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1992

Review of Deborah Tannen, Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/barbara_johnstone/116/
data. Since this material isn't very well integrated into the rest of the book in any case, it might better have been excised.

This book is for scholars unfamiliar with the Chinese mass communication system who are seeking a concise introduction to it or for scholars already familiar with the major works in the field who are seeking an update of those works. Despite its flaws, the book's summaries of the development of the Chinese mass media are excellent, and its examination of those media in the late 1970s and the 1980s is the best available, combining previously published work with original research. Those troubled by the extent to which recent events raise questions about the book's currency, however, may want to hope for a second edition.

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Like communication scholars in traditional research paradigms, many linguists view speaking as encoding and understanding as decoding, and conceive of the use of language as primarily, and ideally, logical and persuasive. In both disciplines, however, new paradigms have presented themselves in the last twenty years or so: ways of conceiving of meaning as indeterminate and jointly created by interlocutors in interactions, and ways of talking about uses of language such as self-expression, phatic communion, and poetry. For the last decade or so, in numerous articles and books for scholarly and popular audiences, Deborah Tannen has been the most visible representative of one of the new ways of doing linguistics—discourse analysis—and of an emerging, as yet unnamed theory about why this kind of linguistics is crucial. Talking Voices is well worth the attention of any reader of this journal, and will be enjoyable comprehensible to all, even those with no training in linguistics.

Tannen frames her study by asking why it is that non-literary language involves many figures of speech and thought traditionally seen as typically literary: repetition, ellipsis, representations of others' speech, imagery, and vivid detail. She claims that literary language and ordinary language are alike because the goal of all language users is the same, be they readers and writers of literature, rhetors and audiences, or casual conversationalists. This goal is involvement. In order for communication to occur at all, people have to be involved in interacting: they have to be concerned, caring, and actively listening. This sort of involvement is the prerequisite for another, involvement in understanding. Constructing meaning involves imagining, feeling, interpreting. The book is about how three "literary" figures—repetition, constructed dialogue, and imagery—create these two layers of involvement in non-literary discourse, as well as in literature.

Following two introductory chapters, Tannen devotes a chapter to each of these three involvement strategies. Chapter 3 is about repetition, within discourses, as people repeat their own and each others' sounds, words, phrases, and grammatical structures, and across discourses, as people construct talk out of bits and pieces of remembered prior talk. Tannen shows how repetition helps speakers produce fluent talk, by relying on formulaic, pre-patterned chunks instead of having to design each word and phrase. Repetition also helps people comprehend talk, by increasing redundancy and reducing the density of new information. Repetition shows how ideas are connected in talk, paradoxically highlighting both what is repeated and what is varied. Repetition is also a way of managing interaction: interlocutors can use repetition to show that they are following, or that they aren't; that they like what others have said, or don't; that what someone has said is the crux of the matter, or a joke, or addressed to one person and not another. Tannen gives examples of forms and functions of repetition in casual talk, in Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and in several plays. She uses evidence from neurology to suggest that human minds have a fundamental, automatic need to repeat and imitate, because repeating and imitating create rhythmic, sensual involvement.

In the chapter on dialogue, Tannen begins by demonstrating, with reference to the work of Bakhtin and with numerous examples from her own data, that speech attributed to another is never "reported," but rather always "constructed." Speakers create voices, and words spoken in them, to involve their listeners in the rhythm of their talk and to involve them in imagining the specific, peopled scenes they are reconstructing. The joint creation, by speakers or writers and hearers or readers, of concrete, familiar scenes is, for Tannen, a key to the sort of involvement that leads to understanding what someone means.
Robert L. Bishop's *Qi Lai!* is a flawed book victimized by bad timing. Most of the book surveys changes in the Chinese communication system since the late seventies. Unfortunately, problems with focus mar the book, and recent political turmoil, of which the Tian-Anmen protests were a part, raises doubt as to the currency of Bishop's overview.

