

The social and cultural realization of diversity: an interview with Donal Carbaugh

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Introduction

Donal Carbaugh (DC) is a Professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) and Chair of the International Studies Council (2004 to present). In 2007–2008, he was Distinguished Fulbright Professor and Bicentennial Chair of American Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland. He has been Chair of both the International Communication Association's Language and Social Interaction Division, and the National Communication Association's International and Intercultural Communication Division. In 1992, he was elected Visiting Senior Member at Linacre College, Oxford University, England, which is a lifetime appointment. Carbaugh is also Charter Member of the Research Advisory Group for the Security Needs Assessment Project of the United Nations, Geneva.

Michael Berry (MB): Like your prior book, *Cultural communication and intercultural contact* in 1991, your recent book, *Cultures in conversation*, was designated the outstanding book of the year in International and Intercultural Communication by the National Communication Association in 2006. In discussions at an IALIC conference, there were some questions about the relationship between personal diversity and cultures in conversation. Is a reference to culture in conversation a denial of personal diversity? Perhaps you could briefly summarize how you interpret the relationship between personal diversity and the role of culture in conversation.

DC: I think there is definitely a relationship between the study of conversation as a cultural phenomenon and the acknowledgment of personal diversity and personal qualities as a fact of individual, social, and cultural existence. I don't think these are mutually exclusive. In fact, there are two general points I'd like to make. One point is that in the studies that I do, my primary unit of analysis is some conversational act, way of speaking, form, or sequence as social and cultural phenomena. Now that act itself, whether it involves address terms, person references, assessments, problem solving, decision-making, opening and closing sequences, or place naming, has its footing in social life in a particular way. It's a social phenomenon in the sense that the way you greet someone, for example, may be done in some conventional manner that is presumably understood by the person you're greeting. This act is also done in a

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culturally tailored and specific way (one does not have a generic form for everyone everywhere). Thus, the primary unit of analysis is conversation that is both a social and cultural phenomena.

Many people are accustomed to studies in which the person or the individual is the primary unit of analysis. In that sense, personal diversity is acknowledged from the beginning. I don't deny the value of that in any sense. The way I bring the two together is to try to understand conversation as to some degree culturally shaped, infused with traces of culture, as well as done in a socially situated way, such that there is some local management among and between people about how something should be done. The additional point that your question requires us to take into account in our thinking is that any application of culture, from opening sequences to closing sequences, is in some sense an individual application, and each individual varies to some degree in how he or she communicates culturally – or in how he or she greets someone, for example.

I treat culture as a practical art, as presumed and practiced in social interaction, as something people do in social situations. In this sense, it is not an essentialized entity, nor a reified 'object.' It is something people use in contexts. Individuals differ with regard to their stance toward a cultural conversation, whether they resist it, want to change it, or whether they endorse it. There are also important individual differences with regard to voice, pitch, volume, and quality. In this way, I think that at one level we're talking about different units of analysis, in conversation or of individuals, and I give priority to conversation, focusing primarily on conversational shapes and sequences more than individual differences. One can look at conversation, then, as something that's also culturally shaped, socially negotiated, and individually applied.

MB: In the past, you have mentioned the inspiration that you have drawn from the work of Dell Hymes. In what way has his research influenced yours?

DC: I think that Dell Hymes' work has been a foundational part of most everything that I've done. One essential point that Hymes has stressed since 1962 is that speaking is a social and cultural resource that is cross-culturally variant and to some degree culturally distinct. Hymes once defined a speech community as 'an organization of diversity.' He was reacting to certain ways of thinking, which abstract from the diverse human resources people have made to develop species-wide generalities about processing language. Hymes happened to be more interested in culturally distinctive uses of language, and the point of diversity is a philosophical and theoretical point of departure that many ethnographers of communication, including myself, assume to begin our studies. One goal then is to somehow bring the study of particularity or local knowledge and local systems of practice in community up to parity with the more widespread tendency to generalize across the species. Hymes has set this up nicely in his early works. The investigative enterprise goes two directions, again according to Hymes, both to generalize about communication principles based upon particular practices, but also to particularize about communication practices based upon the general descriptive framework ethnographers use in their studies.

