
The represented functions of speech in Shokleng myth

GREG URBAN

Two kinds of functions of discourse can be distinguished. First, there are the *meaning-bearing* or *signaling* functions. These have to do with the contributions of a given stretch of discourse to the communication of which it is part. For example, verb forms may distinguish whether a sentence is to be understood as declarative or imperative. The key characteristic of the signaling function is that meaning is directly encoded in, and read off of, some aspect of the form of the utterance. Second, however, there are what might be termed the *goal functions* of discourse, the ways in which speech, as a form of social action, is used to accomplish particular ends that the speaker has (cf. Silverstein 1976). For example, it may be used to build a social alliance or to provoke or to obtain information. One characteristic that differentiates goal functions from signaling functions is that the goal function is usually not itself independently specified in the form of the discourse. We must infer such functions from observation of the role of discourse in ongoing social life.

But if we see goal functions as pertaining primarily to the wants and needs of individuals, we must distinguish these from a third type of discourse function, namely, *cultural functions*. The latter involves discourse in the service of collective social purpose. For example, it may be used to transmit information that contributes to group survival, or it may be used to authoritatively coordinate social action such that group endeavors can be orchestrated. From a semiotic point of view, cultural functions are a subclass of goal functions, since we must infer them, similarly, from observation of discourse in relationship to social life more generally. But from a social theoretic point of view, the cultural level of functioning is distinct, the goals being collective rather than individual in nature.

Indeed, there is a tension between the individual goal functioning of discourse and its cultural functioning. Because language can be used for so many diverse and conflicting individual or local purposes, its ability to accomplish cultural functions is threatened. The use of discourse to trick another person, for example, which may be socially important in negotiating certain kinds of situation, can nevertheless conflict with the information transmission functions. For a culture to appropriate discourse for collective ends, it is desirable that there be some kind of regimentation. Minimally,

this would consist in a set of normative models which represent the consequences of using discourse in certain ways in various types of social situation. The collective social benefits or detriments could be brought, however dimly, into awareness.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that myths, and perhaps other kinds of replicable narrative, are capable of playing this normative role. This is possible because of a special property of language, which the chapters in the present volume illuminate, namely, the ability of speech to refer to itself, especially in the form of *direct quotation* and other forms of reported speech. The quoted speech can contain all of the signaling or meaning-bearing functions of speech generally. For example, in the translation of one instance of reported speech from a Shokleng¹ myth discussed later, it is possible to see that the speech is marked as imperative and that the addressee is charged to perform a highly specific command:

Afterwards, she said to him: "You kill me, and when you kill me, take this water I have brought and make soup for your husband, and give it to him, and eat it together with him."

But, in addition, this quoted speech is embedded in a more extended representation of social situations and processes. The listener is able to get a sense for the role of the speech in relationship to the social action of which it is part – its goal function – and, moreover, to infer from the whole whether that role is socially beneficial or detrimental. The narrative is thus capable of playing a normative role in establishing the desirability of certain kinds of contextually situated language use.

The general model of discourse interaction employed here requires us to distinguish two levels.² The first level is that of the narration as a discourse interaction in which the narratives, in the present case, myths, are told to an audience. The terms narrator and listener will be employed to designate the actors involved in this real-world interaction. The second is the level of the narrative itself, the terms speaker and hearer being employed to designate the characters within the story. Thus, the represented goal functions of an instance of quoted discourse within a given narrative are inferred from what the listener is in a position to know or believe about the speaker and hearer, as well as about the action and situation, in which the reported speech is embedded.

This basic idea was developed in an earlier paper (Urban 1984), which analyzed a single myth. It became apparent from that work, however, that a given myth can contain only one or two major lessons in using speech to accomplish cultural purposes. This is so because the inference about cultural function is in general made on the basis of the entire narrative. Empirically, this means that we ought to find in a given narrative, if it is fulfilling this normative role, a consistent pattern in the represented role of discourse within social action. Conversely, parallelism in this role, within a given narrative, is confirmation that the narrative is organized in part around the representation of a cultural function of discourse.

