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4 **Neo-Hymesian linguistic ethnography in the**
 5 **United Kingdom**

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9 **Ben Rampton**

10 *King's College, London*

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13 This paper describes the development of 'linguistic ethnography' in Britain
 14 over the last 5–15 years. British anthropology tends to overlook language,
 15 and instead, the U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum (LEF) has emerged
 16 from socio- and applied linguistics, bringing together a number of formative
 17 traditions (*inter alia*, Interactional Sociolinguistics, New Literacy Studies
 18 and Critical Discourse Analysis). The career paths and the institutional
 19 positions of LEF participants make their ethnography more a matter of getting
 20 analytic distance on what's close-at-hand than a process of getting familiar
 21 with the strange. When linked with post-structuralism more generally, this
 22 'from-inside-outwards' trajectory produces analytic sensibilities tuned to
 23 discourse analysis as a method, doubtful about 'comprehensive' and 'exotic'
 24 ethnography, and well-disposed to practical/political intervention. LE sits
 25 comfortably in the much broader shift from mono- to inter-disciplinarity in
 26 British higher education, though the inter-disciplinary environment makes it
 27 hard to take the relationship between linguistics and ethnography for granted.

27 KEYWORDS: Linguistic ethnography, inter-disciplinarity,
 28 methodology, Hymes

30

31 **1. INTRODUCTION**

32

33 This is a case study of the development of an arena for the analysis of language in
 34 society that has been taking shape amidst a major reconfiguration of knowledge
 35 production in higher education, that identifies with inter-disciplinarity, and
 36 that looks to capitalise on the importance attributed to language and discourse
 37 across the social sciences quite generally.¹ The paper describes the emergence
 38 of 'linguistic ethnography' in and around Britain² over the last 5–15 years, and
 39 it adopts the perspective that Hymes advocated in a 1974/1983 discussion of
 40 'Traditions and paradigms'. The history of a disciplinary tradition like linguistics,
 41 suggests Hymes:

42 ... resolves itself into an overlapping series of local scenes, specific 'structures of
 43 feeling' (Williams 1965: 64–66), approachable through biographies ... and lesser
 44 writings, more than through isolated classics ... If our interest is to know what
 45 happened ... [o]ur history must become a history, not only of great men, but of

2 circles, and not only circles, but also of institutions, governments, rulers, wars, and
 3 the ways in which these have shaped the renewed origins of linguistics in successive
 4 generations. (1983: 346; see also Scollon and Scollon this issue)

5 Similarly, a particular approach or paradigm is never really ‘a matter of
 6 scientific methods and findings alone, but [is] also a complex of attitudes and
 7 outlooks . . . [C]limates of opinion play a part . . . [and p]articular social origins are
 8 a factor as well.’ (1983: 355, original emphases). From this, Hymes concludes, ‘a
 9 “sociolinguistic” approach [to the description of traditions and paradigms] . . . is
 10 necessary. . . . [O]ne will deal with the occurrence of a paradigm . . . as more than
 11 an intellectual accomplishment; one will deal with it as a process of sociocultural
 12 change . . .’ (1983: 365).

13 Linguistic ethnography is in itself neither a paradigm, a cohesive ‘school’,
 14 nor some kind of definitive synthesis. Instead, it is more accurately described
 15 as a site of encounter where a number of established lines of research interact,
 16 pushed together by circumstance, open to the recognition of new affinities, and
 17 sufficiently familiar with one another to treat differences with equanimity. There
 18 certainly is an overarching intellectual warrant for this interaction, and it resides
 19 in two central assumptions that researchers meeting under the aegis of the U.K.
 20 Linguistic Ethnography Forum are likely to share with a lot of sociolinguists
 21 worldwide, as well as with linguistic anthropologists in the U.S. Specifically,
 22 associates in linguistic ethnography hold:

- 23
- 24 1. that the contexts for communication should be investigated rather than
 assumed. Meaning takes shape within specific social relations, interactional
 histories and institutional regimes, produced and construed by agents with
 expectations and repertoires that have to be grasped ethnographically; and
 - 25 2. that analysis of the internal organisation of verbal (and other kinds of semiotic)
 data is essential to understanding its significance and position in the world.
 Meaning is far more than just the ‘expression of ideas’, and biography,
 identifications, stance and nuance are extensively signalled in the linguistic
 and textual fine-grain.

33 But general tenets like these will be appropriated and applied in different ways in
 34 different contexts (as the tenets themselves imply), and in my attempt to describe
 35 linguistic ethnography in the U.K. as a discursive space, I shall address not only the
 36 meeting arenas and the currents of work that have contributed so far, but also the
 37 backgrounds of its affiliates, their institutional positions, and their siting within
 38 much broader changes transforming British higher education. In the process,
 39 I will venture a characterisation of the analytic sensibilities that this discursive
 40 space encourages, and the perspective on the relationship between linguistics and
 41 ethnography that it inclines us to.

42 But before following Hymes to this ‘sociolinguistic’ account of the wider U.K.
 43 context in which linguistic ethnography has taken shape, I shall begin with a
 44 fairly straightforward outline of the main currents of analysis at play within it.
 45

2 **2. LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE U.K.: ACADEMIC LINES IN PLAY**

3 Linguistics and ethnography were linked in Britain in Malinowski's foundational
 4 work at the start of the 20th century, but it is commonly recognised that in spite
 5 of a few (very) high points (e.g. Parkin 1984; Grillo 1989; Bloch 1975, 1998;
 6 Finnegan 2002), an interest in language and linguistics has been only sporadic
 7 in British social anthropology (Henson 1974; Hymes 1983: 141, 169; Grillo,
 8 Pratt and Street 1987: 275–277; Grillo 1989: 4ff.). In line with this, there are
 9 at present no university libraries in the U.K. that carry the *Journal of Linguistic*
 10 *Anthropology*,³ and none of the debates about language, culture and society that
 11 have gained international attention over the last 10–15 years have been hosted
 12 by British anthropology conferences.⁴ Instead, in the U.K., the links between
 13 language, culture and society have been much more fully addressed at linguistics
 14 meetings.

15 Sociolinguistics conferences and seminars have been one arena for this and,
 16 right from the outset, there have been substantial contributions from researchers
 17 who present their work at sociolinguistics symposia, publish in sociolinguistics
 18 journals, sit on sociolinguistics editorial boards, etc. Nevertheless, it has been
 19 applied rather than sociolinguistics that has served as the crucial formative
 20 context, and in 2001 it was the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL—
 21 www.baal.org.uk) that provided some of the key infrastructure for setting up the
 22 U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum (LEF), a grouping that has been running two
 23 or three academic meetings every year since its inception and that, at the time
 24 of writing, has more than 200 researchers on its email list. In fact, the shaping
 25 influence of applied linguistics extends much further than the organizational
 26 benefits provided by the links with BAAL, and this gives LE an element of
 27 distinctiveness even within a 'broad tent' view of sociolinguistics.

