

Sonderdruck aus:

# SOCIOLOGUS

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR EMPIRISCHE  
ETHNOSOZIOLOGIE UND ETHNOPSYCHOLOGIE  
A JOURNAL FOR EMPIRICAL  
ETHNO-SOCIOLOGY AND ETHNO-PSYCHOLOGY

Begründet von / Founded by  
Richard Thurnwald

Unter Mitwirkung von / With the cooperation of

Rudolf Bergius  
Tübingen

Wolfram Eberhard  
Berkeley, California, USA.

Oswin Köhler  
Köln

Herbert J. Nickel  
Freiburg i. Br.

Wolfgang M. Pfeiffer  
Münster, Westf.

O. F. Raum  
Schwarzenbach (Wald)

Fred Scholz  
Göttingen

Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch  
Berlin

Herausgegeben von / Edited by  
Wolfgang Rudolph



NEUE FOLGE 1977 NEW SERIES / JAHRGANG 27 VOLUME / HEFT 1 NUMBER

---

DUNCKER & HUMBLLOT / BERLIN

## Interethnic Relations in Saraguro (Ecuador) from the Point of View of an Anthropology of Communication<sup>1</sup>

By H. Walter Schmitz

The concern with communication in general or with phenomena of communication in particular has a long tradition in anthropology (Tylor 1871; Boas 1911, 1938; Sapir 1921, 1931).<sup>2</sup> This tradition, however, had been discontinued in some quarters while others had only been partially aware of it.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the 60s it was Dell Hymes who gave new impulses and developed new approaches to this anthropological field of study which to him appeared 'general, central and neglected' (1968: 101). The rudiments of this *ethnography of speaking* (Hymes 1961: 37), later *ethnography of communication* (1964: 1) and lastly *anthropology of communication* (1967) developed in time into a branch of *sociolinguistics* (1971: 47, 78) whose object of research was tentatively defined as 'the means of speech in human communities, and their meanings to those who use them' (1972: 2).

In this essay we will not pursue our problem along the methodological lines developed by Hymes. On the contrary, we hope we can show here that sociolinguistics is able, on the one hand, to come to grips with intercultural communication in some way descriptively but is not able, on the other hand, to provide an acceptable theory of conflicts in communication. This is to say that it will not help us any further with our problem.

---

<sup>1</sup> The present study is based on field research in Saraguro (Ecuador) from July 1973 to August 1974. The research was concerned with general problems in intercultural communication and was part of a project financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and led by R. Hartmann (University of Bonn). The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support by the DFG and the close collaboration of Peter Masson and his many valuable contributions to the discussions. Particular thanks are also due to the author's excellent indígena-assistant and friend M. A. M. to whom he owes much of the fieldwork's success. This paper is an enlarged and revised version of one presented at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology (Symposium on Interethnic Relations), at Amsterdam, 19 - 22 March 1975.

<sup>2</sup> On the development of theories and methods in this anthropological field of research, see Schmitz (1975).

<sup>3</sup> This is especially true for kinesics the origins of which are found in the work of Boas and Efron and which were further developed by Birdwhistell.

We think that phenomena of interethnic relations must also be studied in their communicative aspects with special regard to conflicts in intercultural communication. This is so because here some problems of interethnic relations manifest themselves and because a survey of the possible solutions of these conflicts sheds some light on the question of changeability of forms of interethnic relations.

What, then, is so special about the point of view of an *anthropology of communication*? Why do we not choose the point of view of a *science of communication*? We find that today many scientific disciplines are doing research on phenomena of communication. These disciplines differ not so much in the object of research as in their specific way of posing the problem (cf. Ungeheuer 1970 b: 6 - 8; Hymes 1971 a: 81).

For this paper we will pose the problem of the anthropology of communication in the following manner: How can communication be understood as an aspect of cultural and social processes which is regulated by culturally specific rules as discovered, created, and sustained by persons in their actions?<sup>4</sup>

### Outline of a theory of communication

The following outline of a theory of communication<sup>5</sup> shall lay the groundwork for the analysis thereafter of intercultural communication between *indígenas* (indians) and *blancos* (whites) in Saraguro (Ecuador).

From the point of view of the external observation of interpersonal communication it seems useful to assume formally characterized systems as sender and receiver in whom and between whom signals flow. Each system is constantly receiving signals of several kinds: acoustic signals, visual signals, olfactory signals, etc.

By all structural linguistic theories it is suggested that these signals carry the meaning or the message. For, the traditional linguistic concept of arbitrariness corresponds with a hearer-speaker-system characterized by a so to say tightly knotted signal-message-relation (Richter

<sup>4</sup> Because we cannot discuss these questions in detail, see Ungeheuer (1974) and Schmitz (1976: 29) for the canonical way of posing the problem and its implications for the philosophy of science. From this general formulation of the problem we may derive several more special formulations of the problem as parts of the general one. For the concept of culture as it is understood here, see Harris (1964), Weiss (1973), and Garfinkel (1967: 66 - 75).

<sup>5</sup> This outline basically follows the ideas of Richter (1973, 1974), Richter & Weidmann (1969), and Weidmann (1972); these ideas also formed a part of the theoretical basis for the author's field research in Ecuador and they were tested in relation to problems of intercultural communication. Unfortunately, for reasons of space we have to forgo a discussion of the aspects of this theory concerned with the philosophy of science.

1973: 173 - 175). For such a system the signifiant-signifié-unity is an 'achronically' given one. A competent system operates as if its deduction of messages were tightly knotted according to the model of wraps of signs and contents of signs inventoried in parallel. Performance, then, would be the suppressed knowledge that it will work another way as well.<sup>6</sup> In developing such concepts as social or communicative competence (e. g., Hymes 1971 b) linguists try to knot more elements than they do in the case of linguistic competence, thereby making things even more problematic (Richter 1973: 173; Schmitz 1975: 190 - 194). That is why these theories can only see conflicts in communication between speakers of the same language to be caused by disturbances in transmission ('noise') or as caused by not overlapping inventories of symbols.

