Judith KAPLAN-WEINGER and Char ULLMAN, *Methods for the Ethnography of Communication. Language in Use in Schools and Communities*, Routledge, New York/London, 2015, pp. 186.

Summary

The volume "Methods for the Ethnography of Communication. Language in Use in Schools and Communities" by Judith Kaplan-Weinger and Char Ullman discusses various aspects of the ethnography of communication with special focus on methodological issues. Its target audience, as stated in the preface (pp. ix–xi), are students representing a broad range of fields of study, such as linguistics, communication studies, anthropology, business, education, etc. This book, or in fact this textbook, is also intended for teachers who want to enhance their knowledge and skills, and additionally for professionals researching a selected discourse community (p. ix). In general, Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman's book is particularly useful for people seeking an introduction to the field of the ethnography of communication, who are interested in applying its methods to their research projects. The textbook is divided into 12 chapters, each ending with a "Wrapping Up" section and list of references. It ends with an index of key terms used and names referred to in the book.

Chapter 1, "Making the Familiar Strange, Making the Strange Familiar", provides a general understanding of the ethnography of communication, mainly on the basis of anthropological and sociological considerations. It explains basic concepts related to this field of study, such as 'culture', 'knowledge', 'community', 'communicative competence'. It is particularly valuable that the authors have reviewed a variety of concepts developed by various researchers in the fields that have close ties to the ethnography of communication.

Chapter 2, "Linguistic Anthropology + Sociolinguistics = The Ethnography of Communication", is an actual introduction to the ethnography of communication. It starts with a brief historical development of the ethnography of communication and the explication of aspects of communication with regard to 'communities of practice'. The focus is on reviewing the basics of ethnographic research as a member of a given community of practice or as an outsider, especially insider/outsider ethnography and the emic/etic perspective, and ethnocentrism.

In Chapter 3, "Using Social Theory", the authors explain and underline the importance of social theories for conducting ethnography of communication studies. They are of the opinion that it is necessary to be familiar with various social theories in order to be able to explore different perspectives of the collected data. The authors provide a list of literature depicting the relation between language and power that, to their mind, is worth becoming familiar with before interpreting the data elicited.

Chapter 4, "A Framework for Doing the Ethnography of Communication" with a subtitle "Ethnography of Communication Redux", aims at "rethink[ing] some of the assumptions about ethnography of communication" (p. 38). It outlines how communication ethnographers proceed when conducting their studies (participant observation) to understand communication (and not just language). It points to the dangers and limitations of ethnography of communication studies, such as the observer's paradox, the researcher's impact and reflexivity, including positionality, insider-outsider relationship, collaborative ethnography. The focus of this chapter, however, constitute two models, i.e. Hymes' SPEAKING model (Hymes 1974) and the CULTURES model. Hymes' SPEAKING framework is updated with the concept of the communities of practice as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). In such a way, the static and centripetal speech communities as described within the Hymes' model are exchanged for more dynamic, centrifugal communities of practice. In other words, the authors pledge that it is important to research not only what happens at the center of a given community, but also at its peripheries. The CULTURES model, on the other hand, an innovative framework developed by the authors of the book, is defined as "a process model for doing the ethnography of communication . . . [that] provides the steps through which an ethnographer should progress while gathering the data, completing an analysis, and presenting a description and understanding of a community's ways of knowing, being, and doing." (p. 49) The authors underline that the CULTURES ethnographic research cycle is an iterative model "to account for the continuous influence of what we observe and of what knowledge we gain as ethnographers" (p. 49). That is, it enables the communication ethnographer to go forward and backward in studying communicative situations, events, and acts ethnographically. The CULTURES model, which is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 1 below, is briefly described in Chapter 4 of the book.
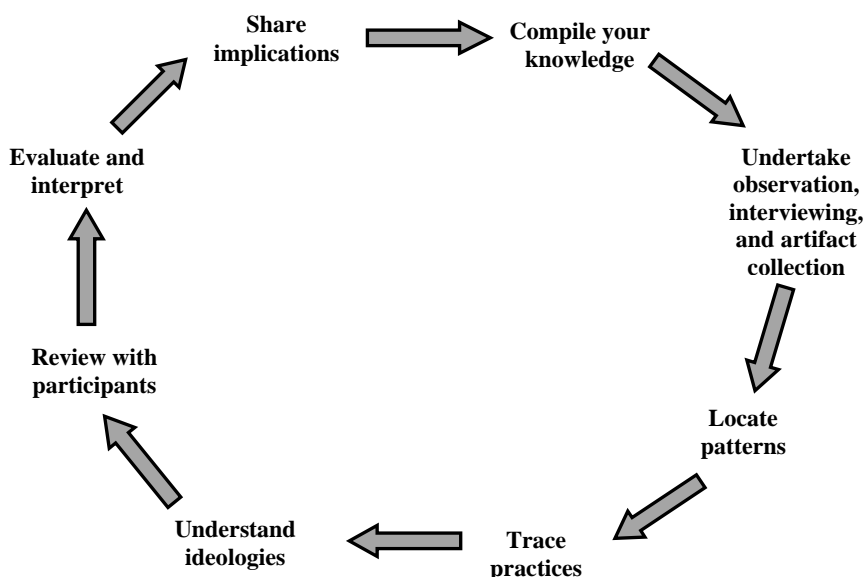