28 With only 150–250 people attending every year, BAAL annual meetings during
 29 the 1990s provided a relatively convivial arena for interaction between five lines
 30 (or 'programmes') of research that can be found in play at present in the Linguistic
 31 Ethnography Forum:⁵

- 32 a. The first of these research programmes was *Interactional Sociolinguistics*. This
 33 obviously began in the U.S. but it took root in the U.K. with John Gumperz's
 34 collaboration with Roberts and Jupp at the Industrial Language Training
 35 Centre in London, focusing on ethnicity, language and inequality in the
 36 workplace (Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts 1979). Cross-cultural communication
 37 was one major issue (Roberts et al. 1992), and culturally (and politically)
 38 embedded second language development was another (Roberts and Simonot
 39 1987). Subsequently, code-switching and language crossing joined the
 40 repertoire of British Interactional Sociolinguistics research on the dynamics
 41 of ethnicity in speech (Martin-Jones 1995; Rampton 1995a), and the scope
 42 for connection with Bourdieurian critique was also added through the
 43 trans-Atlantic collaboration of Martin-Jones and Heller (Heller and Martin-
 44 Jones (eds.) 1996, 2001). Throughout the 1990s (and indeed often earlier,

e.g. Sapir 1949: 104; Halliday 1978), the social constructionist view that human reality is extensively reproduced and created anew in the socially and historically specific activities of everyday life, provided linguists of different persuasions with an invigorating sense of the wider social scientific value of their analytic skills. Gumperz provided a particularly sharp set of empirical concepts and procedures for seeing this, and he achieved this through a pioneering synthesis of dialectology, pragmatics, conversation analysis, ethnography and Goffmanian interaction analysis. In the process, he also opened a space for Conversation Analysis (CA) to impact on contemporary linguistic ethnography (even though the purer forms of CA weren't well represented at British applied linguistics meetings during the 1990s, though see for example Roberts et al. 1992: 82–85 and Sarangi and Roberts (eds.) 1999).

b. The second tradition hosted at applied linguistics meetings was the *New Literacy Studies* (NLS), which in Britain was originally associated with the work of Brian Street, subsequently becoming firmly rooted at Lancaster and a number of other British universities (e.g. Barton 1994; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000; Gregory and Williams 2000; Martin-Jones and Jones 2000). Street argued for the importance of ethnography in understanding how people's uses of literacy derive meaning and power through their embeddedness within social practice, and he critiqued the dominant western model of literacy as a neutral set of skills and competencies (1984, 1995). According to Street and the NLS, the taken-for-granted 'autonomous' model of reading and writing as individualistic, psychological processes promotes particular ideological agendas when applied in education at home and in development projects overseas, and in their place, ethnographic accounts of literacy need to be rooted in an 'ideological mode' that highlights power and not just culture (compare Street 1984 and Rosen 1985 with Heath 1983). Overall, Street and the NLS have played a significant part introducing a politically engaged version of post-structuralism to language studies in the U.K. (Rampton 1995b: 234–240), and they have also influenced a wider shift of interest beyond texts-as-products to texts-in-culture-as-a-process (Street 1993).

Both Interactional Sociolinguistics and the New Literacy Studies stress ethnography, but they were not the only research programmes at BAAL conferences to feed into the U.K. LEF. Though each had some features which were harder to accommodate, there were at least three other lines of research that have had an active presence:

c. Working with clearly stated Marxian assumptions, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) was very strongly represented at BAAL, and CDA itself grew out of systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), a very significant force in British applied linguistics since the 1970s. SFL was itself already influenced by Malinowski's 1923 ideas about language and culture (to a much greater degree than

2 British social anthropology), and in Halliday and Hasan's relationship with
 3 Bernstein, SFL ran an active interest in sociology. CDA's major contribution
 4 was to expand on this, opening linguistics to a wider range of sociologists and
 5 social theorists. It encouraged language researchers to explore the relevance
 6 of thinkers such as Habermas, Foucault, Hall, etc., and it made ideology and
 7 the cultural dynamics of globalisation and free-market capitalism legitimate
 8 topics for critical language study. It also looked towards practical interventions
 9 in education (e.g. Fairclough (ed.) 1992), and indeed overall, though it might
 10 not be recognised, CDA's political commitments chimed well with Hymes'
 11 when he envisaged a reflexive, critical and 'socially constituted linguistics'
 12 (Blommaert et al. (eds.) 2001). At the same time, for anyone with an
 13 ethnographic sensibility, there have been at least two *difficulties* with leading
 14 CDA (and SFL) work: first, detailed and sustained empirical work on non-
 15 textual processes and relationships has often been lacking and second, the
 16 movement from (media) textual forms to grand theory frequently seems too
 17 rapid, speeding past contingent indeterminacies and missing out the inductive
 18 mid-level theory to which ethnography is particularly inclined, working one
 19 step at a time from the data bottom-up (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995;
 20 Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Blommaert et al. 2001).

21 The final two traditions that have hitherto influenced U.K. LE both address
 22 the language learning agenda that has always been salient in British applied
 23 linguistics, one of them focusing on first language development and the other on
 24 second and foreign language education abroad.

- 25 d. In *neo-Vygotskian research on language and cognitive development*, researchers
 26 such Wells and Mercer have used Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal
 27 development (Vygotsky 1978) – as well as the neo-Vygotskian notion of
 28 scaffolding (Bruner 1985) – to investigate teaching and learning interactions
 29 between adults and children. Mercer's research, for example, focuses on
 30 teachers' use of particular kinds of questions to direct students' attention,
 31 on other linguistic strategies which serve to extend understanding and
 32 conceptual development, and on dialogue in task-focused peer group talk,
 33 especially around computers (1995, 2000). Overall, Vygotskian research
 34 on language and education in Britain has provided important insights into
 35 the intricate processes of knowledge construction within particular kinds
 36 of classroom exchanges. But it is less concerned with the significance and
 37 potential for knowledge construction of other kinds of classroom language
 38 practice. It privileges the cognitive dimensions of dialogue and tends to
 39 define context in terms of the task in hand. Relatively little attention is
 40 given to the classroom as a cultural context with its own sites of struggle
 41 and its own local institutional imperatives and affordances for particular
 42 kinds of learning, and the multilayered and contested nature of aims within
 43 the classroom is often neglected (cf. Maybin 2003, 2006; Rampton 2006:
 44 Ch. 2).