But signals do not carry the meaning or the message, but the *message* is produced by the system dependent on the kind of the signal and a *theory of the situation* (i. e., structured previous knowledge, dispositions). The production of the message has to be seen in the following way: The system must prove a logical consecutive relationship between the transcoded input received from the surrounding — e. g., an impression of colour, or a certain sentence — and its theory of the situation. Messages, then, are formed deductively and unequivocally. In the deduction of messages there always is only unequivocality as well as competition or contradiction between unequivocalities.

This means that one and the same signal may lead to differing messages in differing situations. Because the system is constantly building theories it follows that it is also always testing hypotheses.<sup>7</sup> The system, then, is constructing theories (i. e. opinions, concepts, etc.) about everything in its environment. Thus, in each new situation, that is to say, with each of the changing theories of the situation, several hypotheses have to be tested. This takes into account the inclination of man to see his preconceived epistemological concepts confirmed.

On the one hand, this may lead to extremely rigorous concepts (i. e. biases) but, on the other hand, it affords the system to run through possible situations experimentally without endangering it. The system thus contains in itself a 'model of the environment' to which it can adapt its behaviour and which it can experiment with. The results of

<sup>6</sup> For a critique of structural semantics brought forward from a similar point of view, see Wieder (1971). Wieder demonstrates by an application of the 'method of puppetry' (Schütz 1962: 40 - 43) to the theoretical statements of Goodenough, Lounsbury, Frake, Conklin, and Bruner that structural semantics cannot give adequate explanations of how members name objects and why members get into conflicts in communication.

<sup>7</sup> Here and in some other parts this outline draws heavily on ideas presented by Miller, Galanter & Pribram (1960).

its experimenting are summed up in hypotheses and are put to the test against the environment (Richter 1974: 49).

Now, if the system receives a signal which it cannot identify as a consequence of its preknowledge then it must try to obtain further evidence by way of new signal inputs. These upsets in the system — and there are invariably upsets in such systems — always lead to a coupling with other systems, lead to communication. Actually, it is impossible not to communicate (cf. Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967; Richter 1973: 163).

Thus, we find in the case of interpersonal communication at least two such systems coupled together. In order to continue successfully the production of messages, each system requires signals from the other.

Finally, we have to introduce another capacity of these systems: they categorize ('typify' (Schütz 1962: 14)) events, situations, objects, processes, etc. according to certain similarities. Categories, constructed in that way, tend to become consolidated and form a standard part of any theory of the situation. In communication this affords a reduction of the complexity of the environment and of events which enables acting in diverse circumstances with a quasi-certainty.

Thus, it is possible that two coupled — i. e. communicating — systems fail to communicate ('latent conflict in communication') because of differing categorizations ('categorical discrepancies' (Richter et al. 1969: 43)). 'Failing to communicate can either be a consequence of expressing different thoughts in the same way or one thought in different ways' (Richter et al. 1969: 43).

A *latent conflict in communication* can for a long time remain hidden but it becomes overt in one system when this system through coupling with the second system produces a message which contradicts a message previously produced. All this results in a conflict which in its course tends to solve the contradiction. As a conflict in communication between two systems we only consider the case when system 1 is in conflict relative to system 2 and system 2 at the same time is in conflict relative to system 1.<sup>8</sup>

Fundamentally, each system (S 1) has two possibilities to solve conflicts in communication: (a) System (S 2) is recognized as the origin of the conflict and is either discarded as a system or the input is dis-

<sup>8</sup> This terminology will also cover induced conflicts in communication in which a communicator deliberately generates contradictory messages in his partner while remaining free of conflict himself. Most of Garfinkel's (1967) experiments can be regarded as instances of inducing conflicts in communication with the experimenter remaining free of conflict.



qualified. In the long run, this radical solution endangers system (S 1) and its functioning. (b) The system (S 1) disqualifies its own mechanism which led to the deduction of the contradictory messages. In order to do this it changes on a meta-level the premises of its message production and lays down new rules of process. I. e., preknowledge and dispositions are reconstructed in a way to ensure the solution of the conflict (cf. Richter 1973: 185).

We do not feel that there is a need to point out that conflicts in communication may have far-reaching consequences in social life.

For the application of this theoretical outline on processes of intercultural or interethnic communication the following five tenets have to be held in mind which form a substantial part of an anthropological conception of communication:<sup>9</sup>

- a) Processes of communication, either verbal or non-verbal, are taught and learned, they follow culturally specific rules which can be compared with rules of games. In analogy to the terms of game theory processes of communication can be regarded as organized in *moves* and *phases* and as localized in a *field of process*.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, each process is described by the number of persons involved.
- b) Each action of communication is move or phase in several processes in different fields.
- c) *Actual fields of process* have to be discerned from *distant* ones. Actual fields are part of the present observable situation of those involved, distant fields are spatially and/or temporally removed loci of that about which or with which is communicated.
- d) The actions of the individual communicator are based on a theory of the situation which is characterized by the degree of knowledge of the rules and the actual overlapping of the processes. In this theory those involved (participants, reality) as well as the topic (meanings and theme) of communication are cognitively conceived.
- e) Verbal as well as non-verbal formulations of one and the same case under differing conditions of process have different degrees of explicitness. In this connection, Richter et al. (1969: 558) in our view rightfully postulate a law of diminishing explicitness with increasing frequency and/or duration of the interaction in a certain field of process. Garfinkel (1967: 42 - 44) has shown that there exist, regarding

---

<sup>9</sup> The rules mentioned here are slightly different from those mentioned in Richter (1973: 169 - 171) and Richter et al. (1969: 61 - 65). Nonetheless, the author feels indebted to the work of Richter and Weidmann.

<sup>10</sup> For the application of game theory on cultural processes, see Buchler & Nutini (1969).

the appropriate degree of explicitness, rigid rules which the study of the author has shown to be culturally specific.

