Studies in Language and Social Interaction
In Honor of Robert Hopper

Edited by
Phillip J. Glenn
Emerson College

Curtis D. LeBaron
Brigham Young University

Jenny Mandelbaum
Rutgers University
Robert Hopper's intellectual history illustrates the interplay of scholarly and secular life. With his ear tuned to the poetic frequencies of language, coming of age during the 1960s and 1970s, with an interest in language development that may have been born with his children, Hopper was ideally positioned to find rigorous ways to bring social science's Linguistic Turn (Rorty, 1967/1992) to the (Speech) Communication field. In his scholarly career he worked in, or made important scholarly contributions to, many of the major currents of work to be found in Language and Social Interaction. His early work focused on speech effects. He then became interested in speech act theory and discourse analysis, focusing particularly on alignment talk. Next he became intrigued with conversation analysis (CA). In the process of becoming a conversation analyst, he worked through many issues regarding the possible intersections between conversation analysis and such bordering territories as ethnography of communication, social psychology, and performance studies. In his later work, he used conversation analysis to address some of the communication field's traditional questions and issues, and also explored what conversation analysis can offer to the medical field. He did all of this with his special brand of creativity and originality, inspiring his colleagues, undergraduates, and graduate students.

In an award-winning essay, Hopper (1981) reexamined work on "taken-for-granted," the implicit, functional and principled incompleteness in language use. His focus in this piece was that which is in some way left unsaid, and may or may not be left unquestioned. This essay contains some important clues to understanding what drove Hopper's work.

We see the ability to first notice and then question taken-for-granted as a common thread that runs through Hopper's work. This can perhaps be traced
Robert Hopper, in addition to being a rigorous scholar with broad intellectual interests, a strong mission to understand how communication works, and concern with making it work better, pursued his research and teaching agendas in highly innovative and inspirational ways.
to a kind of liminality that may be a prerequisite for scholarly achievement. For as a conversation analyst whose scholarly upbringing was rigorously quantitative, and whose early work examined speech effects, Hopper had a particular vantage point on both CA and the communication field (cf. chap. 2, this volume). This place to look from enabled him both to see communication from a CA point of view and CA from a communication point of view, putting him in the position to have original insights with regard to each. Whatever he was studying, Hopper had the ability to uncover the taken-for-granted, and the skill to see it in new ways. This is evident throughout his scholarly career.

Hopper’s career was driven by his persistent search for a rigorous science of speech. This led him to participate in innovations that have transformed segments of the communication field. In the early 1980s, he was part of a group of scholars who met at small conferences exploring different approaches to the study of language. He was one of the initial proponents of discourse analysis in general, and a primary instigator in the bringing of CA to the communication field.

In his early work, Hopper was interested in how children learn to talk. With Rita Naremore, he published a book on children’s language development that has become a classic text in the field, and was reprinted in a third edition in 1990. Hopper was keenly attuned to the language of what he sometimes called the “underdogs”—women, children, and other minorities who are sometimes discriminated against by the “favorites,” those who do the discriminating. His work on speech effects examined language attitudes—how people perceive and react to the speech of others. This work suggested that we tend to take for granted the transparency of others’ talk. Hopper raised the possibility that we should take into account how shades of skin color, gender, age, and so on may influence how speech is interpreted in addition, or in contrast, to how it is produced. Much of this work indicates how perceptions of speech are influenced not so much by the speech itself, but by how recipients interpret it, based on social stereotypes. His work on language effects made an important contribution toward questioning the field’s established “speaker effectiveness” paradigm (cf. Bradac, Wiemann, & Hopper, 1989, for a summary of this work). Even more important, this work makes the case that what Hopper often called a “science of speech” involves understanding it as an interaction.

Communication studies’ origins in rhetoric and public speaking may contribute to the tendency of work in the field to use a one-way “sender—message—receiver” model, with a strong focus on the sender and the “packaging” of the message. Hopper’s early work made the case for understanding the role of interpretation in the communication process. In this way, he added new dimensions to our understanding of the conventional
relationship between "underdogs" and "favorites," as he called the powerless and the powerful, and people of different races and genders (Hopper, 1986).