2 e. Finally, as well as being central in BAAL during the 1980s, one of the
 3 earliest and most radical critiques of autonomous, 'objectivist' linguistics
 4 in Britain was articulated in *interpretive applied linguistics for language*
teaching (AL for LT), associated with scholars such as Widdowson (1984),
 5 Brumfit (1984) and Strevens (1977). Both the study of literature and the
 6 experience of teaching and teacher education were important as sources
 7 and motives for the development of an alternative epistemology, and this
 8 epistemology emphasised relevance to professional cultures, the positionality
 9 of knowledge, the naïvety of the traditional linguistic injunction to separate
 10 the descriptive from the prescriptive, and the significance of intellectual
 11 dialogue outside the fraternity of academic linguists (cf. Rampton 1997:
 12 5, 6, 11, 2000: 108). It also, of course, embraced Hymes' 1972 notion
 13 of 'communicative competence' (e.g. Brumfit and Johnson (eds.) 1979 *The*
 14 *Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*). In the end, though, there was
 15 no accompanying *ethnography* of communication. Widdowson and others
 16 described their research as 'conceptual' rather than empirical, and because
 17 they tended to work with students who taught in other countries, the
 18 scope for ongoing involvement in educational ethnography was limited. In
 19 addition, as intellectual leaders in English language teaching worldwide,
 20 many in this tradition were caught up in an economy of knowledge that
 21 preferred transportable technologies to articulations of local experience,
 22 and that also continuously sought to convert metropolitan questions
 23 and arguments into polished products for consumption at the periphery
 24 (Pennycook 1994). Overall, interpretive applied linguistics was well tuned
 25 to Hymes' critique of autonomous linguistics, but it did not use this as
 26 a base for developing any identifiably Hymesian programme of empirical
 27 research.

28 In some of these research programmes, then, the ethnography was/is more
 29 pronounced than in others, and they have tended to prioritise different issues
 30 – ethnicities in discourse, literacy practices, power and ideology, cognitive
 31 development, English language teaching. Nevertheless, as is fairly normative in
 32 applied linguistics, all five looked towards practical relevance, the boundaries
 33 around each were generally very permeable, and BAAL meetings provided
 34 a regular setting for contact and cross-fertilisation (e.g. Roberts, Davies and
 35 Jupp 1992; and more recently, Tusting 2000; Slembrouck 2001; Rampton
 36 2001b; Maybin 2006: Ch. 8). In addition, each of these traditions treated the
 37 interface between language/text and situation/context as a central problem. This
 38 differentiated them from other lines of research represented at BAAL conferences
 39 (such as corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics and second language acquisition),
 40 and it laid the ground for a range of methodological discussions subsequently
 41 pursued within the Linguistic Ethnography Forum (focusing on for example
 42 reflexivity, field notes and transcripts, translation, auto-ethnography, and the
 43 limitations of 'systematic reviews of research').

2 The account so far, however, has been principally framed in terms of an
 3 intellectual dialogue between research programmes. But as noted at the outset,
 4 Hymes' advice is that there is more involved than this in the development of
 5 a paradigm, a tradition, or indeed a discursive space like the U.K. Linguistic
 6 Ethnography Forum, and in line with this, it is now worth turning to consider
 7 'climates of opinion' and the 'particular social origins' of the practitioners
 8 of LE.

9

10 **3. LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHERS IN THE U.K.: ORIGINS, COMMITMENTS**
 11 **AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES**

12 An informal survey in April 2006 of the institutional affiliations evident in the
 13 membership data available on 126 researchers on the LEF mailing list revealed
 14 that:

- 16 • 54 members were formally aligned with education (flagged up by words like
 17 'Education', 'TESOL', 'Teaching' in the names of the Centres, Institutes and/or
 18 Departments that they belong to)
- 19 • 53 members were formally aligned with language (flagged up by 'Language',
 20 'Communication', 'Literacy', 'Translation', 'Applied Language Studies')
- 21 • 17 members were formally aligned with culture and area studies (flagged up
 22 by 'Culture', 'Intercultural', 'Media', 'Literature')
- 23 • six members were formally aligned with anthropology (flagged up by
 24 'Anthropology', with three in the U.S.)
- 25 • 10 members were formally aligned with other disciplines (computing (2),
 26 psychology (2), medicine, geography, sociology, etc)⁶

27 This distribution of formal affiliations is consistent with U.K. linguistic
 28 ethnography's base in applied linguistics, and as Brumfit noted in 1985, in applied
 29 linguistics people often embark on research a little later in life than do students in
 30 disciplines like maths, psychology, sociology or indeed formal syntax, phonetics,
 31 etc. (1985: 72, 76). Indeed, as 'mature' students in their late 20s and early/mid
 32 30s (or later), the move from work or family commitments into research is often
 33 more motivated by interests generated in practical activity than by a fascination
 34 with academic theory *per se*. Indeed, in many cases this shift into linguistics
 35 and/or ethnography is an attempt to find a way of adequately rendering quite
 36 extensive personal experience, and the initial spur involves not just the kind of
 37 'contrastive insight' that Hymes describes (1996: 6), but often quite an intense
 38 frustration with the institutional processes in which people have found themselves
 39 living (e.g. Rampton 1992: 30–33). After that, once established, it is common
 40 for applied linguists to engage in various kinds of consultancy research, where
 41 at least initially, the issues to be investigated are identified by people working
 42 inside the organizations that are serving as the fieldsite (cf. Roberts and Sarangi
 43 1999). In both cases, the research process involves an overall shift from the inside
 44 moving outwards, *trying to get analytic distance* on what's close-at-hand, rather

2 than a move from the outside inwards, *trying to get familiar* with the strange,⁷ and
 3 this has at least four consequences:

- 4 i. First, it meshes well with discourse analysis, which is often centrally involved
 5 in stepping back from the easy flow of communicative practice, interrogating
 6 its components, underpinnings and effects. For example, in spite of some
 7 striking differences (Wetherell 1998; Billig and Schegloff 1999), both Critical
 8 Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis provide ways of stepping
 9 back from the taken-for-granted in order to uncover the ideological (CDA)
 10 or interactional (CA) processes that constitute commonsense and everyday
 11 practice, and this commitment to de-familiarisation suits researchers whose
 12 first ethnographic priority is to achieve greater analytic distance on the
 13 activities in which they or their clients/collaborators participate on a routine
 14 basis.
- 15 ii. Second, a from-inside-outwards trajectory fosters doubt about the classical
 16 notion of 'comprehensive ethnography'.⁸ On the one hand, it encourages
 17 sensitivity to the risks of stereotyping: if you are researching people and
 18 institutions in the area where you are based, the kind of people you are
 19 studying may well turn up in your classes and/or read-and-reply to what
 20 you've written, and this provides quite strong incentives to hedge your claims
 21 and clearly specify their limits. At the same time, if you live in a city like
 22 Manchester, Birmingham or London, the complexities leap out at you and
 23 you can really only aim to produce 'broad, in-depth, and long-term study
 24 of a social or cultural group' (Green and Bloome 1997: 183) if you accept
 25 dominant ideological constructions uncritically, or are happy to close your
 26 eyes to the rest of social science. Instead, particularly if you are sympathetic
 27 to discourse analysis, the informants' 'groupness' is itself likely to be treated
 28 as a problematic issue, as a category that exists in a much larger ideological
 29 field among a range of other claimed, attributed and contested identities,
 30 differing in their availability, salience, authority and material consequences
 31 for individual lives (Moerman 1974; Gumperz 1982: 26; see Rampton 2005;
 32 Harris 2006; Maybin 2006: 5 for U.K. examples).
- 33 iii. In a similar vein – third – if your analytic sensibility is shaped in the inside-
 34 outwards directionality, you are quite likely to be sensitive to the limitations
 35 of the ethnography of communication in exotic/distant locations. If you are
 36 a foreigner researching a cultural group that you have little or no direct
 37 experience of, starting out with only a rather a rudimentary knowledge of the
 38 vernacular, it seems unlikely that you will be able to produce much more than
 39 a description of conventional systems, even after a year or two of fieldwork
 40 (see Tonkin 1984; Borchgrevink 2003). It is likely to take you far longer
 41 to reach the levels of understanding and familiarity where you can reliably
 42 tune into the expressive nuances that generally animate communication,
 43 intimating contexts of experience, presupposition and value quite often at
 44 a tangent to the articulated propositions (cf. Gumperz 1982; Becker 1995:
 45

2 299–300). Without that apprehension of the play of dissonant perspectives on
 3 convention, the ethnographic description of unknown ways can still be very
 4 informative, but if it were a lived tension between experience and dominant
 5 forms of representation that drew you to research in the first place, accounts
 6 of this kind may also feel reductive, inclining one to sympathise with the view
 7 of Varenne and McDermott that '[t]hick brushstrokes of Samoans or Balinese
 8 may give some hints as to what Samoans and Balinese must deal with in
 9 their daily lives, but they can greatly distort the complexity of Samoans and
 10 Balinese as people' (1998: 137; Sapir 2002: 191–192).⁹

11 iv. Fourth, the inside-outwards directionality probably has implications for one's
 12 academic and political demeanour. If you are working in the country where
 13 you're a citizen, if you are studying an institution where you have spent a
 14 substantial part of your life, and if you are maybe also actually credentialed
 15 and paid to draw research into professional practice, then you are also likely
 16 to be a lot less vulnerable to the kind of ontological uncertainty about
 17 political intervention that anthropologists feel when they are working on
 18 distant cultures abroad.¹⁰ Similarly, if you start your working life as an
 19 interpreter, a health worker or a classroom teacher, you often feel empowered
 20 as you become more fluent and at ease with academic knowledge. You
 21 probably recognise that traditionally, practical relevance has been stigmatised
 22 in the academy, but up to a point at least, you made your own peace with
 23 that when you first signed up for your professional training. Rather than
 24 having marginality to disciplinary knowledge as your principal anxiety, the
 25 worry is that you're being seduced into irrelevance to activity in the real
 26 world, and this ambivalence about 'merely academic' work makes it easier
 27 to follow in pursuit when 'problems lead where they will and ... relevance
 28 commonly leads across disciplinary boundaries' (Hymes 1969a: 44; Rampton
 29 2006: 372–377). Indeed, it was this kind of 'habitus' that helped to sustain
 30 (and was supported by) the dialogues conducted under the aegis of applied
 31 linguistics.

32 These analytic dispositions have, of course, also found ratification in the
 33 broader 'climate of the times', and the post-structuralism associated with
 34 Bakhtin, Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault, etc. has undoubtedly also contributed
 35 to their development (e.g. Maybin 2006; Rampton 2006: 12–25). Discourse
 36 analysis has moved into a privileged position in the humanities and social
 37 sciences (Fairclough 1992: 1; Coupland 1998: 115–116), and this ratifies
 38 LE's assertion of linguistic and micro-analytic perspectives within ethnography
 39 (cf. [3.i] above). In anthropology and sociology, there's been a profound
 40 reassessment of ethnographic representation, linked to the critique of totalising
 41 description (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Bauman 1992; Clifford 1992), and
 42 this fits well with LE's proclivity for 'topic-oriented' ethnographies of specific
 43 types of professional interaction, literacy event, speech style, etc., rather than
 44 comprehensive descriptions of speech communities (3.ii and 3.iii). The objectivism
 45

of structuralist linguistics and social science has been challenged with a reassertion of human agency (Voloshinov 1973; Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1976), and this feeds impatience with analyses devoted to structural systems (cf. 3.iii), while widespread recognition of the relationship between knowledge and power encourages the view that if neutrality's chimerical, then it is worth embracing the links between research and practical intervention (3.iv). At the same time, if it is correct that these four stances derive much of their resonance from the inside-outwards trajectory associated with applied linguistics, then this post-structuralism is probably as much a visceral apprehension as a book-learned philosophy. Indeed, if the habitus and research problems of LE researchers are as much practical as academic, none of this is likely to lead to the abandonment of data and a retreat to theory. Post-structuralism may make instinctive sense, but if you anyway always valued linguistics and ethnography more for their utility than their pedigree, critiques of objectivism and essentialism aren't debilitating, and can instead be noted as useful supplementary clarifications in the process of empirical analysis and interpretation.

So far, then, my account of contemporary linguistic ethnography in the U.K. has focused on academic arenas and influences, biographical trajectories, and the climate of the times. There is one more contextual element that requires discussion, and this is the extensive reconfiguration of academic knowledge production in the British higher education institutions where the majority of LE researchers are based.