This again, exemplifies that language ('langue') regarded out of context carries no semantic meaning in the sense of a one to one relationship with extralinguistic objects ('reference'), but is only content arrived at absolutely, in different ways. For if the same message can be produced deductively by either a single word-signal or by way of a sequence of sentences, the linguistic as well as the sociolinguistic approach have to be regarded as inadequate for the investigation of processes of communication.<sup>11</sup>

### The situation of interethnic relations in Saraguro

The research area<sup>12</sup> to which the following statements pertain lies in the north of the southernmost province of the Ecuadorian Andean highland (Loja) and comprises nearly all of the *cantón* Saraguro as well as the adjacent parish San Lucas, which lies to the south of Saraguro. In the middle of a fertile, well watered valley, at an elevation of slightly over 8,000 feet above sea level lies the town of Saraguro with a population of about 1,700. The area of research coincides with the area inhabited by the *indígenas* (indians, also called *Saraguros*), excepting only the northern fringe.<sup>13</sup>

Only few *indígenas* live still farther south,<sup>14</sup> but a considerable number has found a home in the lowlands to the east (*oriente*) which they settled in search of pasture for their cattle. Once there, some of the *indígenas* settled permanently (*colonos*) on land they had either bought from the *Jívaro* Indians or which they had forced to give up. Others maintain small *fincas* to which they bring their cattle according to the season, in order to sell it in Saraguro at the time of the great *fiestas* (between Easter and Corpus Christi Day). The conditions may for the whole research area be described as follows:

Indians as well as whites live in an altitude of slightly over 8,000 feet in small hamlets (*barrios*) where their houses are to be found in

<sup>11</sup> A similar critique is made by Garfinkel & Sacks (1970: 339) in their argument that sociological reasoning 'seeks to remedy the indexical properties of practical discourse'. For a more general discussion and critique of the ethnography of communication, see Schmitz (1975).

<sup>12</sup> The research area of the fieldwork of the author and of his colleague Peter Masson comprises the *parroquias* (parishes) of Llushapa, Selva Alegre, Celén, Tenta, Cumbe, El Tablón, Urdaneta, Saraguro, and San Lucas.

<sup>13</sup> Belote (1972: 1) has called the parish of Saraguro the 'traditional highland home' of the *Saraguros*. This, however, is an ethnohistorically unproved statement which also contradicts our impressions of the whole area where Saraguro Indians are living today.

<sup>14</sup> In the parish of Jimbilla and in a region called El Valle.

the middle of the cultivated land which is usually owned by them. Large estates do not exist anymore, but there are six medium-sized *haciendas* owned by whites. Communal centers (*cabecera parroquial*) are the denser populated cumulative villages and villages built on either side of the road. The largest of these centers is Saraguro which is also county seat (*cabecera cantonal*). Cut by deep ravines, settlement in this area is only possible in the valleys; the slopes also have to be cultivated and are used as pasture because of the high population density.

The Panamerican Highway (*Panamericana*) cuts through this area from north to south, while only few passable roads extend east and west.

In the westerly parts more removed from the highway we find that agriculture — main products are: wheat, barley, maize, beans, peas, cabbage, yuca, potatoes, and some tropical fruit — form the basis of home consumption as well as marketing, while cattle is of minor importance. On the other hand, along the *Panamericana* and to the east and south agricultural production is for home consumption only (with a strong bias on maize) while livestock is kept for the production of meat and cheese for marketing.

In our research we could identify in this region by means of an extensive basic initial inquiry<sup>15</sup> three ethnic units and their cultural characteristics defining some of their criteria for identification as follows:

a) *Indígenas* (*indio* is an insult), also called *Saraguros* in the literature. They have retained a relatively traditional indian way of life. There are still 10,000 of them, about 95 % of whom speak what we would consider an often rather corrupted Spanish, while 60 % are still bilingual, speaking Spanish and *Quichua* (Saraguro dialect). Only a few *indígena* families live in the outskirts of Saraguro and — not counting one instance — they form a minority in the other communal (parish) centers. Until 1945 *indígenas* held public offices (for example in the town council of Saraguro: *consejo municipal*) and some of them even were teachers. After 1945 the white population ousted them from these positions by way of transforming the originally religio-political system of offices (*cargo*-system) into a religious system (cf. Belote 1972). Not having succeeded as traders, today the one thing left to the *indígenas* is a weaving mill they run as a co-operative. — Criteria of identification (as an ethnic unit) for these strongly individualistic *indígenas* are not

<sup>15</sup> This basic inquiry was realized in collaboration with Peter Masson who studied the Quichua dialect of Saraguro combining this with a sociolinguistic research.



language but costume in general as well as hair-styles (men and women wear their hair in a single plait).

The group of the *indígenas* may be viewed as 'exposed marginal' (Schermerhorn 1970: 130), regarded from the point of view of the dominant white group of the country.<sup>16</sup>

b) *The whites (blancos) of the center of the cantón Saraguro.* The whites speak a reasonable Spanish, understand little or no *Quichua* and follow the national urban culture in their clothes and their general way of life. They are the only group that does not pay any church taxes (neither the tithe — *diezmo* — nor a similar levy, the *primicias*); they hold all the more important offices of the regional center, control the whole cattle- and grain-trade, nearly all the shops and most of the speak-easies where they illegally sell boot-legged alcohol. Agriculture and cattle-raising they only pursue for home consumption, excepting the case of the few owners of *haciendas*. As artisans they manufacture mainly utensils for the *indígenas* while they have considerable income from lending money to *indígenas* at an interest rate of up to 60 % p. a.

This white group inhabitates the actual center of Saraguro, the criteria for their identification are again the kind of clothes they wear as well as the short hair worn by men and women. The whites of the center are the 'dominant group' of that region.<sup>17</sup>

c) *The whites of the surrounding country (blancos del campo).* The whites living in the outskirts of, and the country surrounding the cantonal center form a middle group between the two extremes, culturally as well as socially (as far as the prestige of this ethnic unit and the social status of the members of this ethnic group is concerned), but they can nevertheless clearly be distinguished from both groups.