Figure 1. The Cultures Model (p. 51)

Its components are further explained in great detail in Chapters 5 to 12, each entitled in accordance with the respective component of the model: Chapter 5 "Compile Your Knowledge", Chapter 6 "Undertake Observation, interviewing, and Artifact Collection", Chapter 7 "Locate Patterns", Chapter 8 "Trace Practices", Chapter 9 "Understand Ideologies", Chapter 10 "Review with Participants", Chapter 11 "Evaluate and Interpret", Chapter 12 "Share Implications". Chapters 5 to 12 present a number of practical details and tips on conducting ethnography of communication studies and include various examples of recent investigations, as well as activities and exercises that help to understand how to conduct such studies. In these chapters, the entire process of ethnography of communication studies is explained in great detail. In addition, Chapters 7 to 12 end with a section "Building Your Ethnographic Analysis", in which the authors pose direct questions about the reader's own project. This section also includes a table called "Looking at My Data" to be filled in with the data of the reader's project on the basis of the issues discussed earlier in the given chapter.

Evaluation

One of the major strengths of the book is that it presents the entire process, literally from A to Z, of conducting ethnography of communication studies: from choosing the community of practice to publishing the research findings. In the final chapter, the authors even explain the advantages and disadvantages of sharing research results in different contexts (conferences, journals) and provide information on various types of scholarly journals (refereed, open-access, peer-reviewed, conference proceedings, journal of a professional organisation), which may be very useful for novice researchers.

Moreover, Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman's book successfully engages the reader throughout, mainly because it is written in a simple language, keeping in mind the needs of the beginner. In fact, the authors conduct a dialogue with the reader through the course of the book and employ various techniques to maintain the reader's full attention on almost every page of the book. In particular, the authors use a good amount of simple examples from their own studies and even from their personal lives (i.e. pp. 7–9), as well as comparisons (e.g. theory as a pair of glasses, p. 29) to explicate the complex points discussed. Throughout the book, there are boxes with questions, situations, and points that can be discussed by students in the class and that trigger the reader to think about and analyse the aspects explained by the authors, and thus to remember them better. Most of the boxes are entitled "Thinking Together", while others are labelled "Working Together", "Reflecting Together", etc. to stimulate group work in the class. In addition, the authors address the reader directly, ask them to imagine certain simple situations from their daily life, and hence, one can say, force the reader to actively follow the deliberations. They also provide links to various videos on Youtube that can be used to test presented theories and models in practice. In such a way, the reader is provided with a variety of ways to better understand how to conduct ethnography of communication studies.

Furthermore, Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman introduce key terms and explain them in a very straightforward and uncomplicated manner, again by directly addressing the

reader and by using illustrative comparisons and examples. Newly introduced terms are written in a different font, making them stand out in the text, thus making it easier to learn and remember them.

The book provides a good overview of research in the field of the ethnography of communication and refers to a number of publications in this field of study, although I have not found any reference to the monograph by Saville-Troike (2003), one of the key publications in the field of the ethnography of communication. The book by Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman also provides a summary of research studies of selected aspects. What is more, well-known definitions, statements, and examples are quoted. Therefore, the book serves as a good source of literature on the subject and a solid introduction to the ethnography of communication. At the same time, in the second part of the book the authors explicate their own innovative model to conduct ethnography of communication studies, which they support with numerous examples and theoretical assumptions. They also provide a lot of interesting activities and exercises, through which the components of the proposed framework can be tested and better understood.

Nevertheless, I was to some extent disappointed with the book. When I reached for it and read its title, I was expecting a volume with a greater focus on methods for the ethnography of communication and their practical application to research in various communities, rather than an introduction to the ethnography of communication. It is a pity that the title of the book, or at least its subtitle, does not signal that it is in fact a textbook or volume presenting the basics of the ethnography of communication as well as an innovative model for conducting ethnographic studies. This is found in the description of the book provided on the first page of the book (before the title page).

All in all, "Methods for the Ethnography of Communication. Language in Use in Schools and Communities" by Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman is a well written book with a thought out structure that provides the reader with a solid introduction to the ethnography of communication and a rich overview of the possibilities and methods that ethnography of communication offers to researchers and practitioners interested to find out more about communication in communities of their choice. Above all, it outlines in detail (step by step) the process of an ethnography of communication study and supports it with numerous examples. Therefore, "Methods for the Ethnography of Communication. Language in Use in Schools and Communities" is a practical and valuable guide to conducing ethnography of communication studies, and I highly recommend it not only to those looking for an introduction to this field of study and its basic concepts, but also to those already familiar with the field, seeking to refresh the stance of their knowledge and obtain an overview of the latest ethnography of communication studies. Instructors may also find this book to be a valuable source of tips and material that will help them engage their students during classes and lectures devoted to the ethnography of communication, inspiring them to lively discussion.

References

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Justyna ALNAJJAR
University of Warsaw