In 1986, with Gerry Philipsen, we published a bibliography of studies in the ethnography of communication, and at that time there were several hundred studies of diversity in communication practices from around the world. This is an empirical

literature which has exploded and expanded in a variety of directions, demonstrating the fundamental assumption of diversity in ethnography of communication research and establishing a strong empirical record that gives us a fund of studies rich for comparative purposes and theory development. Looking across the cases one can generalize about what might be more widely shared in terms of principles of communication or conversation. The focus is not so much in terms of general cognitive structuring, although that isn't necessarily excluded either, but instead on diverse communication practices people use in particular contexts. In other words, Hymes' framework, when used, yields findings about cultural uses and meanings of silence in Finland, or rules for public speaking in public scenes in Russia, and these particular practices can be used to create more general claims about silence and public speaking. The particular practices and the general principles are worked out together.

MB: How or with whom did Hymes develop the concept of ethnography of communication? Who planted the seeds that took root in his mind and led to the development of this communication concept?

DC: The early work of Hymes, the study he published in 1962 called the 'Ethnography of Speaking', expressed a certain frustration with ethnographies that he was reading at the time. In those traditional anthropological ethnographies, he would perhaps find a comment about speaking or about forms of conversation among a group of people or a brief paragraph in one devoted to communication, but then the rest of the ethnography would go on to talk about traditional kinship systems or religious systems or social institutions and the discussion of communication was not pursued. On the other hand, in linguistics Hymes would find formal analyses of technical aspects of language and language structure, but less in terms of the study of language use in context. Hymes' goal was to bring the two together in a study of language as it is used in a context to structure speaking as a social phenomenon. In this sense, I think Hymes was very much influenced by the earlier studies of his days which led him then in 1962 to call for an ethnography of speaking, which would undertake systematic studies of speech as an activity in its own right.

Later, based upon an early study of Keith Basso on silence as a means of communication among Western Apache, he revised his general description of the approach as focused not just on speaking, but on communication generally. Now I like to mention Basso's study and that way of developing the approach because Hymes' framework and the subsequent developments of it have been fueled by field-based research studies of speech and communication in cultural contexts. His revision then, of an ethnography of speaking into a focus on ethnography of communication was based not on armchair thought, but on actual, nose-to-the-grindstone ethnographic work in context. It's in this sense that I think ethnographers of communication are very much grounded in actual practices of people in places and developing our thinking based upon what people have made of communication. So in that sense Hymes' thought has been more influenced by ethnographers' studies of people's practices in local communities than by other literature.

MB: You mention that Hymes' work spanned several fields; how did his contribution affect the work of researchers in those areas?

DC: I think the influence of Hymes' work has been broad and deep. His works have been prominent in the development of a variety of academic disciplines. One can look at Hymes' life itself and see the wide influence he has had. For example, he was elected president of the American Anthropological Association, demonstrating his influence on the field of Anthropology. He was also elected president of the Linguistic Society of America, which demonstrated his influence on the study of languages and linguistics. The American Folklore Society elected him president as well, and his studies of performance and oral performance very much influenced and transformed the study of folklore. In each of these cases, he's had a fundamental influence on the literature of a discipline and a larger field. The same could be said about his contributions to parts of the field of Communication. Further, in the introduction to Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer's Cambridge reader, the second edition in 1990, there's an introductory essay which documents the significant contributions of the ethnography of communication literature to the study of politics and political issues. I think that Hymes' original conceptual framework and methodology has made significant contributions in and of itself to multiple academic disciplines and to interdisciplinary study. In other words, while its structuring of an approach is highly disciplined, that discipline encourages study across many fields. Some time ago in a review in *American Anthropologist*, I summarized the ethnography of communication as 'a discipline with interdisciplinary relevance.' I like that way of thinking about Hymes' work specifically, and the program generally.