Speech Act Theory's emphasis on the active character of speech as action (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Wittgenstein's (1958) theory of language games, the work of de Saussure (1966) and the French structuralists, and the work of Bateson (1972) and his colleagues all influenced Hopper's thinking at this time. His focus shifted from how people react to features of language to how people enact them. This work can be characterized as a form of discourse analysis. For instance, a series of publications and dissertations examined the nature of alignment talk (Morris & Hopper, 1980). This concept, derived from Stokes and Hewitt (1976), examined conversations to see how communicators negotiated understandings. The variety of data sources Hopper used, and encouraged his students to use, for this work is testimony to the entrepreneurial spirit with which he approached the study of language and social interaction. For instance, Ragan (1980) looked at audiotaped employment interviews, Scott (1983) looked at audiotaped conversations between married couples, and Sims (1983) looked at audiotaped parent-child interaction. The practical and ethical difficulties of examining interpersonal communication at the beginning or ending of relationships presented challenges that led to new approaches. Ragan and Hopper (1984) looked at the discourse of couples in the terminating stages of relationships by drawing the conversations from works of literature. Mandelbaum (1983) used novels and plays as a data source to examine the beginning stages of relationships.

In the Spring of 1983, Hopper took a sabbatical in Oxford where he attended data sessions at Wolfson College's Center for Socio-Legal Studies with (among others) Max Atkinson, Anita Pomerantz, Paul Drew, and John Heritage. This began his apprenticeship in CA, which offered solutions to the problem of working in a rigorous fashion with "real" data. While at Oxford, he read the manuscript of CA's coming-of-age volume, Structures of Social Action, edited by Max Atkinson and John Heritage. Upon his return to Texas in June 1983, Hopper embarked on a multipronged effort to develop his own and his students' understanding of CA and to bring the work to the communication field. This involved such steps as establishing the University of Texas Conversation Library, an archive of hundreds of hours of audio- and video-recorded, transcribed, naturally occurring conversations from casual and professional settings; conducting weekly "listening sessions" or data analysis workshops; encouraging his students and colleagues in the field to listen carefully to the
patterns and nuances of everyday talk; and in various ways bringing the Communication field's attention to the contributions CA can make to an understanding of communication. In addition to organizing a wide variety of conference panels and events, and bringing CA scholars to our conferences, in various ways through his published work Hopper was a strong instigator in opening up debate with regard to CA.

Hopper's conversation analytic work began with a thorough reexamination of a taken-for-granted medium, the telephone. Whereas previous conversation analytic work took the phone to be simply another place to examine everyday or institutional conversation, Hopper took the phone to be a medium the study of which promised particular riches for the communication field. He suggested,

Telephony undergirds our theories about communication. Telephone speech splits sound from the rest of the senses, splits the dyad from the rest of society, and splits communication from other activity. Telephone conversation is pure dialogic speech communication. Hence, descriptions of telephone conversation are central to theories of language, conversation, and interaction. (Hopper, 1992, p. 41)

In this way, he showed how a focus on telephone talk promotes "the rediscovery of speaking," helping us to explore in greater depth aspects of communication that often have been either glossed or simply taken for granted. Next his study of telephone talk took him into an institutional setting, the Cancer Information Service of the American Cancer Society. Hopper took the role of teacher seriously. This included outreach. In the millennium issue of Research on Language and Social Interaction, Hopper (1999) advocated finding tangible pay-offs of a "science of speech."

In his final book manuscript, Gendering Talk (in press), Hopper brought together a number of his interests and approaches. The book consists of conversation analytic, discourse analytic, and poetic approaches to understanding gender. Hopper asked, can "genderlects" be described in terms of linguistic features? What is the effect of addressee sex on language? How does the language of "love" connect to other forms of gendered language? Using data from casual conversation, movies and TV shows, novels, poems, and songs, Hopper integrated his interests in the organization of interaction, and its moral dimension, questioning one of social life's most taken for granted concepts, gender.