26 4. LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE RECONFIGURATION OF BRITISH 27 HIGHER EDUCATION

29 U.K. linguistic ethnography is deeply influenced by a general shift in the
30 organisation of academic knowledge in British higher education (see Gibbons
31 et al. 1994; Bernstein 1996; Strathern 2000). In Basil Bernstein's magisterial
32 account of it, the shift involves a move from 'singulars' to 'regions'. 'Singulars',
33 says Bernstein:

34 ... are knowledge structures whose creators have appropriated a space to give
35 themselves a unique name, a specialised discrete discourse with its own intellectual
36 field of texts, practices, rules of entry, examinations, licences to practice, distribution
37 of rewards and punishments (physics, chemistry, history, economics, psychology,
38 etc.). Singulars are, on the whole, orientated to their own development, protected
39 by strong boundaries and hierarchies. (1996: 65)

40 'Regions', on the other hand:

42 ... are constructed by recontextualising singulars into larger units which operate
43 both in the intellectual field of disciplines and in the field of external practice.
44 Regions are the interface between disciplines (singulars) and the technologies they
45 make possible. Thus engineering, medicine, architecture are regions. Contemporary

2 regions would be cognitive science, management, business studies, communications
 3 and media. (1996: 65)

4 In singulars, the central problems are formulated inside the discipline and they are
 5 often theory-generated. In regions, on the other hand, the central problems are
 6 much more likely to emerge from 'real-world' processes outside any one discipline,
 7 and rather than the initial problem-posing, theory is a resource for problem-
 8 solving.
 9

10 Coming out of applied linguistics, linguistic ethnography generally lives in
 11 the regions, and it faces a lot of the issues and challenges endemic to this kind
 12 of interdisciplinarity. In regions, suggests Bernstein, 'inner commitments and
 13 dedications' are sometimes replaced 'by short-term instrumentalities' (1996:
 14 76), and this is undoubtedly a major challenge for LE. As already indicated
 15 (section 3), a very substantial proportion of LE researchers are closely involved
 16 in education – a region *par excellence* (like applied linguistics) – and if you are
 17 actually based in a university department of education, institutional pressures
 18 may tempt you: (a) to read macroscopic and historical processes in only the most
 19 obvious elements of education policy and change; and (b) to prioritise rapport and
 20 relevance above theory development and cumulative, comparative generalisation
 21 (cf. Hymes on 'educational ethnology' [1996: 19]).¹¹ Bernstein goes on to say
 22 that there is often also a lot of tension between singulars and regions, with the new
 23 regions being regarded 'as suspect mixed categories, and as competitors for scarce
 24 resources', and hard questions get asked about their legitimacy as university
 25 studies. Since there isn't any properly institutionalised linguistic anthropology
 26 in Britain, linguistic ethnography over here hasn't really run into very much
 27 opposition from closely related singulars, but there are fairly regular skirmishes
 28 between formal and applied linguistics (e.g. Borsley and Ingham 2001 vs Stubbs
 29 2002), and as an activity in the interdisciplinary regions, cross-generational
 30 reproduction is potentially quite tricky in linguistic ethnography – for people
 31 on the practical-experience-to-research trajectory, one year on a conversion MA
 32 followed by three doing a PhD on their own isn't a very strong base for the
 33 development of breadth and depth in theory and analysis (Rampton 2000: 109–
 34 111). In fact almost by definition, it's harder specifying an academic identity in
 35 the interdisciplinary regions than it is if you're working in a 'singular'. If you try
 36 to do this by identifying a canon of authoritative research studies, you may have
 37 to deal with powerful contending ownership claims and interpretations already
 38 made in disciplinary heartlands, as well as a strong sense that in inter-disciplinary
 39 and interventionist work, it's texts and authors that can function as 'boundary
 40 objects' mediating between *different* discourse communities that really count.¹²
 41 Similarly, if you try to define LE in terms of a consensus on the central theoretical
 42 questions, you're impeded by the openness to practical real-world issues and by
 43 the unpredictability of ethnography itself (Strathern 2000: 286). And because
 44 research outputs are designed for varied audiences, not just academics, who
 45 differ in their types/levels of background knowledge, interest, position, etc.

2 (e.g. teachers or maybe doctors), it is also hard to standardise and then monitor
 3 criteria of textual adequacy.¹³

4 Despite these organisational challenges, researchers pursuing LE remain
 5 committed to the view that the combination of ethnography, linguistics and
 6 discourse analysis is particularly well-suited to understanding the intersection of
 7 communicative practice with social and cultural process, and the development
 8 of 'regional' research provides major opportunities to compensate for the relative
 9 lack of security. The spread of post-structuralism has produced a base line of
 10 intelligibility for people working in different disciplinary areas, and according to
 11 a recent survey, 80 percent of U.K. social scientists were involved in at least some
 12 interdisciplinary research (HEFCE 1999: iii). So in principle at least, there is a
 13 very substantial pool of partners interested in contributions to interdisciplinary
 14 research from linguistic ethnography (cf. www.rdi-elc.org.uk), and in the next
 15 (penultimate) section I would like to reflect on the implications of this for the
 16 relationship between linguistics and ethnography themselves.

18 5. LINGUISTICS AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN DIALOGUE

20 Ethnographers and (mainstream) linguists generally differ in their sense of the
 21 extent to which their objects of study can be codified, and the formulation of rules
 22 is normally regarded as more problematic in ethnography than in linguistics on
 23 at least three counts:

- 24 i. Ethnography's traditional object of study, 'culture', is a more encompassing
 25 concept than 'language' (Hymes 1996: 6; Duranti 1997: 97) and, for all sorts
 26 of reasons, 'culture' appears to be generally less determinate as a focal entity.¹⁴
- 27 ii. In linguistics, empirical procedures – elicitation techniques, data-
 28 regularisation, and rules of evidence – are relatively standardised and can often
 29 be taken more or less for granted, at least within particular schools/paradigms.
 30 The social and personal processes that have brought the researcher to the
 31 level of understanding where s/he could start to formulate linguistic rules
 32 are seen as relatively insignificant. In contrast in ethnography, participant-
 33 observation plays a major role and the processes involved in learning
 34 and adjusting to different cultural practices are regarded as themselves
 35 instructive and potentially consequential for the analysis. The researcher's
 36 presence/prominence in the field setting defies standardisation and introduces
 37 a range of contingencies and partialities that need to be addressed/reported.
- 38 iii. Linguistics seeks to generalise about language structure and use, and typically
 39 only looks beyond what is actually said/signed/written when implied meaning
 40 is highly conventionalised (as in e.g. presupposition and implicature).
 41 Ethnography dwells longer in situated particularities, and this difference
 42 between them shows up in their finished products. Ethnographies involve
 43 rhetorical forms, such as vignettes and narratives (Hymes 1996: 12–13), that
 44 are designed to provide the reader with some apprehension of the fullness

2 and irreducibility of the 'lived stuff' from which the analyst has abstracted
 3 structure. Grammars normally don't.

4 These differences set up an in-principle tension between linguistic and
 5 ethnographic methodologies, and this works in both directions. On the one hand,
 6

- 7 • *ethnography opens linguistics up*, inviting reflexive sensitivity to the processes
 8 involved in the production of linguistic claims and to the potential importance
 9 of what gets left out, encouraging a willingness to accept (and run with)
 10 the fact that beyond the reach of standardised falsification procedures,
 11 '[e]xperience . . . has ways of *boiling over*, and making us correct our present
 12 formulas' (W. James 1978: 106, cited in Willis and Trondman 2001: 2).
 13 This was central to the argument with Chomskyan linguistics articulated in
 14 Hymes' theory of communicative competence (1972), and it is a move that has
 15 been very frequently repeated in different areas of sociolinguistics (e.g. Eckert
 16 2000). Within the applied linguistic arena where U.K. linguistic ethnography
 17 has taken shape, it has, as already indicated, informed the responses to CDA,
 18 neo-Vygotskyan research, AL-for-LT as well as for example second language
 19 acquisition research.

