The Metapragmatics of Direct Utterances

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Abstract This chapter revisits the analysis of the dimension of "directness" in language use as theorized within a socio-pragmatic perspective and as empirically explored within the ethnography of speaking. It draws on Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's seminal study of politeness strategies, which integrates Paul Grice's approach to the logic of conversation and Goffman's study of "facework" in social interaction, and on ethnographies of indirectness (Arabic *musayra*) and directness (Israeli *dugri* speech) as culturally inflected ways of speaking whose study brings out the social regulation and cultural codification of indirect and direct talk. Further exploring the cultural warrants that legitimate the use of directness in the case of asymmetrical power relations, the analysis incorporates Foucault's discussion of the ancient Greek metapragmatic notion of *parrhesia* (fearless speech). In so doing, it highlights the performative, defiant role of direct utterances in the rhetoric of sociopolitical protest.

Keywords Socio-pragmatics · Politeness · Pragmatics and culture · Directness

1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the dimension of "directness," which encompasses speech phenomena ranging from talk identified—by both speakers and analysts—as direct or indirect. In what follows, I use the term "directness" (and its counterpart "indirectness" or "indirection") as umbrella terms for a number of complexly related cognitive and social aspects of speech conduct that signal speakers' claim to the truthfulness of their utterances. Such claims, whether explicit or implicit, whether bona fide or not, are part of speakers' sense of the things one can do with

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particular types of words as well as their presentation of self in social interaction. Ethnographic studies have pointed to the centrality of the directness dimension in the speech economies and social arrangements of various speech communities and to the intricate politics of revelation, concealment, and intentionality that metapragmatic references to either directness or indirectness imply (e.g., Albert 1972; Ochs Keenan 1989; Katriel 1986; Griefat and Katriel 1989; Hendry and Watson 2001). Philosophers of language have been mainly concerned with the interpretability of verbal utterances as encoding speakers' intentions and as governed by the linguistic codes that regulate language use.

The exploration of the dimension of directness in language use thus brings into conversation the work of philosophers, sociologists, and anthropologists interested in language as a vehicle of individual expression, as a form of social action, and as a product of both the dynamics of social interaction and the cultural contexts in which it is embedded. The directness or indirection assigned to an utterance relates to the degree of transparency attributed to it as an articulation of the speaker's communicative intentions, and as an expression of his or her "truth." The speech activity of truth-telling can be performed either directly as in confrontational acts of open critique or indirectly as in the use of irony. The intricate relationship between the directness dimension, claims to truth-telling, and the cultural values attached to telling the truth, maintaining social relationships, and cultivating the aesthetics of artful expression all render the study of the directness dimension a particularly intriguing challenge.

Studies within the philosophy of language, which explore the semantics and pragmatics of utterances identified as either direct or indirect, are largely marked by a concern with the representational function of language and a cognitive focus on meaning, intention, and interpretability. Directness is discussed in terms of the notions of literalness, explicitness, or transparency (and their counterpart notions of figurativeness, ambiguity, or opaqueness). Transparency and opaqueness relate to interlocutors' ability to encode and interpret each other's communicative intentions by attending to the form and context of their utterances. Studies of direct or indirect talk in linguistic pragmatics—concerned as they are with the meaning of utterances in context—interpret directness as involving a range that moves between transparency at one pole and implicit meanings at the other. Thus, for example, in Dascal's (2003) account, an utterance is transparent when the default, immediate interpretation given to it is not blocked. Its blocking gives rise to indirectness, i.e., to further interpretive moves that reveal meanings that are not explicitly or literally stated.

In what follows, however, my focus is on socio-pragmatic approaches proposed for the study of the dimension of directness, which highlight the role of social norms and cultural meanings that ground the use of direct and indirect strategies in speech behavior. While not unconcerned with questions pertaining to the interpretability of utterances, language-oriented ethnographers have been mainly concerned with their social and relational meanings and uses. The research agenda of the ethnography of speaking as formulated by Hymes (1962) consists of a systematic attempt to theorize language use by combining close attention to empirical accounts of localized patterns of speaking and the sociocultural contexts of their enactment. The central

underlying assumption within this research program is that the use of speech forms and the construction of messages is shaped by locally coded rules of production and interpretation. The goal of theorizing within this perspective is to provide an analytic language for in-depth explorations as well as cross-cultural comparisons of naturally occurring social interactions and culturally recognized discursive formations. The directness dimension in language use has indeed provided a highly productive site for such analytically informed empirical inquiry.

Notably, strategies of indirectness—whether they involve hints, implicatures, or figurative speech—have attracted much more research attention than the study of the directness pole. This may be due to the fact that the use of strategies of indirectness is essentially enigmatic, raising issues of interpretability, as communicative intentions are not transparently conveyed in utterances that use strategies of indirectness. The social motivation for such usage was formulated by Goffman (1967) in his seminal microsociological study of "facework" in everyday interaction. Concerned with the ritual constitution of the interaction order, Goffman viewed interaction as a site for the dynamic enactment of verbal and nonverbal gestures of mutual recognition. In and through such gestures, interactants signal their concern (or disregard) for the self-images that participants seek to project in interactional encounters. Goffman regarded the social mandate to uphold one's interlocutor's face wants as the ground rule of all social interaction, a very condition for the possibility of mutual engagement.

Building on Goffman's insights concerning the crucial role of facework in upholding the social-ritual order, as well as on Grice's (1975) analysis of the logic of conversation, Brown and Levinson (1987) have developed a model for the cross-cultural study of linguistic politeness strategies, which is, in effect, formulated in terms of the directness dimension. They point to the tension between interpretability and facework, the cognitive and the social dimensions of speech. In so doing, they propose to expand the notion of conversational cooperation beyond cognitive-interpretive coordination in matching utterance meanings to their communicative intentions, and also attend to the ritual alignment that is encapsulated in Goffman's notion of facework. In this view, since conversational cooperation requires both mutual understanding of utterance content and social alignment, the notion of conversational cooperation needs to be revised so as to include not only acts of understanding but also ritual acts of recognition.

The following section elaborates on the Brown and Levinson model as a basis for revisiting my earlier work on the directness dimension via ethnographic studies of the culturally inflected Israeli style of straight talk—natively known as *dugri* speech (Katriel 1986), which will be juxtaposed with the style of indirectness associated with the Arabic ethos of doing *musayra* (Griefat and Katriel 1989). I try to take my analysis further by problematizing part of the Brown and Levinson model while discussing the directness of *dugri* speech in terms of relations of power and the politics of protest. To demonstrate the productivity of this move, I incorporate into my account Foucault's (2001) discussion of the ancient Greek notion of *parrhesia* ("frankness in speaking the truth" or "fearless speech"), exemplifying its analytic utility with reference to studies of Israeli soldiers' protest rhetoric, concep-

tualized as a form of direct talk (Katriel 2009; Shavit and Katriel 2009; Katriel and Shavit 2011).