While in their way of life and economically they are nearer to the *indígenas* than to the white group of the center, they hold the public offices outside Saraguro, own the few shops, and control the trade, especially of boot-legged liquor. For this group, too, style of clothes

<sup>16</sup> In a 'communication dimension' 'exposed marginal' means to Schermerhorn (1970: 130): 'Recipients of communication noticeably affected by it'. In an 'institutional dimension' 'exposed marginal' means: 'Market exchanges, payment of taxes, some group labor for dominants. Sporadic or intermittent schooling for a few children in educational system of dominants' (1970: 131). Saraguro indians, however, are visiting schools rather regularly but generally with bad success.

<sup>17</sup> 'dominant group signifies that collectivity within a society which has pre-eminent authority to function both as guardians and sustainers of the controlling value system, and as prime allocators of rewards in the society' (Schermerhorn 1970: 12 - 13). As far as cattle-trade is concerned the white traders coming from Loja, Cuenca, and Guayaquil to the cattle market of Saraguro have to be counted as members of the dominant group.

and hairdo (women wear their hair in two plaits) provide the criteria of identification. In the scheme of 'stages of increased participation' (Schermerhorn 1970: 130) they can be placed between 'activated' and 'integrated (centripetal)'.<sup>18</sup>

These three ethnic units are not definable racially but culturally only. This is demonstrated by the fact that *indigenas* may become socially accepted whites (at least whites of the surrounding country) in the course of a few years, once they have adopted white clothing, hair-style, and, later on, the new way of life generally. We have also observed instances of whites "going *indígena*" in the same way successfully.

For some aspects of the theories of the situation<sup>19</sup> of acting and communicating individuals it is important to know, however, that all three ethnic groups define themselves and each other racially, conceive changeable cultural differences as rigid biological-racial ones:<sup>20</sup> The whites of the center regard themselves and are regarded by the others as racially pure from which assumption they deduct the righteousness of their role as dominators and exploitators; the country-whites see themselves as half-breds, that is to say, something better and therefore more privileged than the 'pure' indians. The *indigenas*, on their part, see themselves as the descendants of the 'indios' which succumbed to the whites in the *conquista*, while the whites by this very fact see their power, importance, and higher status, and privileges justified.

### Interethnic relations as process of communication

While, in regard to the kind of rules of verbal and non-verbal communication, the three ethnic units differ strongly, they still have suf-

<sup>18</sup> In the 'communication dimension' this group, indeed, tends more to the stage of 'integrated (centripetal)': 'Exchange of communication in many spheres of life facilitating shared understandings' (Schermerhorn 1970: 130). Because of this point the author will especially discuss communication between whites of the center and *indigenas* what will make much clearer the problems in interethnic communication.

<sup>19</sup> By the statements about the outline of a theory of communication it is obvious that the concept of the 'theory of the situation' by no means is identical with Popper's concept of the 'situational logic'.

<sup>20</sup> With regard to this point the important public functionaries of the national administration are no exceptions. When the author asked in the Oficina de los Censos Nacionales (Office for National Census) in Quito, why they would take no notice of the membership of ethnic units in the census of 1974, the answer was: 'We do not make any differences between the races of our country.' It seems to be a very common error that, even though the opposite may be *observable* in some instances, ethnicity is assumed to be unchangeable ('eternal'). For an example from the Lue, see Moerman (1967: 164).

ficient interethnically compatible<sup>21</sup> rules to ensure, for example, effective interethnic communication of differences of status, and social domination and subordination.

In verbal communication the *indígena* addresses a white of the center as 'don' (sir), 'señor' (Mister), 'Usted' (vous), etc. while the white addresses him as 'cholito'<sup>22</sup>, 'runa' (Quichua for man, human being), 'tú' (tu), etc. Similarly, in other fields of process like, e.g., giving vs. receiving of orders or demand vs. request it is always the *indígena* who makes the moves of the underdog. The major part of these rules which pertain to the form and the sequence of the communicating of domination and subordination are most frequently applied in interethnic and only rarely in intraethnic communication. Without the justification of a close relationship, a white of the center would, for instance, never address a fellow white (of the center), though he be of inferior status, as 'tú'. Again, he would never try to order him about or make demands in an unpolite way. Moreover, during a conversation with an *indígena*, a white speaks more frequently and at greater length than his partner in communication, while in the conversation of whites or of *indígenas* every participant is expected to care for balanced frequency and length of speech (cf. Malinowski 1949: 314 - 315).

By the special treatment<sup>23</sup> in communication of members of the other ethnic unit respectively, each act of communication provides a self-definition and a definition of the other (cf. Watzlawick et al. 1967; Goffman 1957: 47 - 48). This means that each act of communication of this kind is a practice, a recognition, and a confirmation of the established hierarchical order of the ethnic units with all their ideological and economical implications.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Additionally to the existence of at least similar means of communication it is necessary for the understanding between two communicators that the theories of the situation and, with that, the rules of communication of both partners are compatible (cf., Weidmann 1972: 128).

<sup>22</sup> 'Cholo' is regarded as an insult while 'cholito' (the diminutive of 'cholo'), 'indígena', and 'natural' are acceptable for the Saraguro indians.

<sup>23</sup> These different kinds of special treatment which can be observed in Saraguro resemble the cases studied by Burgos (1970) in the Riobamba region in the central Andean highland of Ecuador.

<sup>24</sup> This comes near to Sapir's view of society: 'actually it is being re-animated or creatively reaffirmed from day to day by particular acts of a communicative nature which obtain among individuals participating in it' (Sapir 1931: 78). In a similar way J. Dewey conceived communication as constituting and preserving society (cf., Duncan 1967: 242). In a similar fashion we understand Garfinkel's (1967: 66 - 67) critique of social science theorists who portray man as a 'judgmental dope': 'Generally, they have acknowledged but otherwise neglected the fact that by these same actions persons discover, create, and sustain this standardization'. — For the influence of power relations, socialization processes, and class structures on the construction of realities and the rules of interpretation, see Dreitzel (1970: xvi - xix) and Mueller (1970).