To get a sense of the represented cultural functions of discourse within a given society, therefore, it is necessary to look at a broader set of narratives. We need to see the range of cultural functions that are represented, and to look into the question of how those functions are interrelated. This is the task of the present chapter.

There are methodological problems involved in doing so. The analysis of even a single narrative is laborious and requires considerable space to present the data that support it. Consequently, to examine ten or twenty narratives in a single chapter would mean that virtually none of the assertions could be substantiated. The solution adopted here is to concentrate on a smaller number – in this case, five – and to supply at least some of the supporting data, even though the full myths and their analyses cannot be presented.³ The five narratives chosen for the present chapter are among the most commonly told and widely disseminated myths of the Shokleng. If myths do indeed normatively code lessons about culturally desirable forms of language use, these myths ought to reveal some of the most fundamental cultural functions in Shokleng.

But if there are methodological problems involved in studying a range of narratives, there are also benefits. Most importantly, while reported speech is an important basis for the aesthetic organization of nearly all mythic narratives in Shokleng, it is never the sole basis, and the internal consistency in a given myth is rarely perfect. Some instances of quotation escape interpretation in terms of the dominant cultural function. Consequently, a comparative approach allows us to cast a wider net, to see whether the relationships between speech and action that dominate in one text achieve consistency across texts, even when they are not dominant. The five myths investigated here are analyzed in terms of the following dominant, culturally recognized collective functions: (1) information transmission, (2) imperative coordination, (3) solidarity building, (4) group boundary maintenance and collective deliberation, and (5) emotion triggering.

Information transmission

One potential cultural function of discourse is to convey information about the objective world from a speaker who has that information, however acquired, to a hearer who does not. We can distinguish this from the signaling function of reference, whether semantic (sense relations) or indexical (ostensive relations). In some measure, all cultures probably depend upon this goal function of discourse. However, the function is not necessarily represented in myth or elsewhere in narrative, and, when it is represented, the representation may single out a more culturally specific norm concerning the use of discourse as a vehicle for conveying information. In fact, in the Shokleng case, the norm appears to be a highly specific one having to do with truthfulness and accuracy in a certain kind of interaction.

More generally, in narrative texts, the goal function of information transmission is inferred from the relationship between reported speech and the description of surrounding context. Narratives can be constructed such that the listener knows whether the hearer has prior access to what he or she is being told and, consequently, whether the reported speech in question is actually an instance of information transmission or is really a component of something else. It may be, for example, that the listener knows that a certain character already has some piece of information about

the world. However, he is shown to be eliciting that very same information, of which he is already in possession, in order to test another character. In fact, this situation occurs in at least one Shokleng narrative, as will be described below in the next section. There the discourse interaction involves information transmission as a means to what is the key represented goal function: testing the truthfulness of another.

The theme of information transmission dominates one Shokleng myth, which will be discussed in some detail here. In order to sketch the overall action context as compactly as possible, this myth is synopsized as follows:

The origin of honey⁴

Synopsis: The birds, who at that time could speak like humans, were trying to locate the beehive. So one bird (a toucan) tried to follow the bee as it was “gathering flowers,” but he could not locate the hive. He returned and informed everyone that he did not succeed. The same happened with a second bird (the *kuyan*). The third (the *kānkāl*) finally succeeds in locating the hive, but reports that it is encased in stone. So the birds try to peck through the hive with their beaks, but their beaks break. The little woodpecker goes off to practice on his ceremonial mother’s pestle, and when he succeeds he returns and pierces the hive for the birds. All of the birds eat, but the hummingbird is excluded. Consequently, he hides water from the other birds, and, when they ask him where the water is, he reports that it is far away. However, another bird spies on him and sees that he has hidden the water in a hole. So he tells the other birds and they all come to drink.

The “Origin of honey” telling analyzed here contains eight instances of quoted speech, where by an “instance” is meant a single, continuous interaction, which may involve more than one turn of speaking. Of those eight discrete, reported discourse interactions, five involve the transmission of information. Of the remaining three, one is an instance of transmission for other purposes, one a command, and one inner speech.