Revisiting directness, as undertaken in this study, is an opportunity to both rethink some old issues and explore some new terrain. Linking the study of directness to studies of the language of protest as a form of fearless speech will provide a more encompassing account of the socio-pragmatics of the directness dimension than has been so far proposed.

Directness and Politeness

The most influential treatment of the social dimension of directness in speech appears in the aforementioned Brown and Levinson model of politeness strategies. As noted, this model combines Grice's cooperative principle according to which speakers assume that their interlocutors' conversational contributions are rational and efficient and a consideration of the ritual dimensions of social interaction as captured in Goffman's analysis of facework as interactional recognition.

As is well known, in Grice's original formulation, the maxims that make up the cooperative principle constitute background presumptions that conversationalists make concerning the conduct of conversation. They include four maxims that conversational participants assume each other to follow (unless otherwise indicated): (1) The maxim of quantity that requires the speaker to make his or her contribution to the conversation as informative as required for the current purposes of the exchange (and neither more nor less so) (2) The maxim of quality that requires conversationalists' contributions to be true—i.e., speakers are expected to avoid making statements contrary to their beliefs or for which they can provide no evidence if requested to do so (3) The maxim of relation that requires speakers' contributions to be relevant to the current exchange (4) The maxim of manner that is oriented to the efficiency of conversational exchanges, requiring speakers to be brief and orderly and avoid obscurity and ambiguity (Grice 1975).

In this scheme, when a speaker adheres to the conversational maxims, his or her talk is interpreted as rational and efficient, involving transparency in formulating messages and immediacy in interpreting them. In the terms of the present discussion—he or she can be said to be direct. Directness in communicative exchanges is thus related to participants' cooperation in meeting the presumptions that they speak the truth, keep to the point, refrain from producing overelaborate messages and avoid obscurity and ambiguity. When a speaker violates any of these maxims, this can be interpreted as opting out of the cooperative principle—and the possibility of conversational alignment—whether by choice or by default. Alternatively, the flouting of a maxim may still preserve the presumption of conversational cooperation by giving rise to an inference based on contextual information, i.e., to what Grice calls implicature.

Thus, for example, when a person known for his or her profound dislike of a particular food praises a dish of that food extravagantly, the hearer can either interpret this as a violation of the cooperative principle (i.e., lying) or as carrying an implicature based on the assumption that the speaker intends the statement to be interpreted as ironical. In the latter case, the speaker chooses to convey his or her

meaning indirectly so as to avoid making a disparaging remark that would express his or her true attitude of dislike of the dish.

Grice's mechanism of conversational implicature enabled him to account for the disparity between the propositional semantics of speakers' utterances and their pragmatically based meanings in conversation. While he posited a process that is pragmatic in nature, as it is anchored in various aspects of the context of utterances, Grice was not concerned with the social function of language as a vehicle for conveying expressive and relational meanings. Within his framework of analysis, expressing one's intentions via implicatures is one of the indirect ways in which utterances can be rendered meaningful, yet he did not ask what motivates speakers to convey their intentions indirectly rather than adhere to the conversational maxims and thereby maximize the efficiency of their communication. The cooperative principle is based on the assumption that cooperation facilitates the sharing of utterance meanings so that conversation can proceed properly. It posits an inferential mechanism through which this is done, but does not specify the social motivations or implications of either following (or not following) this principle.

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, which incorporates Grice's model of the person as a rational actor who chooses the means that will satisfy his or her ends, deals with the social dimensions of spoken exchanges rather than with the interpretability of utterances. It addresses speakers' social motivations for using conversational implicatures and other forms of "indirectness" in terms of Goffman's notion of face, one's publicly projected self-image, and elaborates on interlocutors' need to have their face ratified in and through social interaction. This need implies the essential vulnerability of face as it is ever dependent on the dynamics of social exchanges and requires conversational cooperation at the level of social relations. In Brown and Levinson's words:

> Thus face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 61)

The facework that interactional partners engage in is therefore, too, a form of cooperative action, generating mutuality in the ongoing, collaborative construction of social meanings and social worth in the context of conversational exchanges. Brown and Levinson draw finer distinctions in their analysis: (1) That between the public self-image that interactional partners claim for themselves and that which they accord to their interlocutors, and (2) two different types of face wants: (a) "negative face"—the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition, i.e., the desire for autonomy and (b) "positive face"—the desire to have one's self-image and preferences appreciated and approved, i.e., the quest for solidarity.

As the notion of face relates to the social relationships constructed through interactional cooperation, it adds important affective and ethical dimensions to the cognitively oriented questions of interpretability foregrounded by Grice, pointing to an expanded notion of conversational cooperation. The tension between the two interactional requirements—to attend to interlocutors' face wants through the use of indirectness and to regulate one's clarity of expression so as to enhance the

interpretability of utterances underscores the social negotiations involved in conversational interactions.

Such tension is inevitable in the case of verbal acts that inherently involve a violation of one's interlocutor's face wants, and which constitute what Brown and Levinson call face-threatening acts (FTAs). Frequently given examples of such acts are directives (whether orders or requests), which involve interactional imposition, thereby posing a restriction on the interlocutor's autonomy. As such, they violate the interlocutor's negative face wants. Open disagreements, too, can be seen as potential violations of the interlocutor's face as their display potentially undercuts mutuality and solidarity. As such, they involve violations of the interlocutor's positive face wants.

Thus, invoking the notions of "face," "face wants," "FTAs," and the distinction between positive and negative face, Brown and Levinson provide a systematic framework for the investigation of the linguistic strategies that speakers use in violating face wants, even while maintaining the flow of interaction. Their model posits that conversationalists usually construct their messages in ways that help them enhance, or at least maintain, their own and their interlocutors' face in social exchanges by employing a wide range of linguistically encoded politeness strategies that involve various forms of indirectness. The politeness strategies selected depend on the degree to which the interlocutor's face is threatened by the speaker's FTA. The weightiness of the FTA is computed by taking into account three independent social parameters—the social distance between speaker and hearer (D), the power differential between speaker and hearer (P), and the ranking of the imposition in the culture (R). The more highly ranked the imposition, the greater the social distance, or the greater the power differential between speaker and hearer, the more weighty is the FTA perceived to be. The weightiness of the FTA—as assessed in given social and cultural contexts—determines the choice of linguistic politeness strategies speakers make in attempting to minimize the threat they pose to their interlocutor's face. Choosing a politeness strategy commensurate with the level of affront potentially created by the use of the FTA performed assures the possibility of further interaction.