Shifts in Hopper's work have paralleled shifts in the study of language and social interaction in the communication field. Hopper played an active role
in the Speech Communication Association (now National Communication Association) Speech and Language Sciences Division, serving in leadership roles in the Division from 1978–1981. He was active in the name shift from Speech and Language Sciences Division to Language and Social Interaction Division. In 1989 he started the Language and Social Interaction Interest Group at the International Communication Association (ICA). This group gained enough members to shift to Division status faster than any interest group in ICA history. Hopper led the Division for its first 2 years, and in 1996 was honored with its Scholarly Publication Award for his article on the taken-for-granted (Hopper, 1981).

With CA in hand, and having established the University of Texas Conversation Library, Hopper made some strikingly original forays into the taken-for-granted. His work actively participated in making the field aware of the possibilities CA offered for a rigorous study of communication phenomena. I take three different examples to show where Hopper's work in bringing CA to the communication field bears out E. M. Forster's (1910) adage in Howard's End, "Only connect."

First, Hopper did something that conversation analysts are particularly well equipped to do: He took some speech communication fundamentals, and re-examined them from a conversation analytic perspective. Second, he explored the possibilities and limitations of the intersection between CA—a new approach to communication for the field—and other approaches. In particular he investigated in public fora the intersections between CA and social psychology, which has driven much of traditional research in the field, and also ethnography, which has often been the first alternative to standard quantitative approaches in communication. Third, he successfully took the risk of exploring the intersection between art and scholarship, both in his writing and in his part in the Everyday Life Performance (ELP) project. I explore each of these contributions in more detail.

COMMUNICATION FUNDAMENTALS REEXAMINED

As Hopper's insight that telephony brings to prominence some fundamental characteristics of the communication process indicates, CA has enabled researchers to reexamine some concepts and processes previously taken for granted. For example, in work with Kent Drummond, Hopper took on from a CA
perspective some fundamental notions in speech communication. For instance, Hopper and Drummond (1992) showed how relationships can be seen to be displayed and accomplished in and through interaction. This contrasts with the received view in the communication field that relationships are free-standing social categories that can be treated as independent variables, and that their preexisting character influences how interaction proceeds. In studies of this kind, we see part of the pay-off of CA for the communication field. This work shows us how relationships are inherently communication phenomena—human social activities that are accomplished in and through the cooperation, the working together, of interactants. Thus the ethnomethodological insight that relationships are something we DO rather than something we HAVE can be spelled out, with CA providing the resources to examine such prime sites of connection as telephone openings.

This then is a way that Hopper's work provides a connection between CA and the communication field, where CA provides a new perspective on some taken-for-granted aspects of how human social activities work.

In the spirit of seeing what is ordinarily taken-for-granted, coming from communication to CA put Hopper in a good position to explore the border territory between CA and social psychological approaches, and between CA and ethnography.

THE INTERSECTION OF CA AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY;
THE INTERSECTION OF CA AND ETHNOGRAPHY

In the process of exploring these possible intersections, Hopper instigated debate that brought conversation analytic work to the attention of communication scholars.

In "Speech for Instance. The Exemplar in Studies of Conversation," Hopper (1988) showed how different research traditions—Chomskian linguistics, speech act theory, CA—each use examples in their research. He then moved on to a contrast between the use of the exemplar, and the use of the experiment. He asked, "How do we establish paths by which experimentalists and exemplists (for instance, conversation analysts) may speak to each other without undisciplined eclecticism or unbridled paradigm-bickering?" In this piece, Hopper seemed optimistic about the possibilities for and desirability of bringing together CA and experimental approaches. In particular he cited how, working with Sam Lawrence and Nathan Stucky, the matched guise technique (where, e.g., the same speaker says the same things using different accents, and researchers measure listeners' evaluations of various ways of speaking) was
adapted using conversation analytic transcription techniques in order to examine perceptions of male and female speech (Lawrence, Stucky, & Hopper, 1990). Traditionally this research could only be done by having subjects read transcripts, because it was not plausible for the same person to be both male and female. With the detailed level of transcription afforded by CA, they showed how actors can be trained, so that a male's speech can be reenacted by a female or vice versa, very closely approximating the character of the other sex's speech.