All this shows that, in spite of the day-to-day problems in intercultural communication, routines, which have become unconscious are the point on which the whole social structure turns. They clearly tend to consolidate the existing situation. The respective communicative processes and their fields of application have become a standard part of the theories of the situation of the whites as well as *indígenas*. Just this is usually meant when it is said that people have internalized an image of the social order. It is important, however, to fully recognize that this image of the social order is a product of the dominant ethnic unit which created it first with crucifix and sword and fortified it with their clerical and secular power until it had been internalized by the oppressed (cf. Dreitzel 1970: xvi - xix; Mueller 1970). Nevertheless, social structures cannot be regarded as given — though *indígenas* and whites are doing so — but rather as members' accomplishment. 'The topic then would consist not in the social order as ordinarily conceived, but rather in the ways in which members assemble particular scenes so as to provide for one another evidences of a social order as-ordinarily-conceived' (Zimmerman & Pollner 1971: 83).

Now, if whites and *indígenas* treat each other in a special way according to the status ascribed to the other's ethnic unit, then, each person, white or *indígena*, must be able to recognize the other's membership of his ethnic group by some perceptible signs or criteria. This seems to be especially necessary for the meeting of persons who do not know each other personally. As was mentioned above, type of clothes and hair-style provide the criteria of identification. That such signs can sufficiently serve as criteria of identification is well known (cf. Boas 1931: 6; Maynard 1966; Moerman 1965: 1218).

The fact that one can change one's ethnic identity by adopting clothing and hair-style of another ethnic unit, i. e., by demonstrating a new ethnicity, gives special importance to these criteria in the Saraguro region. Nevertheless, a person can also identify others by the music they are playing, by some peculiarities of their speech, or by some activity they are engaged in, and so on.

From this follows that in many encounters clothing and hair-style are the only relevant criteria for recognizing someone as an *indígena* or a *blanco*, and for using these identification labels. But these labels can be used to report almost any behaviour of persons identified by that label. As there are also other labels — *ecuatoriano*, *campesino*, *runa*, *cholito*, etc. — we must assume that *ethnic* labelling is motivated (cf. Moerman 1967: 164) and depends on the frame of reference relevant to a person in a given situation. The question, then, is not, e. g., 'Who

is an *indígena*?' but rather when and how and why the identification 'indígena' is preferred by a person (cf. Moerman 1967: 160).

When a white and an *indígena* meet each other in everyday life, for the purposes of greeting and walking together correctly the only relevant categories from the set of possible identifications are: 'blanco' and 'indígena'. The criteria of identification actually used in this situation can be enumerated retrospectively, but never in advance. For, what some criteria will mean to an acting member in a given situation and which criteria will be used to accomplish the identification of another member can only be known afterwards.

Determining the actual situation and the purposes at hand thus also involves the determination of one's own and the other's identities, all these being elements of one's theory of the situation. If a certain purpose of an interaction is given and one participant can be identified as *indígena* and the other as *blanco*, status differences are implied and have to be taken into account by every participant in choosing his moves in certain fields of process.

Leaving aside the many instances of conflicts in verbal and/or non-verbal intercultural communication which occur, e. g., in trade as well as in schools, where they impede the progress of non-white pupils,<sup>25</sup> we shall concentrate on the analysis of the following case.

*Indígenas* and whites of the center have different rules for walking with other persons. Whites walk abreast, if the terrain allows it. A woman walks on the right-hand side of a man or between two accompanying males. The place on the right or between two persons is the 'place of honour', reserved for persons of respect or esteem. On narrow ways, however, whites may be forced to walk in a file with the 'place of honour' at the head of it. Walking abreast affords the whites the necessary eye-contract during verbal and/or non-verbal communication. As Goffman (1957: 52) argues rightly, this 'physical requirement is underlined by social rules that often define inattention to the speaker as an affront to him'.

Such rules for walking together might have their origins in the type of terrain: in towns or larger villages they can be practised, but not in the small indian villages (*barrios*). There, people always walk in a file, the place at the head of which is the 'place of honour'. *Indígenas* regard it as desirable that the wife walks in front of the husband but in practice — especially, after some years of marriage — she often

---

<sup>25</sup> This is one result of the author's study of conflicts in intercultural communication in some schools within the area of his research.



walks behind him. A woman, *indígena* or white, who is not the wife of an accompanying man (*indígena*) invariably has to walk behind him. If she disregarded this, both had to expect social sanctions (via gossip, especially: 'They are running like dogs'). An older man always walks in front of a younger, while with those of equal age no special preference can be found if the two did not hold *cargos* of differing prestige in the same *fiesta*-cycle. *Indígenas* use to talk while going in a file; they do not need eye-contact to carry on a conversation.<sup>26</sup>

Before proceeding to the analysis of a conflict in intercultural communication, an examination of these rules of walking together and the practice of using these rules may be useful at the outset. The first question should be whether such rules as formulated above and similar ones given with even more precision as results of sociolinguistic studies enable a stranger to a society to perform appropriately his role in any scene to which the mentioned rules refer (cf. Hymes 1964, 1968; Basso 1972: 32). In fact, they do not.

When, e. g., the author walked together with his *indígena* assistant the *indígena* usually walked behind, leaving the 'place of honour' to the 'white', the man of higher status. But when the *indígena* felt that the 'white' did not know where to go because there was no clearly recognizable path, he sometimes changed his place in the file and went ahead of the author in order to guide him. On reaching more familiar terrain he returned to his place behind the 'white'.

By this and other examples it is demonstrated that such rules are idealizations whose relationship to actual conduct has to be studied yet. For, the use of a certain rule in a given situation may produce troubles that motivate modifications in the manner in which the rule is put into practice. 'The modification established, the resultant outcomes (if less troublesome) might then be invoked or assumed to argue what the rule intended 'all along' if an issue subsequently arose around what the rule 'really' calls for by way of action' (Zimmerman 1971: 232 - 233). The intent of the rule was not seen to be violated by the decision to suspend the rule in this instance of its application. Rather, in finding the alteration to be 'reasonable', the *indígena* ensured that the continuing accomplishment of walking together also after that could be viewed as governed by rules (cf. Zimmerman 1971: 233).