Not all uses of FTAs, however, are attended by the employment of redressive action that is encoded in the message design. At times, speakers may refrain from linguistically mitigating the FTAs they perform, speaking directly and saying it "like it is," and thereby ostensibly conveying disregard for their interlocutors' face wants. In Brown and Levinson's framework, the employment of FTAs without redressive action is the "bald-on-record" strategy. The bald-on-record strategy is transparent—explicitly and literally conveying the speaker's communicative intentions. It is also direct in interactional terms—avoiding hedging or other forms of message modulation, it signals disregard for interlocutors' face concerns.

Brown and Levinson define bald-on-record talk as "speaking in conformity with Grice's Maxims" (1987, p. 94). In using this strategy, a speaker tells the truth, makes his or her contribution relevant, brief, and orderly, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity. Within this analytic framework, the use of bald-on-record utterances is interpreted as unproblematic, transparent, and rule-governed communicative

conduct. However, within a facework model, avoiding the use of linguistic politeness strategies, and thus risking affront to the interlocutor's face, appears as interactionally problematic. Following a chain of reasoning that parallels Grice's argument whereby the flouting of conversational maxims gives rise to implicatures, Brown and Levinson argue that the violation of face wants in social interaction gives rise to implicatures concerning the precedence given to other types of wants and desires. In other words, while the use of linguistic politeness strategies constitutes a violation of conversational cooperation in terms of Grice's maxim of "effectiveness," it signals social cooperation, i.e., cooperation in terms of relational alignment.

In sum, within a cooperative model of social interaction—such as the one proposed by Goffman—which prioritizes facework as signaled (inter alia) by the use of linguistic politeness strategies, it is directness rather than indirectness that becomes problematized and calls for an account. While in this model indirectness is enacted in terms of politeness strategies shaped by the weight of FTAs and the relational contexts attending them, as described above, the use of directness is warranted by a set of culturally recognized circumstantial assumptions concerning conversationalists' motivations and social intentions. Not much is said about these cultural warrants, as the Brown and Levinson model is much more elaborate in its treatment of indirectness than directness (the 1987 book version of their paper accords the treatment of the bald-on-face strategy little more than six out of the over 300 pages).

The main example of a warrant for the use of directness anchors the social motivation for its use in the desire for efficiency—when the speaker "wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency *more than* he wants to satisfy H's [the hearer's] face" (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 95). Taking imperatives as an example, the claim is made that the desire for efficiency (real or metaphorical) provides a warrant for sidestepping the interlocutors' face wants in using nonhedged imperatives. Echoing Grice's accent on effectiveness, Brown and Levinson thus valorize efficiency and the sense of urgency with which it is associated, ascribing to it the role of a cultural warrant for the use of direct talk. This may well be the case in cultural contexts in which efficiency is regarded as a prime value, yet it seems clear that (1) such a value judgment is subject to situational and cultural variability, and (2) there may well be other cultural values that warrant the use of direct, bald-on-record utterances.

Brown and Levinson's model of politeness is couched in terms of individual acts and presents a dyadic act-by-act account of strategic interaction. However, they also propose to use this framework for the analysis of cultural ethos, which they define as "a label for the quality of interaction characterizing groups, or social categories of persons, in a particular society" (1987/1978, p. 243). This not only acknowledges diversity among groups but also moves the analysis beyond the level of individual acts, opening up the possibility of socio-pragmatic accounts of cultural communication styles. This level of cultural-linguistic approach, which takes the social group rather than the individual as its unit of analysis, is particularly pertinent to research in the ethnography of speaking. Within this approach, speech styles, or cultural ways of speaking (see below), are discursive articulations of cultural ethos. Brown and Levinson's brief discussion of the notion of ethos provides some pointers to the

ways in which such analysis may build on their politeness model, with reference to ethnographic studies that focus on what they call "the quality of interaction" in various speech communities.

Both the discussion of the group-level cultural ethos that grounds social interaction and the discussion of the bald-on-record strategy are underelaborated in the Brown and Levinson model. As I argue with reference to Arabic and Israeli speech cultures, the Brown and Levinson model helps us analyze directness at the level of cultural ethos, yet this analysis, in turn, throws into question some aspects of the model itself. I return to this model after a brief ethnographic detour in the next section.

2 Directness Within an Ethnographic Perspective

Ethnographers of speaking explore naturally occurring speech occasions as well as indigenous assumptions and norms associated with the conduct of speech in given speech communities. Hymes (1974) has proposed the notion of ways of speaking as a pivotal analytic term that mediates and encompasses reference to the means and forms of speech on the one hand and to their social and cultural meanings on the other. The identification of ways of speaking is not only a matter for analysts' constructions; it is also part of vernacular cultural processes (Carbaugh 1989). Metapragmatic terms that designate speech styles, speaker roles, and speech occasions are routinely identified and often named by cultural members themselves, becoming part of local cultural lexicons that serve speakers as they discuss and assess speech performances. Such labels and commentaries are important interactional vehicles through which social life and speech culture are locally regulated and negotiated, and they also serve as crucial resources for language-centered ethnographies. Quite early on in the development of the ethnography of speaking, anthropologist Ethel Albert, in her study of the cultural patterning of speech in Burundi, included methodological advice to ethnographers, underscoring the importance of culturally marked metapragmatic terms. Recognizing that metapragmatic terms are used by speakers to thematize, evaluate, as well as problematize ways of speaking, speaker roles, and speech occasions, thereby providing productive points of entry for ethnographies of speaking, she commented that "talk about talk should be noted and inquiry directed at its explanation" (Albert 1972, p. 103). Indeed, over the years, the use of "talk about talk" as an empirical resource has become a hallmark of language-centered cultural inquiry. And as was indicated by Albert's pioneering study of speech patterning in Burundi, metapragmatic terms related to norms associated with truth-telling and with forms of directness and indirectness in speech behavior are often central elements in culturally inflected social lexicons.

Taking such metapragmatic terms as my point of departure, I briefly revisit two earlier studies I have conducted of cultural ways of speaking that are metapragmatically designated in terms of the dimension of directness—doing *musayra* in Arabic and speaking *dugri* in Israeli Hebrew (Katriel 1986; Griefat and Katriel 1989).