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention here the significant and profoundly important work of John Gumperz on conversational inference and contextualization cues. Gumperz's books on this topic, especially *Discourse strategies* and *Language and social identity*, as well as his recent developments have been hand in glove with Hymes' earlier works in developing our understanding theoretically and practically of communication and culture. Gumperz established the field also known as interactional sociolinguistics in which are situated the works of scholars such as Benjamin Bailey and Deborah Tannen, among many others. I mentioned earlier Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer's works in the ethnography of communication, and I should also note Greg Urban's writing on discourse-based approaches to culture along with Ron and Suzanne Scollon's works on intercultural communication and Gerry Philipsen's theory of cultural communication and speech codes theory. Others such as Tamar Katriel's studies of Israeli communication and culture, especially her *Dialogic moments*, are major accomplishments. All have great debts to Dell Hymes' work, and all continue to work and develop the theoretical ideas proposed by him and used by others now for several decades.

MB: You've already mentioned some of the ways in which Hymes' approach influenced you. Do you think you could expand a bit more on the importance of his work to yours?

DC: I remember to this day reading his study on the ethnography of speaking which was recommended to me by Gerry Philipsen, my mentor and teacher early in my career. There were several starting points that were laid out in Hymes' 1962 essay, which have influenced me from the beginning. One of these is the idea that communication is both structured and a structuring activity itself. In other words, we try to make our utterances in ways that are competent and appropriate, and these actions are structured in cultural and social ways. Now, through my own work,

I study these ways as both presuming and creating a society, social relations, identities, emotions, and the nature of things. I find Hymes' mnemonic device, the SPEAKING model, to be indispensable in my own work when I'm in the field or interviewing or when I'm analyzing. There are a variety of different ways that I find this model to be extremely helpful. In particular, I should say that as an educator, I find it to be a very useful tool to teach with. Of course, like any tool, you might not at first understand all of the possible ways of using it. Over the years, you learn more and more of what it can do. It's like watching my father with his chain saw. He's been working that thing for decades, and he can do wonderful things with it. I haven't used it as much, and I'm pretty cumbersome with it. Looking at it from the perspective of someone who had never used it, he or she might think it's kind of a dumb tool. However, that's from the point of view of someone who hasn't seen my father at work. I like to think that over the years and decades, my use and others' uses of Hymes' framework has also been useful in that way, that is not only as a tool of science, but as a tool of art.

One of the ways I've tried to develop this particular framework is in developing what I call a theory and methodology for doing Cultural Discourse Analysis. Cultural Discourse Analysis is a way of describing, interpreting, comparatively analyzing, and critically assessing communication codes. There are distinct modes of inquiry that make up this methodology. The first of these modes involves theorizing, or theoretical study, which lays a conceptual basis for the second, descriptive analyses of actual communication practices. After the descriptive mode of analysis is done, there's the interpretation of those descriptive findings, or an attempt to uncover the range of meanings that participants hear as active when that practice is getting done. This interpretation is followed by a comparative analysis of those resources, and then finally a critical assessment of them as to their worth, or harm, especially to the people who practice them. It's in this sense that Cultural Discourse Analysis is made up of a complex investigative procedure, a theoretical, a descriptive, an interpretive, a comparative, and a critical mode, with all of these modes being employed one at a time in order to analyze cultures in conversation.

MB: Do you think that this theoretical approach you've been talking about with its focus on diversity and its emphasis on culture and communication can be understood in any sense as denying personal diversity within a speech community?

DC: No, I don't. In fact, I think it accomplishes quite the contrary. Diversity is of course at one level a personal matter, but diversity is also potentially realized in social occasions and in culturally distinct ways. What constitutes a diverse resource is in a sense an empirical question. Diversity is often measured against some standard of appropriateness or uniformity, and it's precisely that dynamic which has been assumed as a starting point for ethnographers of communication. For example, I mentioned Basso's work on silence with the Western Apache. The theoretical framework of the ethnography of communication leads Basso to focus on the communicative practices that the Western Apache use to accomplish their purposes; the approach is also comparative so it suggests asking how these are different from others such as the practices of the so-called 'Whiteman.' Comparative work like this is there by design and in service of 'diversity.' Another contrast can be seen in my work, which compares the communicative actions of Finnish people, who on some occasions participate in a kind of quietude that they view as important to their sense