20 And on the other hand

- 21 • *linguistics (and linguistically sensitive discourse analysis) ties ethnography down*,
 22 pushing cultural description towards the analysis of clearly delimitable
 23 processes, increasing the amount of reported data that is open to falsification,
 24 looking to impregnate local description with robust and subtle frameworks
 25 drawn from outside. 'The subject matter of ethnography', says Hymes, '[should
 26 not be reduced to meaning], but accurate knowledge of meaning is a *sine qua
 27 non*' (1996: 8), and for this, the empirical heuristics developed in linguistics
 28 are an important resource that researchers can play up in dialogue with for
 29 example ethnographers in sociology or education, introducing a set of highly
 30 developed tools for analyzing and uncovering unnoticed intricacies in the
 31 discursive processes through which cultural relationships and identities are
 32 produced. This is consistent with Sapir's vision of 'The status of linguistics
 33 as a science' (1929 [1949: 166]), and it has been central in a host of
 34 contributions to social science debates about gender, generation, ethnicity,
 35 class, communities of practice, etc. (e.g. Barton and Tusting (eds.) 2005;
 36 Rampton 2006: 369–372).

37 At the same time, these basic differences between linguistics and ethnography
 38 can be played in different ways. One option is to treat their differences as
 39 complementary, and when this happens, ethnography can be seen as *humanising*
 40 language study, preventing linguistics from being reductive or shallow by
 41 embedding it in rich descriptions of how the users of a given variety adapt their
 42 language to different situational purposes and contexts. In the same vein, the
 43 linguistics can be seen as helping to avoid error and inaccuracy in cultural
 44 description, producing ethnographies that are more subtle and detailed. On the
 45

2 other hand, it is also possible to play up their differences, using ethnography
3 and linguistics against each other, problematising their outputs and turning
4 the spotlight back onto the researchers and methods. Here, ethnographic (and
5 historical) methods can be a resource for *deconstructing* language study, charting
6 the processes of ideological reification it involves (Blommaert (ed.) 1999), while
7 analyses tuned to the details of language can be used to fragment prevailing
8 notions of culture and community (Moerman 1974; LePage 1980).¹⁵

9 Just how far this relationship between linguistics and ethnography gets
10 constructed as either complementary or contradictory is likely to be influenced by
11 a wide variety of factors, and in terms of foundational figures in sociolinguistics
12 and linguistic anthropology from the 1960s onwards, Gumperz's work stands
13 out for its empirical reconciliation of linguistics and ethnography, while Hymes
14 develops their mutual interrogation. But harking back to Bernstein's distinction
15 in the previous section, it seems likely that when scholars working at the
16 language-culture interface are looking for mono-disciplinary 'singularity', they
17 will either tend to see the relationship between linguistics and ethnography as
18 complementary, or simply take it for granted, whereas in the interdisciplinary
19 'regions', scholars will be pushed to grapple with the problems and contradictions
20 explicitly.

21 A good example of the former can be seen in Duranti's work over the last
22 10 years, which represents a remarkable effort to consolidate U.S. linguistic
23 anthropology (LA) as a singular, with a textbook (1997), a glossary of key
24 terms (2001a), a reader (2001b), and a 'companion'/handbook (2004). As
25 one might expect with a textbook for students, the 1997 volume contains
26 extensive discussion of the relationship between ethnography and linguistics,
27 emphasising their mutual enrichment, but after that, potential complications
28 in the relationship largely drop from view, and the two almost only reappear in
29 the indices of the subsequent volumes as a harmonious couple ('ethnography
30 of communication'/'ethnography of speaking'). There is hardly any sight of the
31 profound methodological self-questioning that has characterised ethnography
32 over the last 25 years,¹⁶ and the analyses move quite fast past the tools and
33 principles of construction to concentrate on the emerging portrait, letting the
34 researchers and their instruments merge into the background, tacitly ratified in
35 the portraits and models of situated language use and of language integrated
36 with culture that the combination produces. Indeed, in a reflexive paper (which
37 certainly also considers growing interdisciplinarity in LA in the U.S. [2003: 332–
38 333]), Duranti himself suggests that:

39 ... the revival [of linguistics in anthropology departments] has been possible partly
40 because of linguistic anthropologists' ability to project an image of themselves as
41 empirically oriented fieldworkers who have more important things to do than argue
42 with one another (or with those in other subfields). Furthermore, researchers have
43 had no difficulty moving back and forth from one paradigm or another without
44 confronting (or being confronted by others regarding) their own epistemological,
45 ontological, and methodological wavering. (2003: 334)¹⁷

2 A knowing desire to affirm and consolidate the productivity of the combination
3 of linguistics and ethnography was certainly one of the main reasons for setting
4 up the U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum,¹⁸ and even in the interdisciplinary
5 'regions', the kind of disciplinary singularity projected by Duranti provides an
6 essential reference point, serving not just as an indispensable technical resource
7 but also as an invaluable source of the authority you can invoke in interaction
8 with people outside your own niche. Even so, there is still 'a continuous process
9 of negotiating authority and relevance' involved in these interactions (Roberts
10 and Sarangi 1999: 475), and when you are collaborating with non-linguistic
11 ethnographers and non-ethnographic linguists, the tension between linguistics
12 and ethnography often feels not just methodological but also social/cultural. More
13 generally, in the applied linguistics where linguistic ethnography emerged, the
14 tradition of methodological reflexivity runs deep, stretching back at least to the
15 1980s (as already indicated in section 3.v above),¹⁹ and whatever the tact brought
16 to these cross-boundary transactions, definitions and assumptions are repeatedly
17 relativised, there is continual pressure to account for the particularity of the angles
18 and occlusions that different methods entail, and you're often having to return
19 to basics to try to work out how different things fit together. Yes, there certainly
20 are a lot of occasions when it seems wise to smooth over one's 'epistemological,
21 ontological, and methodological wavering', but these need to be understood as
22 strategic moves within a larger context in which the denaturalisation of method
23 has become inescapable.