Speakers of Arabic designate the pole of indirection as a culturally valorized speech mode by invoking the ethos of *musayra,* which involves humoring, accommodating conduct that is natively interpreted as going along with the other for the sake of social harmony. In the cultural world of native Israeli Jews, Sabra culture, it is the pole of directness, metapragmatically designated as *dugri* speech or straight talk, that is valorized. These culturally recognized poles along the directness–indirectness dimension point to the very different speech cultures of Arabs and Jews in Israel/Palestine and provide highly productive points of departure for cultural and cross-cultural explorations. I build on these empirical examples with a view to developing a more comprehensive discussion of the socio-pragmatics of directness than has so far been proposed. In so doing, I bring into conversation two very different theoretical frameworks that are relevant to the study of the directness dimension. I begin by drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness strategies discussed above and supplement it with Michel Foucault's metapragmatic notion of *parrhesia* (adapted from ancient Greek (Foucault 2001)). As I argue, this notion signals additional layers of meaning associated with the use of directness.

Since the pole of indirection has been most extensively studied within an ethnographic perspective (Hendry and Watson 2001), and since it can be more readily encompassed within the Brown and Levinson model, I first consider the meanings and uses of doing *musayra* as an Arabic way of speaking. I then move on to a consideration of the cultural meanings and social uses of *dugri* speech, and then extend the analysis, viewing directness as a form of fearless speech.

2.1 Indirectness as Doing Musayra

The metapragmatic term *musayra* labels an interactional style that foregrounds the social-relational function of speech, often at the expense of transparency of intentions, simplicity of expression, and direct accessibility. Doing *musayra* in social exchanges involves the use of a range of politeness strategies which are oriented to upholding the face wants of one's interlocutors in social exchanges. This social-relational focus is grounded in a cultural ethos in which social harmony is highly valorized.

Doing *musayra* thus involves displays of respect and a conciliatory attitude, and includes anticipating and accommodating one's interlocutor's face wants as well as accompanying the performance of FTAs—when these cannot be avoided—with redressive action in the form of accentuated hedging and deliberate ambiguities expressed through elaborate and esthetically rich forms of indirection. As a socially binding interactional ethos, *musayra* is geared both towards the hearer's positive face wants—seeking to cultivate a shared sense of solidarity—and towards his or her negative face wants—avoiding imposition and protecting autonomy.

As the ethnography of *musayra* has suggested, this ethos is not only pervasive but also highly naturalized within the Arab-Palestinian community studied in Israel. As one informant put it, it is "in the blood of every Arab person." It is something,

others said, that "you drink with your mother's milk," something that is "in the air, you breathe it in" (Griefat and Katriel 1989). Indeed, the metapragmatic notion of *musayra* carries potent overtones for speakers of Arabic, as do its derivatives such as the term *musayir,* which is a positive designator for a person disposed to doing *musayra.* As a mechanism of mutuality, however, it is socially regulated in terms of hierarchical norms pertaining to speaker role and status, as determined by gender, age, and social position. Indeed, while both men and women, adults and children, are bound by the ethos of *musayra,* its differential enactments are regulated in terms of gender and age and social class categories, with *musayra* extended from the one lower to the one higher in the social hierarchy.

Verbal acts of *musayra,* as culturally recognized expressions of considerateness and respect move between conversational restraint on the one hand and conversational effusiveness on the other. Conversational restraint is performatively enacted by strictly following procedural rules of deference, such as avoiding topics of potential discord or any form of confrontational talk. It is also associated with the regulation of pitch and the protection of speakers' right to the floor. Loudness is shunned and so are hurried pace and interruptions. Conversational effusiveness involves politeness strategies that work to dramatize and intensify interpersonal bonding. These include accentuated displays of attentiveness, multilayered verbal greetings, the use of multiple deferential or affectionate forms of address, and generous sharing of personal resources. Informants associated *musayra* with "excess politeness" in language use, a norm that mandates going beyond standard interactional forms of politeness on particular occasions. For example, while addressing one's uncle as "my uncle" would be a properly respectful form of address, calling him "my father" would signal an intention to highlight a special bond, enacting a sense of accentuated respect in the spirit of *musayra.*

The socially contextual nature of *musayra* is further brought out by the different types of *musayra* delineated by native informants. First of all, there is the *musayra* of *respect* that is regulated in terms of social-structural categories—the child is expected to do *musayra* to the adult, the woman to the man, the young to the old, the simple villager to the village head, and so on. Reciprocal displays of facework signal social equality, or at least the absence of claims to social status differentiation among interlocutors. Complementing it is the *musayra* of *magnanimity,* which involves acts of considerateness extended by the "haves" to the "have-nots"—by individuals socially or situationally placed in power positions towards those lower in status or experiencing specific circumstances of disempowerment. Examples given for this brand of *musayra* included accommodating to a sick child, humoring one's wife when she is pregnant, showing hospitality to a stranger in one's community, and so on. Then there is the *musayra* of *conciliation,* which is associated with potentially disruptive and conflictual interpersonal contexts, and involves politeness strategies designed to prevent open, angry, or even violent disputes. Mutually addressed conciliatory gestures of appeasement, sometimes orchestrated by a respected mediator who is *musayir* in the eyes of all, help to prevent conflicts from escalating further.

Finally, informants identified an interest-driven, *political musayra,* which involves the strategic manipulation of the *musayra* code itself for personal gain. Thus,

a man recounted his accentuated displays of *musayra* towards a woman in whom he had no interest except that she had a son who seemed like a good match for his daughter. Similarly, stories circulated in a village about an incumbent for office who, before the elections, took special care to cater to his neighbors' needs, doing *musayra* to them by offering rides in his car from the bus stop that was on the main road to the villagers' homes, a service that was terminated a day after elections were over.

In ways that echo Brown and Levinson's discussion of the use of the bald-on-record strategy in contexts marked by a requirement for efficiency or a sense of urgency, the usually binding facework demands associated with *musayra* must sometimes be suspended and directness is preferred. This is the case on weighty social occasions in which serious decisions need to be made, such as those involved in arranging a marriage. In such contexts, responsible counsel, factual information, and transparency are sought, and the indirection and circumlocution associated with the prevailing ethos of *musayra* are felt to be potentially disruptive. A person seeking advice may explicitly request for *musayra* to be temporarily withheld—urging one's interlocutor to stick to the facts, to be explicit and truthful, i.e., to speak "the *dugri*." A similar dynamic was identified in Albert's (1972) study of speech patterning in Burundi. There, too, indirectness—metapragmatically labeled as *ubgenge* in Rundi speech—is the culturally valorized speech mode, but directness is also an available communicative resource to be invoked in contexts of serious and consequential deliberations.