of well-being, with the communicative actions of mainstream Americans or members of other cultures which involves, in a similar context, other practices. In this way, diversity can be understood as cutting across personal, social, and cultural realms in ways that are very telling and in ways that can be revealed through this kind of ethnographic and cultural study. Some of the research that I'm working on now with regard to cultural styles of identifying conflicts and managing conflicts is important in this sense in that there are diverse cultural resources for just recognizing and understanding that there's a problem or a conflict that needs to be addressed. So I don't see in any sense that the approach is a denial of diversity. In fact, I see the unveiling of potentially hidden performances, of diversity (and its denial), which is part of what's produced through this way of studying language and intercultural communication.

I mentioned the approach can be used to explore the denial of diversity. I'll mention here the studies of Stephen Pratt and the late Lawrence Wieder. They documented how certain classroom interactions functioned to deny Osage people their cultural heritage, even in a classroom designed to examine cultural heritage. Similarly, in *Cultures in conversation*, a chapter is devoted to classroom interactions and the way it privileges dominant cultural discourses at the expense of other counter-cultural and less known ones. This use of language which disadvantages others is crucial to understand and has been a central concern of mine since the beginning. My first book, *Talking American*, was designed to expose how particular and prominent theories of speech, and of personhood, were skewed in the direction of popular American discourses. Deborah Cameron's recent book titled *Good to talk?* achieves similar ends. Works like these seek to embrace diversity when it appears, and when it is denied, in order to better understand such processes and help them work better.

I would like to elaborate the one example from my own work with native people in Montana. There was a time when professors at the University of Montana would sometimes identify some native students as being uncooperative or incorrigible, and they interpreted their in-class performance as non-standard and inappropriate. They interpreted certain actions as an individual person not doing the proper thing. This is a typical discourse in the US as actions are reduced, through this discourse, into individualized units which are personalized (this is analyzed in detail in *Talking American*). However, from a different cultural perspective, from the point of view of a Native American culture, that action was in fact an action of respect or perhaps a cultural response to being confused. It sometimes happened that Native students were put in positions to do things that made absolutely no sense to them, and their reaction to being put in that position was a cultural reaction rather than a personal unwillingness to do an assignment. These dynamics are reported further in my book *Cultures in conversation*. In this way, the acknowledgment of diversity and the effort to discover and describe it as a resource in human communities is a part of the objective of this way of doing research.

MB: When you first began your field studies in Finland, I got the impression that your reaction to what was common in many contexts in Finland brought you awareness not just of your own personal assumptions, but also of what you took for granted in the practices of your culture. Is my interpretation correct?

DC: Your interpretation is definitely accurate. My main research sites have been among Native people in Northern Montana, in Finland, and somewhat less so in England and Russia. Each of these studies has taught me very deeply about things that I otherwise may not have learned if I were simply using the terms and tropes of a monocultural environment in the United States. In Finland, I've been fascinated by certain social moments when, as I mentioned earlier, people can be comfortably co-present in quietude and silence. In my home community in the United States, being that way would be considered very awkward. When I was in the presence of these silences when I first arrived in Finland, I was very uncomfortable to the point of sweat running down my neck. In that sense, my home culture was 'speaking loudly' to me through my body. I think that I've learned over time and now through almost two decades of my fieldwork in Finland about a variety of different stances to comfortable social living that I did not know about when in my home community in the United States. In the process, I've learned about social practices that I have found very enriching to my own life. I want to be careful to emphasize that when I am in Finland, I am not trying to be a Finn, but I have grown to deeply appreciate certain Finnish practices, to enjoy being a part of them, and understanding them in ways that I could not have if I hadn't studied them. I could say similar things about my studies of Russian, Blackfeet, and British communication and culture. The general idea brings me back to your question regarding my own cultural assumptions. I have found that my research definitely does give me a richer and deeper understanding of my own traditional ways, especially as I was raised in a rural midwestern community in the United States. *Talking American* was an effort to study some of those ways.