---

<sup>26</sup> The rules formulated above do not represent even approximately all the rules about walking together with other persons (whites or *indígenas*), but they meet the requirements of the example which shall be analysed here. — There are rules about the walking together of the whites of the surrounding country which also can be found in the corresponding sets of rules of the other ethnic units.

An attempt to solve such problems can be found in linguistic and sociolinguistic analyses, even in ones which introduce a very narrowly defined concept of the situation (e. g., Basso 1972), leaving aside cases of acting under 'anormal conditions' (cf. Basso 1972: 41). In that way, it is tried to define each move and its place in a certain field of process in order to reach semantical unequivocality, while ignoring 'troubles' and alternative possibilities which may arise from other elements of actual situations or from special practical purposes of the acting persons. In fact, these are not only ignored but excluded by definition.<sup>27</sup> However, if sociolinguistic analysis excludes the practical problems which each member faces in acting according to rules, it offers no solution of the problems of analysis but only clings to the idealizations of common sense reasoning.

If, on a broad road, a white of the center accompanies an *indígena* he has hired for a day's work to a field, the following thing happens:

The *indígena*, according to his notion of 'place of honour', and of the ethnic status of the white gives him one to two meters head start. The white, in his turn, fails to recognize this as a move in the distant field of process 'attestation of respect' along the rules laid down for his ethnic unit and along which he in his actual field of process expects the *indígena* to act. This misappreciation of the behaviour of the *indígena* on the part of the white may be regarded (from the point of view of an external observer) as a conflict (latent) in communication in the white relative to the *indígena*.

From the point of view of the *indígena*, however, if one of them wants to tell or show something to the other, there is no need to break up the nice file they are forming. For the white, on the other hand, walking in file and talking are moves in two mutually exclusive fields of process, because 'talking to someone' is a move which has its place in the process of walking abreast or in the process of standing together. As one of the two wants to say something, the white demands of the *indígena* to walk beside him, i. e., to change the actual field of process. The *indígena*, for his part, finds this incompatible with his 'attestation of respect'. He will probably close in on the white but he will not walk on his side — despite all demands: the conflict in communication in the white relative to the *indígena* can be regarded as an overt one. Because the *indígena* will not give in to the demands of the white, the conflict

---

<sup>27</sup> So, in his analysis of rules for ice travel among the Fort Norman Slave, Basso (1972) excludes 'troubles' as, e. g., drifting snow which does not allow identification of the type of ice only by looking at it and also disregards the reasons why members want to cross the ice, as well as the conditions in which members are who want to cross it. They might be in a hurry because somebody needs help or might try to cross the ice though being wounded.

in communication in the white relative to the *indígena* will remain overt until he will solve it by accepting the behaviour of the *indígena* as his 'usual expression of stubbornness'. This supposed lack of education in the other will not only serve to 'explain' the origin of the conflict but also to underline his own fine manners.

In the *indígena* this behaviour of the white will also cause an overt conflict in communication relative to the white whom he, on the one hand, offers the due respect while he himself, on the other hand, is abused and called a simple, even though he does not see any obstacles to a conversation. In such cases of an overt conflict in communication the common solution is the disqualification of the white's move 'abuse' ('He is out of his mind.') or the identification of his move as one in another field of process ('These whites can do whatever they feel like.').<sup>28</sup>

After having examined this example, the question arises: What are the social consequences of conflicts in communication and which function do they have?

Richter et al. (1969: 75 - 77) argue that *latent* conflicts in communication have a 'protective social function'. For instance, in talking about a topic very inexplicitly, participants in communication are able to believe they understand each other while actually meaning different things. So they can hide their different opinions in favour of paying respect to each other. In social rivalry latent conflicts in communication can be used purposively in order to keep one's real motives of action hidden, thus avoiding an overt social conflict. Richter et al. (1969: 75) conclude: 'This protective social function of the conflict in communication tends not only to preserve social inequalities but to stabilize the conditions of society, though only pseudoharmonically.'

It seems, however, that overt conflicts in communication can also have this function, however only those types of overt conflicts which are solved in the same way as by the participants in our example. For, if the *indígena* and the white disqualified their own mechanisms which led to the deduction of the contradictory messages, they would practise a kind of co-operation presupposing a certain degree of equality, and aiming at understanding each other. This, however, would question their belief in their fundamental social inequality. But, because the conflicts in the white as well as in the *indígena* are solved by discarding the other participant as a competent communicator or by disqualifying the received 'input', neither the white nor the *indígena* can find the real origin of the conflict in communication and none of them learns from this conflict. Rather, they see their preconceived concepts of each other confirmed and thereby their concepts of the social order, too.

---

<sup>28</sup> These are statements which the author often heard from the *indígenas*.

We can, therefore, conclude that latent conflicts in communication generally have this 'protective social function', while overt ones have this function only when the communicators have a different and unquestioned status and the conflict is solved by discarding the partner as a competent communicator or by disqualifying the received 'input'.

As both types of conflicts in communication are frequently observable in intercultural communication in the Saraguro area and as overt conflicts are usually solved in the above described way, they must be regarded as an important factor in the stabilization of the conditions of the larger society of this area.

### Avoiding and solving interethnic conflicts in communication

The main problem opposing the development of strategies for the discovery, avoidance, and solution of conflicts in communication lies in the unawareness of many means of communication, especially the non-verbal (cf. Birdwhistell 1973). To lay open interethnic differences in the means and rules of communication is a difficult undertaking, only to be mastered by specially trained teachers. But instead, white teachers know almost nothing about the culture and the way of life of the *indígenas*. Even those whites who work and communicate with *indígenas* daily, are often totally ignorant of the culture of their counterpart.<sup>29</sup> A strong ethnocentrism generally impedes any attempt to learn something about, and especially, to understand the culture of the other.