Since it is associated with traditional ways, doing *musayra* implies the recognition of social arrangements and hierarchical relations that are sanctioned by the authority of tradition. As in the case of the Malagasy community studied by Ochs Keenan (1989) or the Kewa people of Highland New Guinea (Josephides 2001), who associated their own style of indirection with tradition, and linked direct talk to modernity, modernization is claimed to counteract the cultural force of *musayra*. Some younger informants testified to the increasing difficulty they experienced in conforming to the other-oriented, concessive, and self-effacing behavior involved in doing *musayra,* ambivalently pointing to the cultural option presented by the *dugri* ethos that they well knew is rooted in the Jewish-Israeli modernist, nation-building project.

2.2 *Directness as Dugri Speech*

In its use as a modern Hebrew vernacular form borrowed from vernacular Arabic, into which it was borrowed from Turkish *dogru, dugri* has acquired the role of a metapragmatic term specifically used to designate straight talk, straight talkers, and speech occasions characterized by both. As a cultural way of speaking, Israeli *dugri* speech was crystallized in the 1930s and 1940s among the first generation of Israeli-born Jews of European descent, the Sabras. In Zionist revolutionary ideology, the Sabra identity as a New Jew was constructed out of a rejection of Diaspora Jewish logocentricity, self-effacing and appeasing attitudes and cultural preference

for indirectness and verbal virtuosity. This fundamental rejection, grounded in a revolutionary, action-centered ethos, gave rise to Sabra culture.

While doing *musayra* applies to both verbal and material action, the *dugri* ethos is anchored in a localized cultural distinction between words and deeds. Indeed, within the modernist Zionist ethos, speech was valorized in terms of its instrumental effectiveness rather than its aesthetic possibilities or potential for subtle and complex expressivity. *Dugri* speech—with its accent on simplicity, factuality, and functional transparency—has become a hallmark of Sabra speech culture. Given the foregoing discussion of the bald-on-record strategy as conceptualized within a facework model of social interaction, the emergence of straight talk as a culturally dominant speech style raises interesting questions concerning the cultural warrant that underpins the privileged use of directness in speech. This becomes especially the case when directness in the form of *dugri* utterances allows speakers to perform FTAs without redress, avoiding the use of politeness strategies, and thereby conveying disregard for interlocutors' face wants. If, as Goffman has proposed, mutual concern for face is the ground rule of all interaction, one might well ask under what conditions can such patterned disregard for face in the service of simplicity, factuality, and functional transparency become a valorized cultural pattern?

I respond to this question in two steps: Firstly, and still working within the Brown and Levinson model, I briefly recapture some of my earlier ethnographic account of *dugri* speech (Katriel 1986), with an eye to articulating cultural members' warrants for privileging directness. The culturally embedded cluster of meanings and values informants associated with the *dugri* speech style provides an alternative interpretive frame through which *dugri* utterances are heard as inoffensive, even well intentioned, rather than as posing a threat to the interlocutors' face. Secondly, and stepping out of the facework model proposed by Brown and Levinson, I problematize the socio-pragmatic role of the social category of power embedded in it and explore the implications of recognizing the performative role of directness within the framework proposed by Foucault (2001) for the study of fearless speech.

The employment of *dugri* speech is warranted for Sabra speakers not by the value of efficiency, or a sense of urgency, but by a cluster of sociohistorically situated meanings that are routinely associated with it by its users. These include *assertiveness,* which involves the manifestation of inner strength and a fearless stance; *sincerity,* which relates to the expectation that one's utterances should transparently and unequivocally reflect one's communicative intentions; *naturalness,* which entails a preference for spontaneity and simplicity in message design; and *solidarity,* a social state characterized by the equalizing we-feeling that anthropologist Turner (1969) has termed "communitas."

By invoking these cultural meanings through the use of *dugri* speech, *dugri* speakers speak in ways that fully conform to Grice's conversational maxisms, overriding the demands of facework. In so doing, they reaffirm their identities as proper Sabras, the proverbial New Jews who say what they mean and mean what they say. When speakers explicitly mark their verbal performance as *dugri* by prefacing their utterances with such metapragmatic locutions as "I'll tell you/let me ask you *dugri*...," they indicate their awareness of the potential threat to face posed by their straight talk as well as their choice to ignore it.

Self-declared *dugri* utterances are thus explicitly marked by a contentious flavor—they do not just transparently convey what the speakers believe to be true but also their estimation that their interlocutors would prefer not to hear this bit of truth. That is, *dugri* speakers see their talk as oppositional and assume an agonistic positioning vis-à-vis their interlocutors. This is not simply circumstantial disregard for face concerns. Rather, *dugri* speakers heighten attention to face by deliberately violating their interlocutors' face wants—signaling both disagreement and lack of solidarity at one level, yet invoking a shared cultural-communal frame on another. The use of *dugri* utterances positions speakers in a particular cultural matrix that affirms the possibility of a stance one can gloss as "dialogic opposition."

This brings me to the second step in my attempt to extend the analysis of *dugri* speech, and this step takes us out of the facework model by focusing on the symbolically potent, performative dimension of *dugri* speech. Indeed, recognizing the performative role of *dugri* utterances entails different assumptions about the relationship between speech signs and their context of use than assumptions posited within the framework of the Brown and Levinson model. The logic of this model is essentially inferential and correlational, linking speech signs (in this case, forms associated with politeness strategies) with features of the sociocultural context (in this case, interpersonal distance, power relations, and cultural assumptions about the severity of particular FTAs). Thus, particular signs are read as indexing contextual features, and particular contextual configurations are read as motivating the use of strategically employed speech signs.

In the terms proposed by linguistic anthropologist Silverstein (1976), this model considers politeness strategies as contextually embedded presupposing indexes. Linguistic signs reflect a particular social terrain and are interpreted as a product of particular social forces. In the case of social relations marked by equality, the use of *dugri* speech reflects interpersonal trust. It is the expected mode in intimate relations. Explicit *dugri* utterances (as in the use of the framing device "I'll tell you dugri...") are used when interlocutors' interpersonal distance permits—but cannot presume—the appropriateness of using straight talk. In such instances, the use of the metapragmatic term *dugri* serves to define the social field as appropriately involving trust and mutual regard and thereby authorizing the directness of the talk. Such explicit references bring out the performative role of *dugri* speech, and the metapragmatic term *dugri* functions as a creative rather than a presupposing index—it discursively defines the social situation rather than reflects its pregiven contextual features. As Silverstein explains, such verbal indexes become particularly important when "the occurrence of a speech signal is the only overt sign of the contextual parameter, verifiable, perhaps, by other co-occurring behaviors in other media, but nevertheless the most salient index of the specific value" (Silverstein 1976, p. 34).