For studies of speech evaluation, this creative use of CA transcription provides the phlogiston that permits an experimental distinction between speech features that were generated in real life by biological males/females, and those delivered in female/male pitch and vocal patterning (Hopper, 1988). The difficulties associated with research of this kind are familiar. However the application of CA transcription methods, and the innovation of training actors in this level of detail, allows the study of language attitudes toward gender differences to base itself in a data source much closer to "real life" than having subjects read transcripts.

Despite the optimism reflected in "Speech for Instance" regarding border treaties between CA and traditional approaches to studying speech communication, in a piece published a year later in Roger and Bull's (1989) collection exploring possibilities for the melding of CA and social psychology (or SP), Hopper clearly delineated the two, and emphasized the disjunctures between them. He noted that work that has attempted to combine them tends to "offer operational definitions and coding procedures, and the cross-tabulation of occurrence of defined items with psychological variables," and thereby overlooks phenomena of interest to conversation analysts. His conclusions, then, were more pessimistic regarding the possibilities of combining CA and social psychological approaches. He proposed that we "respect CA and SP as left and right branches of the description of interpersonal communication" (Hopper, 1989, p. 63).

Doctoral dissertations provided a forum for Hopper to oversee work that tests the intersections between CA and other ways of working, and at the same time bring CA work and its contributions to a "science of speech" to the attention of speech communication scholars. This is notable, for example, in Kent Drummond's work revisiting "back channels." As the instigating part of a colloquy in ROLSI, Drummond and Hopper (1993), along with Wieder (1993), Zimmerman (1993), and Tracy (1993) explored the intersection of quantification and CA. In two papers in this collection, Drummond and Hopper first took
Jefferson's (1984) suggestion that a "yeah" from a story recipient is more likely to precede the recipient taking the floor than a "uh huh" or an "mm hm." They combined conventional cross-tabulations of the occurrence of these acknowledgment tokens and the probability of further speech by the speaker of the token with analysis of the fragments. They used the analysis to lead them to refine their findings. Thus rather than stop at the cross-tabulation, Drummond and Hopper examined the interactions that constitute their data in what could simply have been unexplicated examples.

In attempting to combine CA methods with quantification, Drummond and Hopper (1993) pointed out the difficulties associated with treating all so-called "back channels" as doing the same job. The three respondents then thrashed out the issues with respect to attempts to combine CA with traditional social psychological approaches. In this way the "back channel," a term frequently used unreflectively in a wide range of research, was thoroughly taken to task. In the process of showing the interactive work that it does, larger issues were addressed.

A similar approach was taken in examining the relationship between CA and ethnography. Michael Moerman's (1988) book, Talking Culture, prompted a good deal of debate regarding the relative merits of CA and ethnography, and the possibility and desirability of combining them. In a special edition of ROLSI Hopper brought together a wide variety of perspectives in a format in which the debate could be played out.

In each case, he provided a forum for a constructive encounter between conversation analytic perspectives and traditional, often unquestioned approaches in communication. Addressing connection and difference is crucial as CA becomes more widely practiced in the communication field. CA developed initially under the auspices of the sociology discipline. Therefore articulation of CA itself, and of its relationship with other approaches in the communication field is vital if we are to appreciate and realize fully the potential contributions of CA to the study of communication phenomena, or as Hopper often put it, to a "cumulative science of speech." Through conference presentations and special issues of journals in addition to his own publications, Hopper played a key role in providing fora for the communication field to explore the opportunities CA afforded for studying communication.

EXPLORATION OF THE POETIC

A third arena in which we see Hopper's work making a unique contribution, and a mind-stretching set of connections, is in his pursuit of the poetic. Robert was a
poet and songwriter, and generously shared his creativity. His scholarly writing is poetic too. He used words in such a way as to stretch the established categories, the given ways of thinking.