Part of the problem with *Qi Lai!* (which means "stand up!") is that its focus is unclear. The author never tells the reader what his intentions are, and those intentions aren't obvious. The author creates some confusion by using the terms "communication" and "mass communication" synonymously. Thus, the title proclaims that the book looks at the Chinese *communication* system, Chapter 4's summary of past practice examines "Mass Media Prior to 1949," Chapter 6 devotes itself to "The Chinese Communication System," and the book gives individual attention only to mass media: television, radio, film, posters, magazines, books, and newspapers. The reader for whom not all communication is mass communication may be excused, then, for uncertainty as to what Bishop is trying to do. This problem is especially serious because the subject is China. As anyone familiar with communication in China knows (and as Bishop himself remarks), the communists relied heavily on face-to-face channels in communicating with the mass of the people. The title of the book, then, leads knowledgeable readers to believe that Bishop examines face-to-face communication. Yet, having acknowledged the importance of such communication, Bishop has almost nothing to say about it. It is quite some time before the reader realizes that Bishop is primarily concerned with *mass* communication. The book's title confuses, and Bishop fails to reduce that confusion by clearly telling the reader what kind of communication he is studying.

The book's focus is unclear in another way as well. The book does three things: it investigates the effectiveness of the official mass communication system in China, sketches the evolution of that system, and describes the system in the present. No rationale is offered for pursuing all three of these goals together. The analysis of the effectiveness of official media isn't worked into the rest of the book very well; it certainly doesn't appear in any of the conclusions drawn at the end of the book. Thus, it is difficult to see why it was included, except that it happened to be available. The historical material takes second place to descriptions of the recent Chinese official mass communication system. This is as it should be, for there are a number of excellent books detailing the Chinese official communication system through the middle 1970s, including Frederick T.C. Yu, *Mass Persuasion in Communist China* (New York: Praeger, 1964), Alan P.L. Liu, *Communications and National Integration in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), Godwin C. Chu, ed., *Popular Media in China: Shaping New Cultural Patterns* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1978), Godwin C. Chu and Francis L.K. Hsu, *Moving a Mountain: Cultural Change in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1979), and especially Godwin C. Chu, *Radical Change through Communication in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978). With these works available, there is no need for Bishop to do more than outline the system's development up to the late 1970s, which he does unusually well. His summaries are clear, concise, and well-focused on essentials, providing an excellent introduction to the subject. Most of the book is devoted to the description of the Chinese mass communication system since the late seventies. Therefore, given that the information about the effectiveness of the mass communication system is not integrated into the rest of the book very well, and given that the historical summaries are appropriately brief, the reader must conclude that Bishop is primarily trying to update previous examinations of the official Chinese mass communications system by describing that system in the late 1970s and 1980s. This is a conclusion that the reader gradually reaches, however, since the author never tells the reader what he is doing and why he is doing it.

The book has one other serious flaw. Its examination of the effectiveness of mass communication in China concludes, first, that the mass media are less believable and less influential than communication with family and friends and, second, that mass media are generally influential to the extent that they are seen as publicizing official demands, rather than as providing accurate facts upon which one might make decisions. However, the validity of these conclusions is undermined by the sample population from which they are drawn. The author bases his discussion of mass media effectiveness on interviews conducted in 1981 with Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong. For the most part, these immigrants were economic refugees. They came to Hong Kong despite a generally unfavorable picture of the colony painted in the official Chinese media. So, it is hardly surprising that the sample population believes unofficial communication to be more trustworthy than official communication. Bishop notes this problem, yet he uses the
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(Think, for example, of the common way of expressing a lack of understanding: "I can't picture that.") Imagery and detail also help create scenes, in narrative but also in non-narrative conversation, in artful spoken discourse, and in writing. It is by sparking the audience's individual imaginations that hearers and writers create real understanding; scenes you can vividly imagine are more memorable loci for new information than are abstract propositions, in any genre of discourse.