This knowledge and extracommunicative understanding of the means and rules of communication is not enough to rule out interethnic conflicts in communication.<sup>30</sup> As a matter of fact, there is a number of whites who understand and know the rules governing the walking about with *indígenas* even in their details but who, when the situation arises, get into the same old conflicts described above.

Though the author had an extracommunicative knowledge of some of the rules of communication between whites and between *indígenas* he frequently found himself in conflicts in communication relative to an *indígena* or a white.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> In a similar way the *indígenas* are ignorant of the culture of the whites of the center.

<sup>30</sup> For the concept 'extracommunicative', see Ungeheuer (1970a). The idea underlying the distinction 'communicative/extracommunicative' was also formulated by Garfinkel et al. (1970: 339).

<sup>31</sup> Such experiences can be viewed as a preliminary phase of a research following the suggestion of Bohannan (1968: 97) 'to examine in detail the transactions between anthropologist and informant. At the risk of ruining the ethnography ... why not study anthropologists anthropologizing? ... such a scheme would be another step in the direction of understanding the process of cross-cultural learning and communication.'

Things became better when, in some few situations, the author began consciously to communicate in such a way — e. g., by practising those gestures which could be regarded by his counterparts as appropriate to the actual situation — as would do a white or an *indígena* in the same situation. What was necessary, however, was not some behaviour according to a certain rule in the sense of enacting this rule literally, but a behaviour which satisfied the counterparts as an 'orderly' and 'reasonable' one, i. e., behaviour which could be made out by all the participants as 'orderly in a certain fashion' and as 'governed by the appropriate rule'. This implied processes of judgement about the manner of application of a certain rule on relevant occasions, i. e., of a judgement which kind of behaviour could be seen as a move that, in the actual field of process, was in accordance with the relevant rule.

To avoid most of the possible interethnic conflicts in communication, it is necessary for A to behave in the way laid down for B's ethnic unit, and to act in that way, if B is unable to behave according to the rules which A has to observe in his ethnic unit (cf. Goffman 1957: 48 - 49). The practice of this communicative behaviour would thus not only destroy the dividing-lines between ethnic units but, in some parts, also break down the hierarchical order with all its implications.

Changes in the present forms of interethnic relations in Saraguro will have to be made. It would sooner be possible, however, to change the socio-economic and political basis of interethnic relations which would bring about integration and mutual familiarity also on the level of communication, than to proceed the other way round.

So, what remains to be found are *strategies* for the solution of interethnic conflicts in communication. Clearly, *indígenas* and whites already use one strategy: the other participant in communication is usually recognized as the origin of the conflict and is either discarded as a competent communicator or the other's relevant word or action (input) is disqualified. But, by relying on such solutions persons in the long run endanger their ability to act successfully within their social and physical environment. Instead, the other type of solution consisting of a disqualification of one's own mechanism which led to the deduction of the contradictory messages should be practised. For, thereby the actual theory of the situation is adjusted to the circumstances and conditions encountered while communicating with others. In doing so, the person learns to act more successfully and acquires new knowledge which might become important in other situations too.

Looking for strategies following this line, it seems that above all a greater awareness of potential conflicts and more explicitness are called



for. This would comprise the explanation of one's own behaviour on a meta-level. This, again, would call for readiness on the part of the partners in communication to consciously disregard the culturally specific rules of the degree of explicitness in intercultural communication. But here, too, we are in dilemma because on the one hand, such, and, for reasons of space omitted, many more contra-conflictory strategies (cf. Richter et al. 1969: 187 - 189; Haney 1967) have to be learnt and used, while, on the other hand, there is no one to do the teaching.

Not only for these reasons the author thinks that here lies a difficult but rewarding task for an applied anthropology of communication that wants to be taken seriously.

### References

- Basso, K. (1972): Ice travel among the Fort Norman Slave: Folk taxonomies and cultural rules. *LinS* 1. 31 - 49.
- Belote, J. (1972): The cargo system in Saraguro, Ecuador. Unpublished ms.
- Birdwhistell, R. L. (1973): Kinesics and context. Essays on body-motion communication. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Boas, F. (1911): Introduction. In *Handbook of American Indian languages* (BAE-B 40, pt 1.) Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution. 1 - 83.
- (1931): Race and progress. *Science* 74. 1 - 8.
- (1938): *General anthropology*. New York: Heath.
- Bohannon, P. (1968): Comment on Proxemics by Edward T. Hall. *Current Anthropology* 9. 97.
- Buchler, J. R. a. Nutini, H. G. (eds) (1969): *Game theory in the behavioral sciences*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Burgos Guevara, H. (1970): *Relaciones interétnicas en Riobamba*. (ediciones especiales, 55.) México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.
- Dreitzel, H. P. (1970): Introduction. In H. P. Dreitzel (ed.), *Patterns of communicative behavior*. Recent sociology no. 2. New York: The Macmillan Company. vii - xxii.
- Duncan, H. D. (1967): The search for a social theory of communication in American sociology. In F. E. X. Dance (ed.), *Human communication theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 236 - 63.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967): *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- a. Sacks (1970): On formal structures of practical actions. In J. C. McKinney and E. A. Tiryakian (eds), *Theoretical sociology. Perspectives and developments*. New York: Appleton. 337 - 66.
- Goffman, E. (1957): Alienation from interaction. *Human Relations* 10. 47 - 59.
- Haney, W. V. (1967): *Communication and organizational behavior. Text and cases*. Homewood, Ill.: Irwin.
- Harris, M. (1964): *The nature of cultural things*. New York: Random H.
- Hymes, D. H. (1961): On typology of cognitive styles in language. *AnL* 3 (1). 22 - 54.