The first three instances are precisely parallel. Each of three birds, that has gone off in search of the hive, reports on his failure or success. The instances are as follows:

“I did not see the hive,” he (the toucan) said.

“I did not see the hive,” he (the *kuyan*) said.

“I saw the hive, but it is encased in stone,” he (the *kānkāl*) said.

The description of surrounding context in each case reveals to the listener the truthfulness of the description. In the last instance, for example, the immediately preceding description is: “the *kānkāl* saw the hive and he arrived.” The listener is thus able to ascertain the truth of the first part of the *kānkāl*’s statement, namely, his claim that he located the hive. From the subsequent action descriptions, moreover, it is apparent to the listener that the second half is borne out: the hive is in fact encased in stone.

It should also be noted that it is apparent to the listener that the truthful transmission of information in this case leads to a socially desirable outcome, namely,

determination of the location of the hive followed by its eventual piercing. The result is that honey is made generally available to the group, honey being a delicacy the Shokleng highly prize to this day.

One seeming instance of transmission, whose goal function as represented within the narrative is probably distinct, occurs in connection with the piercing of the hive. The woodpecker, having practiced on his ceremonial mother's pestle, comes to where the birds are endeavoring to pierce the hive. The following discourse interaction is reported:

And he (the woodpecker) said to them, "What is all this noise about?" And they said to him, "We are trying to pierce the hive and that is what all of the noise is about."

While it would seem that the other birds are communicating truthfully with the woodpecker, it is apparent to the listener that the woodpecker already knows what he is being told. The actual goal function in this case would seem to be an interpersonal one, namely, greeting in the more ceremonial form of heralding and acknowledging a presence. By means of a question, the woodpecker announces his appearance on the scene. By means of the response, the birds recognize this presence.

The latter portion of the narrative returns to the central theme of transmission. Interestingly, however, the next instance of reported speech involves what the listener knows to be explicitly false information. After being told by the narrator that the hummingbird, because he was not given honey at the hive, hid the water, causing the birds to go thirsty, the listener is then provided with the following instance of reported dialogue:

And so they said to the hummingbird, "Is the water nearby?" And he said to them, "No, the water is far away. I who fly well always drink water."

The listeners, but not the hearers, know that the water is in fact nearby, but that the hummingbird has stoppered it up with a lid so that it cannot be seen. There can be no doubt in the listener's mind that the hummingbird is lying.

But importantly for the lesson of the myth, the truth is finally discovered. Another bird, hidden behind a rock, spies on the hummingbird as he comes to drink water. When the hummingbird closes up the lid and leaves, he rushes to the water, drinks, and then says: "Hi, hi, hi, hi, I see water, I see water, I see water." This utterance acts as a general signal beeped out to all of the birds, and as a proposition whose truth is simultaneously apparent to the listener. At the same time, the truthfulness of this utterance is verified by the hearers, who then know that the hummingbird has lied. The latter apparently ends up in ignominy and disgrace.

The moral for the listener, which is simultaneously the norm regarding language use encoded in this myth, may be formulated as follows: *transmit information to the group truthfully and good consequences will follow: lie and the lie will be discovered and the liar disgraced.* The lesson is not a decontextualized one. Rather, in the myth it applies specifically to communications between an individual and the group. In fact, the situational type portrayed here is one that is common in Shokleng society. Someone who locates game or fruit, or who observes something that is of collective importance, returns and reports his discovery to the group. In the hunting-gathering

context in which this narrative arose, truthfulness and accuracy and being forthcoming in this situation of information transmission are critical to collective survival. Because the community depends upon accurate knowledge of its surroundings, it must simultaneously maintain a norm of truthfulness in this type of interaction.