In the book's final chapter, Tannen shows how the three strategies she has discussed work together, by means of extended analyses of a piece of academic prose and of Jesse Jackson's 1988 Democratic Convention address. This chapter will be helpful to communication scholars who are confused about what discourse analysis is and how it's different from what they do. They will find that in some ways it isn't different at all: Tannen's discussions of Jackson's use of metaphor and of the rhythmic and rhetorical structure of the speech are based on just the sorts of analysis people in communication studies do, and Tannen makes reference to others' work on African-American homiletics. What differentiates other aspects of Tannen's analyses from traditional rhetorical analysis is her close attention to linguistic form, in accordance with linguists' underlying concern with why phrases, clauses, and sentences take the shape they do.

_Talking Voices_ is a contribution to a way of thinking about language identified with A.L. Becker and Paul Friedrich, among others. It is a view in which language is seen as what people do when they talk or write (Becker calls it " languaging") rather than as an abstract structure of rules and relationships. In this view, the thing to do if one wants to understand language is to examine particular, situated bits of language to see what elements come into play in their creation and interpretation. This task is possible only if one becomes attuned, as closely as possible, to the discourse and the conditions of its production and comprehension; it is thereby essentially aesthetic. And, since its language is never the only thing that contributes to a discourse's meaning, the task is essentially interdisciplinary. This kind of linguistics has a great deal to offer communication studies. _Talking Voices_ is an engaging, clear introduction to this emerging paradigm.

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The consensus among scholars of scientific rhetoric is that scientists use rhetorical strategies to validate their claims to each other. The burden remains for rhetoricians to discover the underlying criteria that constrain and structure the range of legitimate rhetorical strategies within scientific communities. Lawrence J. Prelli's new book attempts such a project. He joins the insights of contemporary rhetoricians of science and recent work in the philosophy and sociology of science with traditional topical analysis. For Prelli, scientists make systematic, rhetorical decisions, based upon knowledge about fitting rhetorical ends, points of stases, and potentially relevant topos that indicate what can or cannot be said concerning scientific claims in different situations. While these criteria in themselves are not formally logical, Prelli insists, they are not illogical: "the method of choosing involves reasoning, but about how to create situationally reasonable claims rather than formally logical entailments" (119).

This idea of a rhetorical logic is at the heart of Prelli's book. The first part of his text, which seasoned rhetoricians may wish to pass over, surveys general approaches to rhetoric and standard theories of rhetorical invention based on stasis and the topical method. Rhetorical scholars will find Part Two more relevant since it develops in considerable detail how rhetorical invention works in science. Prelli's major claim is that scientific rhetoric "is strategically created with a view to securing acceptance as reasonable by a special kind of audience. It is based on a particular kind of topical logic" (258). This logic is revealed as scientists initially choose a situationally reasonable and pragmatic purpose for their discourse. Scientists cannot merely discover what they believe are important findings and expect other scientists to recognize the significance of these results. A critical purpose of scientific rhetoric is to identify ways in which one's work modifies the problems members of the addressed scientific community perceive as pertinent. Thus, scientific rhetoric elucidates points of major stasis "concerning the four grand functions of doing science: adducing evidence, interpreting constructs and information, evaluating the scientific significance of matters discussed, and applying scientific methods" (145; emphasis mine). Within the sphere of each of these superior stases, more subordinate problems concerning the nature of scientific claims must be examined.
Therefore, the superior stases can be broken further into “subordinate stases,” which include conjectural, definitional, qualitative, and transitive issues.