MB: Let's get back to the links between your work and Hymes', and its relationship to another program of work in linguistics. In 2006, Noam Chomsky was interviewed for this journal, and I have sent you a copy of that interview. It seems that your views differ somewhat from his in terms of your analysis of Hymes' work. What would you say the major differences are between Chomsky's views and yours?

DC: Well I, of course, have great respect for the scholarly work of Noam Chomsky. Professor Chomsky's research and writing are well-known and very influential in studies of language. His book, *The logical structure of linguistic theory*, has promoted a view of language in a way that I regard highly. Chomsky's project has focused primarily on formal analyses of language structure. The central concept of linguistic competence, in Chomsky's view, locates language and linguistic structure specifically as an internal capacity that an individual has in his or her mind. Subsequently, thinking about language is located in the 'language organ' as it houses internal mechanisms, cognitive structures and the like, that are used to interpret language. Note the location of theorizing as internal to the mind. On the other hand, I read Hymes as focusing systematically and rigorously, not on the internal capacities of the human mind, but on social occasions in which people meet in order to do things together. In this sense, Hymes is more interested in social acts of speaking, while, I think, Chomsky is more interested in the individual capacities of competence that are housed internally. A summary of this is that Chomsky's focus is on language while Hymes' is on speaking as a social and cultural phenomenon. Each can be used to examine the other and thus the views can be complementary, but have at times become competitors.

Hymes' interest in communication and in speaking leads him to look at these very messy social and cultural worlds in which we live where there are diverse ways that interactions get done and a variety of different interpretations of meanings. His goal is to try to sort his way through these interactions and interpretations in order to understand how people have helped each other and also how they have hurt each other. I think there's very strong interest in what Hymes, following Stephen Brown and Penelope Levinson, has called negative and positive freedoms. As Hymes put it in one essay, we need to better understand impositions of people, one on another, as well as what is deemed worthy in communal scenes. Focusing on communication and language use helps us come to terms with these types of dynamics and to understand them as a part of our understanding of cultures in conversation. These types of interactions were not a fundamental concern of Chomsky's linguistic theory, and, in that sense, I think Chomsky did what he did in a profoundly important way, but what Hymes is doing is profoundly important as well. I happen to find Hymes' starting points to be very useful for the kinds of questions I raise, particularly about communication and cultures, diversity in discourses. I know others who think differently about it, and I welcome this range of views.

I do think there are at times some ill-tempered comments that are made concerning another's views of communication. I'll add simply that Hymes' view of communication itself, and the range of developments he and Gumperz inspired, are quite highly developed, multidimensional, and focused on careful analyses of diverse human practices and politics. I find this view based upon diversity and discourses to be more appealing both intellectually and practically.

I'll add a little personal anecdote here. When I was at Linacre College at Oxford in 1992 in the fall, I had the great privilege of listening to Professor Chomsky deliver a lecture about the natural qualities of language. I was excited to be able to hear what he had to say about the natural qualities of language, and I listened carefully and took detailed notes about these qualities. I noticed upon reviewing my notes that the natural qualities he identified seemed to me to apply not only to language study as he was discussing, but also to studies of speech, conversation, and communication which were more my interests. After the lecture, I had an opportunity to have a conversation with him and I asked him about the qualities he had discussed. I asked if these qualities could apply not only to language study, but also to the study of speaking, that is the uses of languages in contexts. His response to me let me know in no uncertain terms that you could study that if you wanted to, but that's not a study of 'language proper.' His emphasis on 'language proper' was quite adamant and to this day I can recall the forceful intonation accompanying those words. I left this conversation with Professor Chomsky with the realization that his focus from his view is on formal theoretical structures of language, while Hymes' focus is on speaking as a social, cultural, and very personal phenomena. In this sense, I think that the emphasis on particular social practices and diversity assumes center stage in Hymes' work in a way that it doesn't in Chomsky's linguistic work.