Imperative coordination

If discourse can be used to transmit information, it can also be used by a speaker to get a hearer to perform some highly specific action. This is what will be referred to here as the goal function of *imperative coordination* by means of discourse. Such imperative coordination is encoded in narrative in the relationship between an instance of reported speech and the description of the subsequent actions of the hearer of that speech. Typically, the listener is able to infer from the reported discourse and the context in which it occurred whether a command or instruction has been issued, although the reported utterance itself is not necessarily marked as an imperative and even though considerable delicacy of interpretation may be involved. In addition, however, the listener can determine from the subsequent action whether and in what measure an instruction has been carried out.

Interestingly, imperative coordination is the single most widespread represented discourse function in the myths examined here. At least one instance of speech that involves goal functional imperative coordination is found in each of the myths investigated in this chapter. Discourse-mediated imperative coordination, however, sometimes occurs as an additional layer within a represented goal function of discourse that is quite distinct, just as happens in the case of information transmission. I will argue that this is the case, for example, in the myth examined in the next section, where imperative coordination is employed within the larger goal functional context of building the appearance of solidarity.

The theme of imperative coordination dominates one particular myth, which is synopsized as follows:

The giant falcons

Synopsis: A man instructs his brother that, when the giant falcon carries him off, the brother should go to fetch his bones and bury them on the side of a mountain far away. The brother does as told. When the man is carried off, he dons feathers, telling the people to wait for him there, and he ascends into the sky. In the world above the sky, he sees his brother's bones and then sets off down a path, where he meets an old woman. He asks her about the brother's bones and she tells him where they are. Then she instructs him to kill her and to take up her role with respect to her husband. He does so and she comes back to life again. The same thing happens with a second woman. After this, the brother shatters the giant falcons and the pieces of each falcon in turn become the falcons we see in the world today. He then returns to earth with the bones, as the people watch him spiralling downward, and he buries the bones in the ground. But he buries them too close to the village. Consequently, the burial place is spotted by a group of women and they

see there a little boy. Had they not seen the little boy, he would have grown quickly into the man who had been carried off originally. However, because they have seen him, he disappears forever. It is for this reason that, when people die, they do not return.

The myth contains nine instances of quoted speech and seven of these involve discourse-mediated imperative coordination. The first two pertain to a single instruction, and that instruction is related to the central lesson of this myth:

Kuyankàŋ said to his brother Klaiṁmàŋ, “When the falcon, who has been carrying off men and eating them, does this to me, you go up there to get my bones.”

After a long time, he said to him, “When I go up there, you must go to get my bones, and when you carry them back, and descend to here, then you must put them on a mountainside way over there.”

The listener infers from the reported speech itself that the speaker in question is endeavoring, by means of discourse, to get the hearer to perform a set of actions. Those actions, indeed, are the subject of the ensuing narrative, so that the listener is in a perfect position to ascertain whether, in fact, they have been adequately carried out.

By the end of the myth it is revealed that the hero, while he has done most of what he was instructed to do, has failed in one regard. He did not bury them on the “side of a mountain far away,” but rather too close to the village. Consequently, the women were able to see the little boy who grew up from them. Had they not discovered the little boy, he would have grown quickly into the previously dead brother, who would, consequently, have been brought back to life again. But because they saw him, the process of death has become an irreversible one. This is expressed by the little boy in two instances of quoted speech that occur at the end of the narrative: “You will not see me again” and “You who were looking at me will not see me again.” The listener can infer from this the following lesson: failure to perform instructions carefully results in an undesirable outcome, namely, that when people die they no longer come back to life again.

The middle two instances of reported speech prepare the listener for this conclusion by suggesting how things might otherwise have been. After the hero has ascended to the sky and met an old woman on the path, the following interaction takes place:

She said to him, “Why have you come?” “I have come to look for the bones of the man who came up here. Where are they?” “They are hanging from the *yayà* tree. In the newly woven baskets, that’s where they are hanging.” Afterwards, she said to him, “You kill me, and when you kill me, take this water I have brought and make soup for your husband, and give it to him, and eat it together with him.”

When the hero carries out the instruction, magically, the old woman comes back to life again. There is no apparent reason why the hero should have agreed to carry out this rather bizarre instruction. But the listener knows that, because the hero did precisely as he was told, therefore the desirable occurred: the old woman died but she came back to life again.