The creative role of such indexical expressions brings out the performative, world-making function of *dugri* utterances. It becomes most apparent in relation to the power dimension in social exchanges. Unlike the social dimension of interpersonal distance, the power dimension can be asymmetrical. In the case of hierarchical power relations, *dugri* utterances are unidirectional. Inverting the social hierarchy, they are directed to the more powerful by those in lesser power positions—the

rank-and-file soldier to the commander, the office worker to the boss, and so on. *Dugri* speakers are aware of the power hierarchy, yet work to temporarily suspend it through the performance of bottom-up acts of verbal dissent couched in an appeal to a common cultural framework of solidarity and trust that is equally relevant to all.

This performative matrix finds its quintessential place in speech events (Hymes 1972) that are metapragmatically designated in vernacular Hebrew as "a *dugri* talk" (*siha dugrit*). Speech exchanges considered *dugri*—whether a priori or a posteriori—can be described as culturally patterned, ritualized verbal performance involving a distinctive sequential structure of verbal actions and particular interactional stances assumed by participants (Katriel 1986, pp. 57–75). As interactional rituals, *dugri* talks do not only give voice to speakers' positions in a transparent way but also create a context in which the Sabra image as active, resourceful, and assertive—as willing to speak truth to power—is affirmed.

Thus, while the ethos of *musayra* is grounded in cultural values that privilege the interests of the group over those of the individual, the maintenance of social-structural hierarchy over the cultivation of interaction-based solidarity, and the preservation of harmony over the transformative potential of conflict, the *dugri* ethos, by contrast, is grounded in a cultural matrix that warrants the discursive undermining of these values in particular contexts. In speaking *dugri,* members of Israeli Sabra culture affirm the transformative potential of conflict talk even while conceding its detrimental effect on immediate interpersonal relations. They see themselves as promoting social harmony by asserting their individuality within a solidarity-oriented communal dialogue based on mutual trust. *Dugri* speakers' ability and willingness to perform FTAs in giving voice to unpopular truths stand out most clearly in contexts of asymmetrical power relations, when conveying unwelcome opinions, attitudes, or information threatens to challenge the authority of one's superiors or the taken-for-grantedness of received opinion. It is this challenge that makes *dugri* speech symbolically potent and endows it with a transformative potential.

As will be expounded in the next section, the directness articulated as *dugri* speech in Israeli Sabra culture in the context of asymmetrical power relations shares many socio-pragmatic features in common with the speech activity rendered by Michel Foucault as "fearless speech" in his discussion of the ancient Greek metapragmatic term *parrhesia* (Foucault 2001). In both cases, truth-telling is viewed as a speech activity whose meanings hinge on the social conditions of its performance. In both cases, too, truth-telling does not stand as a goal in itself but capitalizes on its transformative potential.

As public performances, both *dugri* speech and Greek *parrhesia* are enacted in confrontational rituals involving rhetorics of protest. As forms of *speaking out,* they address both concrete and generalized audiences, signaling actors' insistence on *voicing* their thoughts and feelings despite their subordinate or marginalized social positioning. In contexts of actual or potential silencing, both *dugri* speech and *parrhesia* are culturally coded ways of speaking that give voice to the possibility of asserting difference and expressing dissent. A closer look at Foucault's (2001) discussion of *parrhesia* can bring out its affinity with *dugri* speech, suggesting that both these vernacular ways of speaking provide cultural underpinnings for the Western critical tradition of open discussion and free expression.

3 Parrhesia: Speaking Truth to Power

In a series of seminars presented in 1983 at Berkeley, Foucault (2001) applied his genealogical approach to the study of the ancient Greek (and Roman) metapragmatic term *parrhesia*, rendered as "fearless speech." Having identified the notion of *parrhesia* as a key symbol (Ortner 1973) in antiquity, he combed the classical Graeco-Roman literature for the uses of the term *parrhesia* and its derivatives, much in the way an ethnographer of speaking follows the social life of metapragmatic terms that name ways of speaking, speaker roles, speech practices, and occasions in the speech community he or she studies.

Foucault locates his interest in the term *parrhesia* within Western philosophy's concern with the problematic of truth. One aspect of this problematic relates to the great tradition in Western thought that he calls "the analytics of truth" (Foucault 2001, p. 170). Such a philosophy relates to the ways in which the correctness of the process of reasoning that leads to determine the truth of a statement, i.e., the ability to gain access to the truth, is ascertained. Foucault's own interest lies with another aspect of truth-telling—the problem of the truth-teller as a social role or of truth-telling as a social activity.

In the manner of the ethnographer who explores the speech economy of a particular cultural group, Foucault seeks to analyze "how the truth-teller role was variously problematized in Greek philosophy" (Foucault 2001, p. 169). The questions he asks address the socio-pragmatics of truth-telling as a speech activity that became thematized and theorized in terms of the notion of *parrhesia* around Socrates and his confrontation with the Sophists about politics, rhetoric, and ethics. These questions relate to four sociocultural dimensions of the activity of truth-telling—"who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power" (Foucault 2001, p. 170). Tracing the language game of *parrhesia* in terms of these socio-pragmatic questions, Foucault sought to construct "a genealogy of the critical attitude in Western philosophy" (Foucault 2001, pp. 170–171).

As in the directness associated with *dugri* speech, the person who employs *parrhesia*, the *parrhesiastes,* is someone who chooses to speak out, rejecting the option (and, often, pressure) to keep silent. *Parrhesia* is grounded in a speech culture that privileges both transparency and personal avowal. Thus, "the *parrhesiastes* acts on other people's minds by showing them as directly as possible what he actually believes" (Foucault 2001, p. 12), and he or she makes it clear that the opinion expressed is indeed his or her *own*—"I am the one who thinks this" (Foucault 2001). Since the *parrhesiastes,* like the *dugri* speaker, is aware that the true beliefs he or she is stating dissent from those of the audience, their voicing inevitably constitutes an FTA, an act of criticism that risks violating the interlocutor's face wants. This, as Foucault points out, has particular consequences in contexts of power relations—"when a philosopher criticizes a tyrant, when a citizen criticizes the majority, when a pupil criticizes his teacher, then such speakers may be using *parrhesia*" (Foucault 2001, p. 18) This, however, is only the case when "the *parrhesia* comes from below and is directed towards 'above'" (ibid.) and not, for example, when a parent or teacher criticizes a child. In ways that bring to mind the foregoing discussion of the directness of *dugri* speech, and of the uses of the bald-on-record strategy more

generally, Foucault claims that acts of *parrhesia* require courage and risk punishment. In Foucault's words:

> When, for example, you see a friend doing something wrong and you risk incurring his anger by telling him he is wrong, you are acting as a *parrhesiastes*. In such a case you do not risk your life, but you may hurt him by your remarks, and your friendship may consequently suffer for it. If, in a political debate, an orator risks losing his popularity because his opinions are contrary to the majority's opinion, or his opinions may usher in a political scandal, he uses *parrhesia*. (Foucault 2001, p. 16)

Speakers' motives for the use of *parrhesia* combine a sense of freedom and a sense of duty. The *parrhesiastes* is actually free to keep silent, but he or she opts to speak out and does so out of a sense of duty. Thus, a criminal's confession can be considered *parrhesia* only when it is voluntary and not when it is mandated by the court. Criticism—whether it is directed towards a friend or a sovereign—is also enacted out of a sense of duty "insofar as it is a duty to help a friend who does not recognize his wrongdoing, or insofar as it is a duty towards the city to help the king to better himself as a sovereign" (Foucault 2001, p. 19).

In sum, Foucault characterizes *parrhesia* as a speech activity marked for its directness in socio-pragmatic terms—in terms of the speaker's positioning vis-à-vis the *truth,* in terms of the speaker's relation to his or her own *self,* in terms of the speaker's relation to the *audience,* and with reference to the *cultural codes* that govern this speech activity. In his words:

> More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relation to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia* the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy. (Foucault 2001, pp. 19–20)

Foucault's account of *parrhesia* thus resonates quite closely with the foregoing account of *dugri* speech. Both these ways of speaking give voice to a cultural ethos that favors directness as a strategy in both symmetrical and bottom-up communication. Both involve a morally driven choice to give voice to one's truth despite the potential threat to interlocutors' face wants—risk disapproval, censure (and, in extreme cases, risk to life). A cultural ethos that favors directness legitimates the performance of fearless speech and may facilitate the emergence of organized dissent. In the next section, I illustrate such a cultural possibility with reference to several expressions of dissent involving three generations of Israeli soldiers, tracing their cultural roots to the ethos of directness in Israeli speech culture, articulated as *dugri* speech.

4 Directness and the Rhetoric of Protest

As studies of the rhetoric of protest in social movements have shown (Morris III and Brown 2006; Bowers et al. 2010), directness as a speech ideology (Schieffelin et al. 1998) holds a privileged place in the rhetoric of dissent. It can be thought of as

the verbal counterpart of "direct action" practices developed within the context of social movements. Speaking out—as indicated by the explorations of *parrhesia* and *dugri* speech—is a well-recognized oppositional strategy. The counterhegemonic messages voiced in contexts of public dissent signal rejection of codes of respect that uphold powerful positions and hegemonic stances. They are deliberately provocative, serving the persuasive role of sociopolitical agitation.

My study of *dugri* speech (Katriel 1986) explored two cases of soldierly dissent in tracing the connection between directness of speech and the rhetoric of protest. Both involved incidents in which soldiers' dissenting voices were interpreted as public enactments of *dugri* speech, and both have triggered public controversies that were magnified by short-lived, yet rather intense media coverage. In other words, these incidents of *dugri* speech gave rise to "social dramas," i.e., public events involving discord that "bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence" (Turner 1974, p. 36). In such conflict situations, people find themselves taking sides "in terms of deeply entrenched moral imperatives and constraints" (Turner 1974, p. 36), considering it their duty to directly challenge fundamental societal values by engaging in fearless speech.

One such social drama, which I addressed in my original *dugri* study, involved the case of Colonel Eli Geva, who declared his refusal to lead his troops into the heart of Beirut during the first Lebanon War (1982), claiming that such a move was morally indefensible because it would cause the indiscriminate loss of civilian lives. Eli Geva thus employed *dugri* speech to give voice to the truth of his personal conscience and thereby challenged not only the military hierarchy but also central cultural values—such as self-security concerns and martial camaraderie—that ground the military order of which he was a part (Katriel 1986, pp. 89–98). His act of defiance cost him his military career.

The other social drama I interpreted in terms of the *dugri* idiom involved the publication of Netiva Ben-Yehuda's autobiographical novel *1948—Between Calendars* in 1981, which focused on her experiences as a woman fighter in the Israeli War of Independence (1948). This novel was marketed as a *dugri* book that presented the reality of war without obfuscations and equivocation. It thematized the act of speaking out, as the author retrospectively invoked the self-doubts that beleaguered her as a soldier and led her to question the validity of Israeli war culture. In a striking section of the book, she described the self-silencing strategies she employed as a committed young soldier in response to the social and familial pressure she felt not to reveal her feelings and doubts, and suggesed that the publication of the book served as a belated corrective for that silencing. The book directly challenged the fundamental values associated with the emergence of the *dugri* ethos—such as courage and purposeful action, and demanded a place for indecisiveness, self-doubt, and moral sensitivity when facing combat situations of the kind the author described.

In choosing to speak out, both Eli Geva and Netiva Ben-Yehuda used straight talk to challenge fundamental components of Israeli cultural ethos—he in real time, she in retrospect. Some of the audiences they addressed found their challenges not only provocative but also morally offensive. Two generations down the road,

a group of Israeli veterans organized under the heading of Breaking the Silence (BTS) protested the nature of their military engagements vis-à-vis the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories. These activists similarly employed the cultural idiom of straight talk in publicizing their own and their peers' experiences as soldiers of the occupation in the form of a well-designed testimonial project of political dissent.

BTS activists are all young veterans of the Israeli army who spent at least part of their 3-year mandatory military service in the Israeli occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza during the first decade of the twenty-first century, which included the Palestinian uprising, the Al-Aqsa intifada, between 2000 and 2004 and its aftermath. The core members of BTS formulate their choice to speak out in moral terms. As discussed in Foucault's study of *parrhesia*, they see their choice as a blend between the freedom to speak out and the sense of duty that propels them to do so. At the same time, they are aware of the personal costs involved in their choice as many of them have faced social censure, criminalization, marginalization, and denigration by official state organs as well as members of their informal social networks.