MB: You have talked quite a bit about Hymes' emphasis on communication through speech. You have also briefly discussed the work of Keith Basso and your own work among Native Americans and Finns. Both of these field sites have created experiences for you with silence as a culturally positive and active means of communication. What new insights have you gathered through this focus on non-verbal communication?

DC: The relationship between speech and silence or non-speech fascinates me. Whether one speaks, or is silent, is in some sense a culturally shaped practice; what one means by one or the other is particular to a cultural scene. I'm interested in how this shaping is conducted in communicative action. These practices have been a central interest of mine for quite some time. As we mentioned earlier, it is essential to understand the important role of the non-verbal channel in studying social situations among Native American people. One case in point, I'll never forget my first interaction with a Native American woman in Montana. I asked her a question, and, rather than responding verbally, she turned slightly away from me and looked into the distance across the plains. That was her way of responding. I was expecting a verbal response, but all I got was a non-verbal gesture that I think from her point of view said all that she wanted or felt that she needed to say in that moment. I was perplexed by this, to say the least. This example also emphasizes the primary role of the visual channel in many social occasions of communication. My current work, among other things, is exploring the importance of the non-verbal in various meditative practices, or spiritual acts, which sometimes are solely non-verbal. Although we often do speak about these practices through language, speaking about them is not doing them. It's simply referring to them. The relationship between the non-verbal enactment of meditative practices and the speech about them is profoundly important to understand, and, I think, quite revealing to study, both personally and professionally. One finding is that the relationship between the enactment of these practices, and speaking about them, is itself cultural. For some, the report takes priority ('How do you know them if we do not talk about them?'); for others the report is always secondary ('If it is put into words, the event itself is polluted'). I find this intriguing. Part of the fascination is the study of communication generally, which helps give perspective to the role language plays in particular societies. In this way, communication theory can help locate language within a larger expressive system, in a way that linguistic theory alone does not.

I want to add that the study of gesture and non-verbal communication is very much a part of many works now being done in conversation analysis and other modes of inquiry or other programs of research as well, for which I have a high regard and in which I am greatly interested. For example, I want to mention the work of Charles and Marjorie Goodwin and of Jürgen Streeck, who are doing studies of nonverbal behavior within the context of social interaction and conversation. Their work also offers fresh perspective to our understanding of this kind of dynamic.

MB: If we look at the European Commission during the year 2008, there was a major emphasis on 'intercultural dialog.' The focus was on multilingualism in order to improve communication within the EU. This goal is considered important, but English remains prominently active. Could you comment on how Hymes in the past and you currently approach the challenge of intercultural dialog when people from multiple cultures are communicating with a shared language? We can use English as an example in this case.

DC: Well this is a most important and most fascinating phenomenon, I think. One way to approach it is to start by first determining what exactly the practices of use of that shared language are, whatever the shared language may be. This analysis is where I started with my studies of classrooms at the University of Montana where there

were Native American and non-native students participating in the classroom. All of these students were using English, but English was a second language for several people in the class but not others. I looked at how the uses of English were differently practiced in that situation, and what it was accomplishing in varieties of ways for the people in that social context. In other words, how language use was patterned, what its meanings were, and how those patterns related to the patterns of linguistic practices in the students' home communities. This is a complicated dynamic, but one that can be studied by focusing carefully and doggedly on the actual practices in scenes among participants within act sequences. This focus, to begin, allows the researcher to identify certain actual practices as robust in a scene. I think a second point is to embrace the diversity of languages if possible, in the context itself, and this openness might involve attempting to understand varieties of a certain language, in this case English. For example, in the United States, it is essential to examine the variety of English known as African American Vernacular English on its own terms, by focusing on what it's being used to do, either in art, as in hip-hop culture, or in other contexts when it's used. Asserting one variety as a standard that is the only proper variety of a language is less and less tenable. As we move around the world today, we see all kinds of varieties of English that are active, for example, in China, that aren't the same as those in communities in inner cities or rural parts of the United States or in Scotland or in inner cities in England. It's a wealth of diversity, and somehow understanding the diversity and what it produces when people come together is, I think, a crucially important task that many of us are taking on, including the readers of this journal.

