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*Language and Communicative Practices.* William F. Hanks. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996. 335 pp.

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A daunting task confronts linguistic anthropology: investigating the relationship between language and reality (an investigation now, ironically, stereotyped in the phrase "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis") and doing so, specifically, by situating language with respect to culture and society. Reading William Hanks's new book is invigorating in this regard. We see just how hard people have thought about one aspect of this problem, and we glimpse some new lines of research and thinking that are shaping contemporary approaches to it.

This book is signature Hanks, for cognoscenti of his other work. It is all about context; dare I say it is saturated by "context"? It is about the situatedness of language and speech in space and time, and relative to "here"s and "now"s. Context is one way to approach the language and reality problem. Through ostensive reference ("This computer before my eyes"), language seems to brush up against a piece of nonlinguistic reality, which is, simultaneously, part of my immediate context. Through deictics ("I," "this," "here," "now"), language seems to reach out of its Saussurean system into the sensible realm, to anchor itself in a context. No wonder one approach to the language/reality problem (the approach Hanks has adopted) has been through context. An understanding of contextualization seems to tell us how language taps into the world.

If this book is signature Hanks, there is also something new here. Unlike his earlier *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), this book is designed to be accessible to readers other than technically trained linguistic anthropologists. Here is the opening of chapter 1:

Start with a simple scenario. It is 7:28 a.m. on September 19, 1993. Chicago. Jack has just walked into the kitchen. He is standing at the counter by the sink, pouring a cup of coffee. Natalia is wiping off the dining room table. Gazing vacantly at his coffee cup, still drowsy, Jack says,

"D'the paper come today, sweetheart?"

She says,

"It's right on the table."

Turning to the small table inside the kitchen, he picks up the paper and his cup of coffee. He joins her out in the dining room. [p. 1]

We follow this one example, fragmentary as it is, through a remarkable portion of the book, looking at it from first this angle and then that. We even see, in figure 1.2, a plate of the front page of the *New York Times* of September 19, 1993, the paper to which Jack was presumably referring. The example proves so complex (and this is part of Hanks's point: to show us

just how much goes into something so seemingly simple) that we do not get to another comparable example until a hundred pages later.

What is Hanks up to in all of the intervening pages? He is not just illuminating the opening example. He is taking us on a tour of the intellectual landscape of linguistic anthropology. Because he does it so skillfully and entertainingly, I at first thought his intent was to produce an introductory textbook in linguistic anthropology. I still think the first and, possibly, second parts (there are three in total) can serve as an introduction to key texts and concepts. We go through Saussure, Peirce, Boas, Sapir, Bloomfield, Chomsky, Austin, Grice, and Voloshinov. Curiously, we also hear quite a bit about Ragnar Rommetveit, an early critic of Noam Chomsky but not exactly a household name for linguistic anthropologists, and about literary phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, along with the more familiar Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schutz.

In the book's final part, "Communicative Practices," however, we see why this is not an introductory survey of great ideas in linguistic anthropology. Here Hanks lays out his own new synthesis, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's work on social fields and developing an approach to genres. In chapter 12, "Meaning in History," Hanks tackles some ethnohistorical Mayan documents, illustrating how his practice approach provides new ways to explore empirical problems pertaining to documents.

The approach to the language/reality problem through context is one significant new development in linguistic anthropology. A complementary approach, though not one discussed in this book, is through the problem of circulation, in which the abstract aspect of language as shared meaning-bearing system is seen to depend on the replication and circulation of discourse that is simultaneously in the world and about the world. This is, so to speak, a horizontal approach to the problem, in which one looks at the different types of inter-conversion between language as abstract meaning and language as tangible thing. Along these lines, I was struck by the fact that the Jack and Natalia example, concrete and in this world as it is made to seem through diagrams and a photo of the *New York Times* cover page, is one that Hanks actually made up! The power of discourse to create worlds and contexts that can then be analyzed is impressive, indeed; and Hanks's book is an impressive synthesis of ways of thinking about such problems. ■