As if to drive home this point, a second, nearly identical episode occurs. Upon meeting another old woman, the following interaction takes place:

She said to him: "Why have you come?" "I have come to look for the bones of the man who came up here. Where are his bones?" "By the path, hanging from the broken *yayà* tree. They are in the newly woven basket." She said this, and then she said to him, "You kill me, and when you kill me, take the water I have brought, and say to your husband: 'Give me the instrument for removing thorns from the feet; I want to remove thorns from my feet.'"

In this case, the instruction itself includes giving an instruction. The hero is to say: "Give me the instrument for removing thorns..." And he does so. Again the old woman returns to life.

The question and answer routine that precedes the instruction remained an enigma during the initial analysis of this myth (Urban 1984). However, some light is shed on the problem by the previous discussion and by a broader analysis of the cultural goal function of imperative coordination as represented in myths. From that broader study, it appears that commands and instructions tend to take place in relationships that are characterized by solidarity. The theme of imperative coordination can be only one layer within a more encompassing goal function, but when it is, that goal function typically has to do with solidarity. We will see examples of this later.

In the present context, however, it is the information transmission that is the intermediate layer and imperative coordination that is the ultimate goal. It is significant that the hero already possesses the information he elicits from the old woman. This is explicitly mentioned in an earlier portion of the narrative. The listener must wonder why the hero has to ask about what he already knows. One possibility is that the hero may still have been in some doubt. But another possibility is that he is testing her to see whether in fact she is someone whom he can trust. Without evidence of trust, his compliance with her command would have been foolhardy. Knowing that he can trust her, however, his obedience of the command is not a wholly blind act, even though neither he nor the listener can determine why she would be telling him to do this. The dictum in Shokleng society, therefore, is not: obey all commands unquestioningly. It is rather: obey those commands that emanate from someone whom you can trust.

In any case, other instances of command and obedience flank these central episodes. Just prior to ascending to the sky in the first place, the hero tells the people: "the sky's hole is over there; wait for me tomorrow." This is repeated somewhat later. The listener can determine whether the people comply with this command, and, in fact, when the hero later descends spiralling down to earth, there are the people gathered around watching. The instruction has been executed.

The remaining instance of reported speech in the myth is really a series of commands made by the hero as he destroyed each of the giant falcons, shattering them into the smaller creatures we see in the world today:

He threw a stick at them and said: "You will become a *kòkàŋ*, and you will eat the jacutinga bird."

He hit another, it is said, and he said: "You will become a *yuyuy màŋ*, and you will eat snakes."

He hit another, and said: "You will become a *tàtà* and you will eat little birds."

He hit another with a stick and he said: “You will become a *yatàn* (buzzard) and you will eat rotten flesh.”

He hit another again, and, it is said, he said: “You will become a *kòkàŋ*, and you will eat monkeys.”

It is apparent to Shokleng listeners, from their knowledge of the world today, that these commands were obeyed. These birds do go around eating what they are supposed to eat.

As a normative model for the use of discourse, therefore, the myth stresses the faithful carrying out of instructions. When this is done, desirable social consequences follow. When it is not, the results are bad for everyone. However, there is an important proviso: the instructions should emanate from someone whom you can trust. The overall lesson of the myth may thus be formulated as follows: *obey as precisely as possible the commands of someone worthy of trust.*

The proper situation to which this norm relates is in many respects the inverse of the first. In the earlier case, an individual is instructed to leave the group and perform some specified task. This latter situation is also a common one in Shokleng society, and, historically at least, the instruction could pertain to killing, whether in hunting or in warfare, or to bringing back something, whether a material object or information. In any case, instructions of this sort are what enable the coordination of actions at the community level. It is obviously essential to group survival that norms of compliance be strict.

