paper, Hanks solidifies his position as our preeminent theorist of deixis, amplifying, clarifying, and making more accessible the perspective he has developed over the past two decades. Where his previous work on Yucatec spatial reference might have been (erroneously) construed as an elaborate ethnographic account of Maya demonstrative practice, there is no mistaking his general theoretical aims here. I find especially useful his analytical separation, and subsequent contrastive re-lamination of, first, two highly schematic, austere, (and rarely juxtaposed) frames of reference for talk: the Bühlerian spatial field and the conversation-analytic space (if we may call it that) of sequential organization; and then two socially richer frames of reference for action: Goffman’s ‘situation’ inhabited by ‘gatherings’ or persons in minimal co-presence, and Bourdieu’s ‘field,’ historically and politically constituted and richly populated. In a typical move for him (I am reminded of his treatment of participant roles in Hanks[1996]), by embedding deictic usage in these superimposed frames of reference, Hanks shows how, despite apparently schematic semantics, deictic contrasts can signal widely varied, sometimes (apparently) contradictory situations and perspectives on situations.

One problem, for me, in the analytical juxtaposition (or coordination, lamination, empirical coincidence, or whatever) of these analytically separable frames of reference is that each is somewhat caricatured in the process. For a single example, Hanks suggests that “native speakers’ common sense about their own language and verbal practices” is “absent from both the situation and the *Zeigfeld*.” But Goffman explicitly defines the neutral co-presence of a ‘gathering’ by subtracting from it highly structured, semiotically rich, verbally relevant configurations (such as his ‘with’). Thus, the typified understandings of native interactants are, in some sense, inherent in the ‘situational’ stage, if only by their suspension for analytical purposes. Hank’s own move thus seems exactly parallel to Goffman’s: the deictic frame, in either its “spatial” or “interactionist” construal, is precisely like an empty ‘situation’ waiting to be filled.

I am also somewhat confused by the dual metaphors of “embedding” and “layering.” When a deictic field and some other field (Hanks’ first example is “the judicial field”) are juxtaposed, how is one to decide which is embedded in which, or whether they are merely to be layered together? If the latter, what coincides with what? If the former, what are the relations of precedence or dominance that govern the embedding? Hanks writes that “effective agents in deictic practice” may “accumulate value” but that these are “added specifications motivated not by deixis as such, but by other social fields in which it may be embedded.” However, in Hanks’ own account of the deictic field there is an essential “inherent” (which is to say, highly naturalizable) power-parameter of (potentially asymmetric) “access.” Thus, different agents in the deictic field may have differential access to referents, and this differential access is routinely semanticized in the

linguistic contrasts available. This sounds like “value” to me. (Consider, further, the complexities of differential access given by perceptual modalities—by blindness, deafness, or supernatural omniscience—presumably the products of “embedding.”) Hanks is reluctant to concede priority to a *Zeigfeld*-based semantics for Yucatec deictics. Yet his own example 32—in which his interlocutor assumes he is aware of a semi-conventionalized “association” of a deictic form with a specific reading, but he asks for clarification, prompting a “change of footing”—could be read as suggesting just such a priority. The interlocutor’s “more careful” second try, which “relies not on the habitual relation . . . but on the spatial relations of proximity . . . and inclusion,” could be taken as evidence for the spatial reading as primary, unmarked, and hence “basic.” In a somewhat parallel context, Leslie Devereaux and I interpreted the non-committal Tzotzil *te* ‘there’ in response to a specific question about somebody’s whereabouts—the equivalent of the “habitual association” Hanks describes—not as habitual or conventional but maximally, and strategically, non-informative, hence, ‘polite’ in the context of obsessive Tzotzil privacy (Haviland and Haviland 1983). It relies, precisely, on the unmarked semantics of the system of contrasts of which the deictic partakes.

Finally, let me complain again about something that has bothered me before. Hanks’ perspective insistently fills “pure” space with conceptual and social complexity. When it comes to gesture, however, this complexifying sophistication evaporates. In the same crucial example 32, Hanks notes that the space-prioritizing second reformulation uses a deictic which “usually indexes a performance of a gesture” (which, significantly, his “notes are insufficient to specify”). Hanks correctly notes that “while both indexicality and gesture are pervasive in language, referential deictics are unique in joining the two systematically.” And yet his few remarks about gesture concede to it little of the complex layering and embedding shown to characterize spoken deictics. (He does argue that gestured deictics have “directive” force—in fact, pointing gestures carry this directivity on the faces, as it were, as well as in their ontogenesis.) Notice that the “directive” force of deictics, spoken or gestured, extends precisely to the fact that they are non-characterizing. Since they “provide virtually no identifying information as the objects picked out” they inherently constitute directives to interlocutors to engage in the appropriate inferential procedures. Pointing gestures are no less complex than their spoken counterparts, and the different morphologies of pointing gestures (Kita 2003) as well as the frequently pre-structured spaces or places in which they operate may parallel both the elaborated paradigmatic contrasts and the social complexity in practice of verbalized deictics.

Hanks has given us here another example of the best sort of linguistic anthropology, and I hope others will heed his call to open up research embedding speech in “other varieties of practice.”

Hanks, William F.

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1983 Privacy in a Mexican village. *In* Public and Private in Social Life. S.I. Benn and G.F. Gauss, eds. Pp. 341-361. London: Croom Helm.

Kita, Sotaro

2003 Pointing: Where Language, Culture, and Cognition Meet. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.