24 6. CONCLUSION

25 When Hymes started theorising the relationship between linguistics and
26 ethnography, he inserted it into the larger project of bringing anthropology
27 'back home', turning away from the 'study of people not ourselves', 'of coloured
28 people by whites', back to the analysis of educational and other institutional
29 processes (1969b, 1973 [1996: Ch. 3], 1980 [1996: 4]). He went on to sketch
30 out a 'vision' of ethnography disseminated through society at large. At one
31 pole, he suggested, there would be people who'd been professionally trained
32 in ethnography and at the other pole, there would be the general population,
33 respected for their intricate and subtle knowledge of the worlds they lived
34 in. In between, there would be people who could 'combine some disciplined
35 understanding of ethnographic inquiry with the pursuit of their vocation' (1978
36 [1980: 99]). Hymes wanted to make the middle group as extensive as possible,
37 but in his view at the time, it was the professional ethnographers who would
38 provide the launching pad. Since then, significant parts of this programme have
39 carried across the Atlantic, but in doing so, it has taken root in terrain where
40 professional ethnographers interested in language were extremely thin on the
41 ground. In the absence of a U.K. linguistic anthropology ready and able to train
42 students *ab initio* and operate as a 'community of practice' where novices could
43 absorb skills in language-and-culture analysis through 'legitimate peripheral

2 participation', Hymes' programme has been embraced by a mixture of his middle
3 group and non-anthropologists doing research in applied and sociolinguistics.
4 Many of these people had to find out for themselves how to work ethnography into
5 their existing interests in language, and their background and position turned
6 the emerging mixture into a way of getting analytic distance on practices and
7 processes quite close at hand. The work emerging from this has been varied,
8 sometimes relatively low-key, and often lacking in the textual standardisation
9 that one can expect in more tightly focused discourse communities. It has
10 meshed, though, with a broader shift in the organisation of academic knowledge
11 production, away from mono-disciplines with clear boundaries towards regions
12 where different disciplines overlap, drawn into interaction through their
13 attention to practical problems in the real world. This shift looks more than
14 momentary:

15 If singulars were the modal form of discursive organization in the 100 years between
16 the mid-19th century and the mid-20th century, then it may be that regions will
17 become the modal form from the late 20th century onwards. (Gibbons et al. 1994;
18 see also Bernstein 1996: 68; Strathern (ed.) 2000)

19 If this is the case, then it looks as though there is an enduring place for research
20 activity with the kind of profile I have described.

21 For a number of reasons, 'linguistic ethnography' seems to be the best term to
22 characterise this research activity, comprising as it does a number of more specific
23 traditions that share a commitment to putting linguistics and ethnography
24 together to try to understand the social processes that we are involved in. Although
25 it is an invaluable reference point, 'linguistic anthropology' clearly wouldn't do
26 as a general label, as only a few of us have a training or a job in anthropology, and
27 nor would the 'ethnography of communication', as our work has been affected by
28 Critical Discourse Analysis, neo-Vygotskyan research, AL-for-ELT, as well as by
29 Interactional Sociolinguistics and New Literacy Studies (both filial developments
30 beyond the Ethnography of Communication). Indeed, many of us remain vigorous
31 in our particular alignments with International Sociolinguistics, New Literacy
32 Studies, CDA, etc. (as well as other traditions), but none of these individually would
33 work as an umbrella title capable of capturing the whole. Nor would 'applied
34 linguistics' be any good, since this misses the background of self-differentiation
35 from the non-ethnographic, non-interpretive methods found in fields like second
36 language acquisition, corpus linguistics, etc. There certainly are some quite
37 closely related variants that it might be helpful to use at certain moments
38 with specific audiences (e.g. 'sociolinguistic ethnography', or 'ethnographic
39 sociolinguistics'), but perhaps 'linguistic ethnography' is particularly well suited
40 to the inter-disciplinary regions. In contrast to 'ethnographic linguistics' which
41 would declare 'linguistics' as the principal arena for its activity, 'linguistic
42 ethnography' situates this work within a methodology – ethnography – that
43 is very widely shared not just in anthropology but also in sociology, education,
44 management studies, etc. At the same time, it specifies the linguistics of discourse

2 and text as the primary resource for our efforts to contribute in a distinctive way
 3 to the broader enterprise of social science.
 4

 5
 6

7 **NOTES**

- 9 1. The arguments in this paper were first posted at www.ling-ethnog.org.uk in 2004,
 10 with inputs from Karin Tusting, Janet Maybin, Richard Barwell, Vally Lytra and
 11 Angela Creese. Since then, I have circulated versions to a number of scholars and
 12 presented versions at panels coordinated by LEF, Lukas Tsitsipis, Mary Bucholtz and
 13 Kira Hall. I am very grateful indeed for all the feedback I've received, but must
 14 accept responsibility both for the more tendentious elements, and for sticking with
 15 formulations that would demand more nuancing if there were more space.
- 16 2. About a quarter of the researchers on the Linguistic Ethnography Forum's email list
 17 are resident outside the U.K.
- 18 3. In fact of the 123 libraries listed in March 2006, the British Library is the only one
 19 in Europe.
- 20 4. In a search of the website of Association of Social Anthropologists (of the U.K. and
 21 the Commonwealth) (www.theasa.org – accessed on 7 December 2006), I have been
 22 unable to find anything on 'language' in the conferences listed there (dating from
 23 2007 back to 1998).
- 24 5. This is attested in the proceedings of the BAAL Annual Meetings – *British Studies in*
 25 *Applied Linguistics* (BSAL) – published during this period.
- 26 6. Since some of the institutional names that I've counted combine several of these
 27 key words (as in e.g. 'Culture and Communication'), the figures here amount to
 28 more than the 126 members for whom it's possible to infer disciplinary/thematic
 29 alignment from institutional affiliations.
- 30 7. Of course when it comes to the analysis of particular events or practices, the
 31 investigative process involves continual oscillation between 'getting close' and
 32 'stepping back', and at this level of operation, they may be hard to disentangle. But
 33 this doesn't invalidate the more macroscopic distinction between, putting it crudely,
 34 ethnography 'back home' and ethnography abroad (see 3.iii for elaboration).
- 35 8. Of course, there are also more mundane reasons why 'comprehensive ethnography'
 36 is problematic as a goal for U.K. LE, related to practitioners' disciplinary training. As
 37 indicated above, the U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum has taken shape within an
 38 association for applied *linguistics*, not anthropology, and only a few of the participants
 39 have had a thorough grounding of classic anthropological ethnographies or models
 40 of culture (theories of ritual, gift-exchange, kinship, etc.). So in fact, even if they had
 41 wanted to produce 'comprehensive ethnography ... documenting a wide range of a
 42 way of life' (Hymes 1996: 4), they didn't really have the accredited expertise to do so.
 43 Instead, U.K. researchers have tended to develop their commitment to ethnography
 44 in the process of working from language, literacy and discourse outwards, and so
 45 even though they have varied in just how far 'outwards' they reached, for the most
 part the ethnography has taken the narrower focus that Hymes calls 'topic-oriented'
 (Hymes 1996: 5).
- 9 9. Rampton 2006 and Maybin 2006 are two recent examples of (U.K.-focused) LE
 research that dwell quite heavily on speaker agency, and for their ethnographically
 oriented consultancy work with doctors, Roberts and Sarangi insist on 'a shift from