This affinity for the poetic shows itself in various other ways. He used to ask sometimes for class assignments to be written in poetry rather than prose. Hopper is one of few in communication to count among his refereed publications a poem (published in Communication Theory, Hopper, 1991). Again we see his eagerness to engage beyond the established boundaries, to gently rough up the smooth surfaces of the intellectual taken-for-granted. The poetic is manifested in two ways in particular in his scholarship: in his work on the poetics of talk, and in his part in the ELP project.

Hyde and Sargent in their article in Hopper's (1993) special edition of Text and Performance Quarterly on Performance and Conversation noted that typically Communication approaches play "as a strategy for managing and manipulating interactive episodes." They pointed out that Hopper's work on the poetic has, as they put it, "turned this around a bit." Building on Sacks' and Jefferson's work on poetics, Hopper brought to the attention of the communication field "the play of poetics and the poetics of play." This was most notable in his 1992 article in Text and Performance Quarterly on "Speech Errors and the Poetics of Conversation," in which he laid out various arenas in which we can learn from the poetic character of "speech errors." In his book on Telephone Conversation, Hopper (1992) suggested that "playful interaction" may be "the natural state of conversational speaking." He put it like this: "Play episodes lift up a corner of the universe to reveal the great Poem, speaking us" (p. 190). This work along with that of some of his students, most notably Phillip Glenn (Hopper & Glenn, 1994) helps us to begin to understand the work of play in everyday interaction, grounding that understanding in the details of everyday talk. In addition, Hopper's persistence brought about the publication in Text and Performance Quarterly of a magnificent piece by Gail Jefferson on the poetics of ordinary talk, that was developed from a talk she originally gave in 1977 (Jefferson, 1996).

Attention to the details of everyday talk brought about the Everyday Life Performance project. It began in the early 1980s when Nathan Stucky worked with Hopper to put on a performance of reenacted naturally occurring conversations. Stucky trained actors to re-produce conversations, studying them with tapes and conversation analytic transcripts, until they could, as it were, "sing along" flawlessly. The results were striking. Hopper used the ELP
learning method in classes to bring students close to the details of conversation. Some of the results are documented in the special edition of *Text and Performance Quarterly* that Hopper (1993) edited. Again, an original twist on the contributions of CA transcription conventions is made accessible, and a new aspect of their importance to the field is displayed.

In these three major arenas then, Hopper was an innovator and a groundbreaker. His work challenges both researchers' and interactants' taken-for-granted. He was a primary instigator in bringing CA to the Communication field, in his search for a cumulative science of speech. This involved taking on and reexamining some concepts that are often taken for granted in the Communication field. It also involved experimenting with CA to solve some of the communication field's highly resistant research conundrums. In the process of doing this, he provided various *fora* for addressing issues that are fundamental to the research enterprise in this field. All of this has been done with an ear tuned to the poetic frequencies of language—that which is seen but unnoticed.

All the while, Hopper was teacher, friend, and mentor to more than 30 doctoral students and 10 master's students. In his teaching also, he was never afraid to risk being interesting, to challenge the taken-for-granted, and to spin enticing connections.

Hopper was a remarkable role model as a teacher and scholar. His tenaciousness in wrestling issues to the ground, the extent to which he lived his work, his persistence in leaving no stone unturned, and his intellectual generosity toward and moral support for his graduate students were all extraordinary. No one who was in his classes, or saw him present at conferences, will forget his originality in these settings. In 1990 he received the University of Texas' Award for Distinguished Graduate Teaching. In 1994 he received ICA's B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award for service to students and communication research. In 1998 he was the inaugural recipient of NCA's Mentoring Award. He also won ICA's Outstanding Scholar Award from the Language and Social Interaction Division in 1996, as well as winning NCA's Outstanding Scholarly Publication Award in 1996. All of this was done with humility, with the self-professed stance of a "bricoleur," and with a keen ear for wordplay and puns. In a recent report of research productivity in communication studies (*Communication Monographs*, June, 1999) Hopper was ranked as ranked 16th in the country. His intellectual legacy speaks for itself. His impact on his students, both graduate and undergraduate, and on his colleagues and friends in the field and beyond, guarantees his immortality.
REFERENCES