- Hymes, D. H. (1964): Introduction: Toward ethnographies of communication. In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.), *The ethnography of communication*. (AmA 66 (6) pt 2.) Washington, D. C.: American Anthropological Association. 1 - 34.
- (1967): The anthropology of communication. In F. E. X. Dance (ed.), *Human communication theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1 - 39.
- (1968): The ethnography of speaking. In J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Readings in the sociology of language*. The Hague: Mouton. 99 - 138.
- (1971 a): Sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking. In E. Ardener (ed.), *Social anthropology and language*. (ASA Monographs, 10.) London: Tavistock. 47 - 93.
- (1971 b): On linguistic theory, communicative competence, and the education of disadvantaged children. In M. L. Wax, St. Diamond & F. O. Gearing (eds), *Anthropological perspectives on education*. New York: Basic Books. 51 - 66.
- (1972): Editorial introduction. *LInS* 1. 1 - 14.
- Malinowski, B. (1949): The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In Ch. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (eds), *The meaning of meaning*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 296 - 336.
- Maynard, E. (ed.): *The indians of Colta. Essays on the Colta lake zone, Chimborazo (Ecuador)*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University.
- Miller, G., Galanter, E. a. Pribram, K. (1960): *Plans and the structure of behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Moerman, M. (1965): Ethnic identification in a complex civilization: Who are the Lue? *AmA* 67 (5) pt 1. 1215 - 30.
- (1967): Being Lue: Uses and abuses of ethnic identification. *Proceedings of 1967 Spring Meeting*. Seattle, Wash.: American Ethnological Society. 153 - 69.
- Mueller, C. (1970): Notes on the repression of communicative behavior. In H. P. Dreitzel (ed.), *Patterns of communicative behavior. Recent sociology* no. 2. New York: The Macmillan Company. 101 - 13.
- Richter, H. (1973): Kommunikation als Prozeß — Sprache als soziales Gebilde. In M. W. Hellmann (ed.), *Zum öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der DDR*. (Sprache der Gegenwart, 18.) Düsseldorf: Schwann. 160 - 94.
- (1974): Über Störungen zwischenmenschlicher Kommunikation. In G. Ungeheuer (ed.), *Kommunikationsforschung und Phonetik. Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Kommunikationsforschung und Phonetik der Universität Bonn*. (IPK-F 50.) Hamburg: Buske. 45 - 58.
- Richter, H. u. Weidmann, F. (1969): *Semantisch bedingte Kommunikationskonflikte bei Gleichsprachigen*. Mit einem Vorwort von G. Ungeheuer. (IPK-F 17.) Hamburg: Buske.
- Sapir, E. (1921): *Language. An introduction to the study of speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- (1931): Communication. *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Vol. 4). New York: Macmillan. 78 - 81. (Reprinted in D. G. Mandelbaum (ed.). (1949) *Selected writings of Edward Sapir*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. California P. 104 - 9.)

- Schermerhorn, R. A. (1970): Comparative ethnic relations. A framework for theory and research. New York: Random House.
- Schmitz, H. W. (1975): Ethnographie der Kommunikation. Kommunikationsbegriff und Ansätze zur Erforschung von Kommunikationsphänomenen in der Völkerkunde. (IPK-F 49.) Hamburg: Buske.
- (1976): Zum Problem der Objektivität in der völkerkundlichen Feldforschung. Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 101, 1 - 40.
- Schütz, A. (1962): Collected papers I: The problem of social reality. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871): Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and custom (2 vols.). London: John Murray.
- Ungeheuer, G. (1970 a): Kommunikative und extrakommunikative Betrachtungsweise in der Phonetik. PICPS VI. 73 - 86.
- (1970 b): Über wissenschaftliche Arbeit und Wissenschaft, am Beispiel linguistischer Disziplinen. Bibl. phonetica 9. 1 - 8.
- (1974): Probleme, theoretische und praktische. In G. Ungeheuer (ed.), Kommunikationsforschung und Phonetik. Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Kommunikationsforschung und Phonetik der Universität Bonn. (IPK-F 50.) Hamburg: Buske. 17 - 26.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J. H. a. Jackson, D. D. (1967): Pragmatics of human communication. A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes. New York: Norton & Company.
- Weidmann, F. (1972): Grundlagen einer Kommunikationssoziologie. (IPK-7 42.) Hamburg: Buske.
- Weiss, G. (1973): A scientific concept of culture. AmA 75. 1376 - 1413.
- Wieder, D. L. (1971): On meaning by rule. In J. D. Douglas (ed.), Understanding everyday life. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 107 - 135.
- Zimmerman, D. E. (1971): The practicalities of rule use. In J. D. Douglas (ed.), Understanding everyday life. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 221 - 38.
- a. Pollner, M. (1971): The everyday world as a phenomenon. In J. D. Douglas (ed.), Understanding everyday life. London: Routledge & Kegan

## Synopsis

### Interethnische Beziehungen in Saraguro (Ecuador) aus der Sicht einer Anthropologie der Kommunikation

Am Beispiel der interethnischen Beziehungen zwischen Weißen (*blancos*) und Indios (*indígenas*) in Saraguro, einem Kanton im südlichen Andenhochland Ecuadors, wird gezeigt, wie sich Probleme in diesen Beziehungen in interkulturellen Kommunikationskonflikten manifestieren. Für die Analyse einiger Aspekte interkultureller Kommunikation und für die Untersuchung eines Beispiels eines Konflikts in derartiger Kommunikation wird eine Theorie der Kommunikation in ihren Grundzügen dargelegt. Im Verlaufe der sodann folgenden Analyse ethnographischer Daten wird auf die Inadäquatheiten einiger linguistischer und soziolinguistischer Konzepte ('Zeichen', 'Bedeutung', 'Kompetenz', 'Performanz') und Methoden ('Komponentialanalyse') hingewie-

sen. Es wird die Meinung vertreten, daß die strukturelle Linguistik und Soziolinguistik aufgrund dieser Inadäquatheiten keine zufriedenstellende Theorie des Kommunikationskonflikts vorlegen können. Schließlich wird aufgezeigt, a) daß Mitglieder unterschiedlicher ethnischer Einheiten Unterordnung oder aber Überordnung praktizieren, indem sie auf ihre je Kultur festgelegten Weisen kommunizieren; b) daß latente wie auch offene Konflikte in inter-ethnischer Kommunikation dazu tendieren, die bestehende, alle Ethnien des Gebiets umfassende Sozialstruktur zu stabilisieren.