As a grassroots, activist-led organization, BTS engages in generating bottom-up messages addressed to the soldiers' superiors, their elders, political leaders, and the public at large. Their mission statements appeal to the society that has sent them out to perform the daily tasks involved in upholding the occupation of millions of civilians, explaining:

> The main goal of BTS is to expose the true reality in the territories and as a consequence to promote a public debate on the moral price paid by Israeli society as a whole due to the reality in which young soldiers are facing a civilian population everyday and controlling it. (BTS 2004)

Their marginalization is a product of their dissent, not its cause. Indeed, within the matrix of Israeli society, they carry prestige as (largely) male combatants who have demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the nation, and within the context of protest, they carry a great deal of narrative authority as authentic witnesses of the occupation scene. Having placed themselves in a counterhegemonic yet privileged position, they claim the right to voice their outspoken critique of the Israeli occupation regime and the military culture that perpetuates it. Provocatively, they present their dissent and straight talk as an expression of their patriotic commitment and as an extension of their military role, saying:

> So far, hundreds of veterans have decided to break the silence, and each day they are followed by many more. During our service we successfully fulfilled a wide range of military tasks. There is one task left: to tell, to speak, and to hide nothing. (BTS 2004)

These soldiers' version of fearless speech takes the form of a grand gesture of condemnation—political condemnation of military practices, moral condemnation of the occupation regime and the social silence surrounding it, and self-condemnation for their own complicity in upholding this regime. The moral outrage encapsulated in this condemnatory stance sets the distinctive tonalities of BTS testimonial rhetoric. Thus, while the soldiers' testimonies offer detailed descriptions of the scene of occupation in factual terms, the moral outrage they express foregrounds the epideictic dimension of their rhetoric. This rhetoric of condemnation is their discursive response to the extremities of helplessness and degradation in which they

find themselves implicated during their military rounds and the moral shocks these engender (Jasper 1997).

For the past 10 years, steadfast in their resolve to give voice to the truth of their experience as well as to their moral convictions, these troubled yet eloquent young men and women have been trying to reclaim their humanity by generating cycles of testimony-based protests that involve self-reflective, sometimes self-incriminating, accounts of their experiences as soldiers of the occupation. Their rhetorical project, couched in the language of testimony and witnessing, discursively addresses and critiques the ills of the occupation by joining a long-standing speech ideology that valorizes morally driven fearless speech, a cultural strand that draws on the Western critical tradition rooted in *parrhesia*, and whose localized version is encapsulated in the *dugri* code.

Voices of protest—even while expressing personal grievances or giving voice to personal experience—have a public resonance as they seek to affect social agendas and trigger public debate. Their employment of directness is a deliberate strategy designed to attain clarity of statement, as well as a provocation designed to attain audience attention. Expressing counterhegemonic positions through public performances of fearless speech signals disengagement from centers of power and social prestige, yet, at the same time, it constitutes an attempt to tip the balance of power through a transformative act of speech.

5 Concluding Remarks

In revisiting the directness dimension of speech, I have foregrounded the social and cultural contexts in which both indirect and direct utterances are used. While indirectness in speech has been more extensively studied within socio-pragmatics and linguistic anthropology, it is the study of directness that seems to invite an extension of current approaches to exploring this speech dimension in both interactional and political terms.

I followed in the footsteps of the Brown and Levinson model of politeness, which has incorporated the Gricean approach to the interpretability of utterances, adding a concern with the ritual dimension of social interaction as a form of facework. Within such an expanded approach, pragmatists' interest in utterance meanings and mutual understanding in communication is complemented by—and balanced against—the performative dimension of verbal utterances as ritualized gestures that articulate and recognize social identities and social relations and thereby help sustain the social order.

Brown and Levinson's model of politeness strategies is grounded in the analysis of potential clashes between the representational-interpretative functions of utterances and their relational-ritual functions. Direct talk—while enhancing clarity and transparency and thus facilitating hearers' understanding of utterances—may at the same time unsettle social relations by creating interpersonal offense. It therefore needs to be legitimated by appeal to either social circumstances or cultural values that can serve as warrants for straight talk. The brief discussion of ethnographic

studies concerned with directness and indirectness was designed to illustrate the centrality of cultural meanings and localized interpretations in understanding and weighing the use of direct and indirect forms in the verbal repertoires of particular speech communities. My ethnographic accounts of both indirectness and directness, as natively captured by the metapragmatic terms of *musayra* and *dugri,* respectively, are informed by the insights offered by the Brown and Levinson model and its attempt to bring into conversation the representational and the relational dimensions of language use.

The study of public dramas and social controversies triggered by the use of *dugri* speech, and ancient Greek *parrhesia,* has pointed to the role of directness in the rhetoric of social and political protest. While both *dugri* and *parrhesia* name cultural-linguistic possibilities that pertain to interpersonal everyday interactions as well, they seem to find their quintessential place as performative acts that challenge power relations and redefine social situations. These are typically contexts marked by bottom-up power struggles in which directness is a morally grounded vehicle for voicing sociopolitical dissent and unsettling dominant and hegemonic positions.

Moving from the interpersonal to the public domain, engaging in direct, fearless speech—insisting on frankness in telling the truth—becomes specified as a language-centered political act of protest, an act of speaking out. Such acts are characterized by (1) their oppositional nature, the voicing of counterhegemonic positions; (2) their bottom-up (or margin-center) structure of participation; and (3) their "double articulation" (Scannell 1991), i.e., the appeal to a generalized audience beyond the person(s) directly addressed. I would argue, therefore, that the distinctiveness of directness as political *parrhesia* in Foucault's discussion, or as oppositional *dugri* rituals in my own studies, lies in the particular structure of participation involved no less than in utterance form and content.

This chapter has revisited directness as a dimension of speech by attempting to bring into conversation theoretical frameworks proposed for the study of a range of speech phenomena addressed in terms of this dimension, as well as interpretive findings regarding culturally named ways of speaking that are metapragmatically labeled and discursively evaluated by native speakers as either direct or indirect. Taking the ethnography of speaking approach as my point of departure, my discussion was not concerned with the representational function of utterance meanings or questions of truth and falsehood. Rather, it was concerned with truth-telling as a verbal activity, addressing the interpretability of utterances within a broader frame of discussion that balanced issues of meaning transparency against relational-performative concerns associated with facework and power relations.

The discussion of public *dugri* rituals and political *parrhesia* has added another layer of meaning to the study of direct talk, singling out particular contexts and participation structures as factors defining the nature and role of direct talk as a speech activity that finds its special place in the rhetoric of protest and facilitates the possibility of voicing dissent. This move has extended the discussion of directness from a concern with the interpretability of utterances and the ritual regulation of facework, opening the road to a discussion of the performative uses of the directness dimension and the politics of speech in social life.

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