- 2 ‘objectivist’ explanations which grasp social explanations from the outside towards
 3 a position where practices are grasped from the inside ‘in the very movement of their
 4 accomplishment’ (Bourdieu 1977: 3)’ (Roberts and Sarangi 1999: 474).
- 5 10. Of course, although working in a society where you are a citizen may make you feel
 6 more confident about political intervention than anthropologists doing fieldwork
 7 abroad, this is no guarantee of striking the best balance between analysis and
 8 activism. Personally, I would align with Heller’s approach – ‘my own preference
 9 has been to first try to understand what is going on, and then ask myself how I feel
 10 about it, and what, if anything, I want to do about it’ (1997: 84; also Cameron et al.
 11 1992). For others, though, political commitment may enter much earlier into the
 12 process of analysis.
- 13 11. One of the complications of doing linguistic ethnography in educational sites is
 14 that yesterday’s theoretical conceptions – for example ‘communicative competence’,
 15 ‘language community’ – often still have a lot of currency in official educational
 16 discourses. It can be a difficult task translating back and forward between an
 17 established and a new discourse that one is still struggling to enunciate oneself,
 18 and the simplest path may be to stick with the old formulations, slightly adjusting
 19 them here and there with new data, or maybe defending them against technocratic
 20 misappropriation. In principle, institutional sites like these can be rich in both
 21 grounded and theoretical opportunities, not just inviting researchers to study the
 22 complex paths and historical developments of language ideology, but also pushing
 23 them to reflect personally on where they used to be and where they are today. But
 24 using ethnography for this kind of theorisation requires a good deal of labour, time,
 25 reading and experience, and in reality, it is often very hard to extend one’s analytic
 26 gaze beyond the most obvious elements of institutional policy and practice.
- 27 12. ‘Boundary’ figures like Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Foucault appear repeatedly in LE
 28 studies, and this serves in part to build bridges into other social science disciplines
 29 (cf. Rampton 2006: 406–407, 369–372, 2001a: 286–288). I have invoked authors
 30 like these a great deal myself, but confess that I have never waited to read everything
 31 that each of them wrote before feeling entitled to do so (see also Rampton 2001a:
 32 266).
- 33 13. Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic (1994), for example, includes contributions written
 34 by teachers, and like Heath (1983), Gregory and Williams (2000) is written to be
 35 accessible to members of the community they describe. Roberts (2003) describes the
 36 process of co-authoring articles with medical practitioners, and notes that ‘our basic
 37 ontology was frequently questioned and we found ourselves talking up the authority
 38 of our analysis in a way which we were not so comfortable with’ (2003: 144).
 39 These variations extend of course even to single-authored texts written for familiar
 40 audiences. Both Maybin 2006 and Rampton 2006 address the ‘the minute, moment-
 41 to-moment negotiations of meaning in children’s dialogues’ (Maybin 2006: 184) and
 42 make extensive use of Bakhtin, but with Maybin orienting to neo-Vygotskyan debates
 43 about children’s meaning-making and education and Rampton taking Interactional
 44 Sociolinguistics as his point of departure, there is significant difference in the degree
 45 of micro-analytic detail that they employ.
- 46 14. Reasons for this include the representation of language in writing, and the
 47 success of linguists (from ancient times) in isolating structural elements from the
 48 communicative flow, modelling them in formal systems and testing these models
 49 empirically.
- 50 15. Specifically in terms of the conflictual dimension of the relationship between
 51 linguistics and ethnography, there appears to have been a shift in the pattern of

- 2 ascendance over the last 50 years. According to Hymes, the worry during the
 3 post-war hey-day of structuralism was that the humanities and social sciences
 4 were worryingly 'pre-scientific' (1983: 196). Linguistics was held up as a model
 5 for the scientific study of culture as an integrated system, and the intensity of
 6 U.S. anthropologists' interest in linguistics as a key to the organisation of culture
 7 was matched by linguists' lack of regard for ethnography. The emergence of post-
 8 structuralism may have changed the boot to the other foot. Fragmentation and
 9 contingency take over from coherence and system, the linguist's claims to science
 10 are relativised by growth in the belief that knowledges are situated and plural; and
 11 it's now quite commonly felt that the natural sciences have been worryingly 'pre-
 12 social', ethnography and other forms of contextual study being invoked as necessary
 13 correctives (Gibbons et al. 1994: 99).
- 14 16. In over 1700 pages, there are for example only five (rather passing) references to
 15 James Clifford (one of the leading critics of traditional ethnography).
- 16 17. Although the institutionalisation of linguistic anthropology in the U.S. is obviously
 17 infinitely greater than in the U.K., I am not in a position to judge the balance
 18 within this of the dispositions towards either mono-disciplinary 'singularity' or inter-
 19 disciplinary 'regionalism'. Within the U.S., Duranti's work may be a good example
 20 of the former, but Hymes is a major exponent of the latter, and concerns with
 21 epistemology and the relations between knowledge and power broadly similar to
 22 Hymes' are also central in for example the Scollons' 'nexus analysis' (2003, 2004),
 23 as well as in the 'collusional analysis' developed by McDermott et al. (McDermott
 24 and Tylbor 1983; McDermott 1988; Varenne and McDermott 1998).
- 25 18. In the opening paragraph of its constitution, the U.K. LEF defines its aims as being:
 26 * 'to bring together researchers conducting linguistic ethnography (LE) here and
 27 abroad
 28 * to explore a range of past and current work, to identify key issues, and to
 29 engage in methodologically and theoretically well-tuned debate' (at www.ling-ethnog.org.uk accessed on 25 June 2006).
- 30 19. In contrast with the situation in sociolinguistics, applied linguists have never
 31 been properly socialised into doctrines about language research being ethically
 32 neutral and 'linguistics being descriptive, not prescriptive', and if for example one
 33 rereads Cipper and Widdowson's (1975) paper on 'Sociolinguistics and language
 34 teaching' in the *Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics*, one sees a much earlier,
 35 far sharper understanding of idealisation as a situated strategy, and of the limits of
 36 sociolinguistic generalisation, than anything to be found in introductory textbooks
 37 in sociolinguistics, (see Rampton 2000: 106–108 for elaboration).

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33 Address correspondence to:
 34
 35 Ben Rampton
 36 Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication
 37 King's College London
 38 DEPS, Franklin-Wilkins Building Waterloo Bridge Wing
 39 Waterloo Road,
 40 London SE1 9NH
 41 U.K.
 42
 43 *ben.rampton@kcl.ac.uk*
 44
 45

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