Once relevant stases points have been delineated, the second part of Prelli’s rhetorical logic of science unfolds. Scientists develop available lines of thought, indexed by topos or “standards that all scientists apply in doing science. . . . These themes constitute a stable, ever-present collection of discussable options that are . . . culturally ‘authorized’ by all scientific communities” (216). These lines of thought are transformed into arguments that will evoke a scientific audience’s cooperation in modifying the described problems. Prelli groups the topoi of science into four central headings—the problem-solving, the evaluative, the exemplary, and the ethical. The practice of science mandates that scientific discourse solves significant problems. But only discourse that demonstrates “experimental competence” and “replication,” to name just two of the problem-solving topos described by Prelli, is accepted as a legitimate instance of scientific problem-solving. Evaluative topos “suggest lines of argument in which rhetors test the special values of experimental, theoretical, or methodological claims” (199). Thus, in order to evaluate one set of claims against another, scientists employ evaluative topoi—such as internal consistency, simplicity, and fruitfulness—which demonstrate that a scientific discourse is reasonable (and a more persuasive explanation of extant problems) because it reveals internal consistency, is more parsimonious than other explanations, or is productive of new findings. Exemplary topoi include such discursive strategies as examples, analogies, and metaphors, which can be enlisted to support scientific arguments. Finally, topos that enhance a scientist’s ethos include universality, skepticism, disinterestedness, and communality. In general, correct use of topos not only legitimizes scientific discourse as reasonable but structures the way scientific audiences think about their problems. Consequently, topical analysis supplies critical insights concerning “what could have been said about a scientific subject” (216) and why scientific claims are more or less successful in particular situations.

Prelly’s arguments are detailed and well supported with many rich examples. Of special note is his analysis of the Memory-Transfer dispute and the McLean v. Arkansas controversy over scientific creationism. Prelli is particularly adept when exploring the use of exemplary topos in the Memory-Transfer debate, where he shows how “mapping metaphors” actually constrained scientific thinking about human brain processes. In the McLean controversy, he illustrates how topical analysis distinguishes scientific from non-scientific claims, within the parameters of public argument.

Still, a reader wonders how this text relates to larger concerns within the rhetoric of science. Curiously, Prelli mostly avoids the ongoing epistemic quarrel between rhetorical realists and social constructivists. Prelli himself would seem to fall into the latter camp since his book provides arguments supporting the contention that scientific rhetoric is primarily about matching claims to prevailing community conventions and audience constraints, not to the facts of the world. Borrowing from Knorr-Cetina, he suggests that “scientific inquiry is not a process of careful description aimed at securing absolute truth, but instead is a constructive activity involving several series of selections aimed at ‘manufacturing’ scientific products that make things work” (88). Still again: “Any instance of symbolic reorientation in science requires suasive processes that are continually adjusted to specific audiences addressed in particular times and circumstances” (100). Despite this social constructivist leaning, Prelli never systematically addresses potential philosophical objections to his work. During his discussion of scientific topos, for example, Prelli talks as if topos have no other objective grounding than in the consensual agreement of scientific audiences. Clearly, Prelli’s aims are not philosophical. Yet his critical reading along social constructivist lines closes him off to the interesting possibility that scientific discourse is accepted not because it simply adapts topos to audiences but because topos help to connect scientific claims to the physical world. In this sense, Prelli seems not to appreciate the force of the double epistemic claims of science. Perhaps a discussion of the combinatory force of the social and the natural grounding of scientific knowledge would better explain the privileged status of science.

Topoi provide scientists with intentional materials to make discourse persuasive. But this explanation seems to beg questions as to why topos exist in the first place, what it means, philosophically, to say topos structure scientific discourse, or why scientists “accept” and “value” topos as legitimizing components of their rhetoric. Prelli seems to argue that because rhetoric and rhetorical topos exert a profound influence on the acceptance or rejection of scientific claims, their use has become a normative part of science. Prelli seems untroubled by the counter view that while scientists do all they can rhetorically to advance the factual nature of their claims through topical reasoning, topos reflect, normatively and canonically, scientific practices that have led consistently to meaningful descriptions, explanations, and predictions about objective reality. In this view, scientific discourse is persuasive because it enlists suitable lines of argument and situationally relevant topos to match claims against constraints imposed by the physical