One particular project I've been working on that has to do with these issues has been looking at 'dialog,' which connects to the call for intercultural dialog by the European Commission. This research has been looking at dialog from a cross-cultural perspective, and the general program of work has been in two parts. The first part looks at key theorists of dialog such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Martin Buber, Carl Rogers, and David Bohm in order to determine what sense these theorists make of dialog. A second part of this project has then been a series of focused ethnographic studies in various languages of cultural terms that bear some resemblance to the English term *dialog*. So far we've studied about 12 languages, looking first at the vocabulary in those languages that has some resemblance to the English term *dialog*, and then looking from the perspective of those vocabularies at how the English term *dialog* relates to them. For example, with Xinmei Ge, we have examined the Chinese term, 'duihua.' The Chinese character and meaning of 'duihua' is much broader than the English term, 'dialog,' with 'duihua' meaning utterances which are mutual and may be face-to-face. What we've found is that a call generally for dialog, in English, brings with it not only some prominent English meanings, but also, in this case, the Chinese broader meanings that do not match the English form, and its meanings. This can become a potential problem. And so, the plea to have a dialog, whether it be an intercultural dialog or a dialog on race in America or a dialog on what it indeed means to be a member of a particular group, can carry with it, especially in interlingual situations, different forms of practice. When someone says we need a dialog, there are different meanings about exactly how that should be done. It's precisely that variety of practice that we're trying to understand. This analysis helps us understand then, through dialog in cross-cultural perspective, the range of communicative forms that are active within and between languages and the meanings which are invoked when speakers make a plea for dialog. Of course the plea to dialog speaks variously

to different speakers and participants in different scenes, and it's that kind of understanding that we need, I think, in our multicultural societies and in our globalized world today. The works of Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard are quite valuable for this.

MB: So does this mean that our shared knowledge of English around the globe does not necessarily include awareness of hidden cultural meanings that can be active for different participants when communicating with each other?

DC: Yes, I think that's a profoundly important point, practically and theoretically, and one that I think is a very humbling point to realize as a socio-political matter. We speak with the assumption that other people will understand what we're saying, but we're constantly reminded that there are misunderstandings. In *Cultures in conversation*, I started by talking about 'invisible misunderstandings' of the kind we are discussing here. Many times we don't understand, especially when we're using a shared language, that others may hear our terms, our vocabularies, our forms of practice, like the term *dialog*, in another way, rather than the way we understand it. We don't realize that a Chinese meaning system might hear the English word *dialog* with Chinese inflections of meanings, which are hidden from American English users who have a different popular or predominant set of American meanings about the word *dialog*. This mismatch of meanings, that is sharing a language and not seeing there's a different meaning system attached to it, can often be a source of intercultural misunderstanding, misattribution of intent, or cultural stereotyping, and, therefore, a source of conflict and tension among peoples. I think to the extent that we understand that kind of dynamic, we'll be better able to work together in ways that are more productive for all of us. This understanding of course does not guarantee success, but if we are to succeed, something of the kind should be helpful along the way.

MB: I thank you very much for this opportunity to communicate your insights to the readers of this journal.

DC: I thank you very much for thinking of me for this interview.

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Notes on contributor

Michael Berry (PhD University of Wisconsin Madison) moved to Finland as a Fulbright professor in 1975 and remained as a Senior Lecturer of English for Intercultural Communication and as a Docent of Intercultural Relations at the Turku School of Economics as well as a Docent of History at the Universities of Turku and Tampere. He has served many years as Guest Professor at Johannes Kepler University in Linz, Austria. His teaching and research has focused on creating a pedagogical Third Space in which local and exchange students experience learning to cope with sensitive cultural issues when using English as a shared international

language. One of his courses was designated as the Exceptional Finnish Intercultural Business Course for 2007 by the Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration. Berry has also served as a member of the Research Advisory Group for the Security Needs Assessment Project of the United Nations, Geneva.