Solidarity building

If discourse-mediated imperative coordination arises in Shokleng narratives within solidary social relationships, there is a concomitant question of how such relationships can be established. As discussed earlier, one possible use of discourse is to test the other, and, if those tests are passed, to assume on that basis the existence of a solidary tie. Correspondingly, looked at from the point of view not of tests but of appearances, it is possible to use discourse creatively to give an appearance of solidary ties, either as part of an endeavor to build a true alliance or for some other reason, for example, for purposes of manipulation or deceit.

There are scattered examples of such solidarity-building or manipulative usages in Shokleng narratives. In one myth (discussed in the section below on emotion triggering) the great falcon says to the armadillo: “My ceremonial father, dance with him (the porcupine) for me.” Here the address term “my ceremonial father” is a trust-building device, designed to get the armadillo to execute the command that follows. But, as will become apparent here, Shokleng narratives consistently inculcate an attitude of skepticism towards solidarity built up in this way. The emphasis is upon collateral verification of any discourse expressions, and, of course, the most solidary ties are those based upon a long history of interaction, such as arises within the domestic group and community. Genuine solidarity is based upon multiple and mutually reinforcing kinds of evidence over the long haul. The American English

adages “talk is cheap,” “put your money where your mouth is,” “seeing is believing,” “actions speak louder than words,” and “don’t believe everything you hear,” in some measure gloss this discourse attitude.

The importance of skepticism towards solidarity building is the theme of one Shokleng narrative:

The snake shaman

Synopsis: There was a man with a beautiful daughter and all of the young men wanted to speak with her. They would come and talk with the father, who would tell them to sleep next to the girl. However, when the young men were asleep, the father would cut a lock of their hair off, roll it into a ball with wax, and they would later die. Two young men died in this way. The third, however, wished to discover what was going on. He only pretended to sleep, and he observed as the man cut a lock of his hair. Later, when the man was sleeping, he got up, located the wax ball, and substituted some of the daughter’s hair for his own. The next morning he secretly followed the girl’s father and watched him feed the wax ball to a snake. After the man left, he burned up the snake, at which time the daughter became gravely ill with a fever. Her mother ordered her to go bathe herself to reduce the fever, but it was to no avail and she died. As a result of her death, her father suffered greatly. However, because the snake was gone, he could no longer harm others.

The bulk of the reported speech in this myth consists of three nearly identical interchanges which occur when the young men come to visit the daughter and converse with her father:

And they would all say, “Father, tell me stories,” and he would tell them stories.
 And he would say, “Father, where shall I lie.” “Over there, lie with her.”
 And he would listen.

And (one) would say, “Father, tell me stories,” and he would tell them stories.
 And he would say, “Father, where shall I lie.” “Over there, lie with her,” (he) would say.
 And he would listen to him sleep.

And then he said to him, “Father, tell me stories,” and he told him stories.
 And he said, “Father, where shall I lie?” And he said, “Over there, lie with her.”
 And he listened to him sleep.

The background situation makes apparent to the listener that the young man and the girl’s father had, in each case, no prior experience with one another. Moreover, the former is clearly interested in the latter’s daughter and therefore wishes to establish a solidary relationship with him. This is expressed, in each case, by the use of a solidary term of address, “father.” Further, the young man requests that the girl’s father tell him stories, an activity intimately associated in Shokleng society with domesticity. That the father obliges is seeming confirmation of the solidarity that the young man desires. The final discourse confirmation comes when the young man asks the father where he should sleep. The father, in an instruction harmonizing perfectly with the young man’s desire, tells him to sleep with the daughter. This leads the young man to conclude, in the first two instances, that the father is his ally and that a solidary bond exists.

The point of the story, however, is that these discourse expressions are not to be trusted. As the listener knows, things are not as they seem. And the latter portion of the narrative reveals the full scope of the father's horrifying activities. Significantly, this portion contains little reported speech. Instead, the young man, smarter than his predecessors, seeks visual evidence and the latter portion of the narrative is filled with descriptions of how he *watches* the father. Indeed, the latter proves on visual evidence to be a wicked shaman, engaged in activities that reveal his true nefarious intentions towards the youth. Verbal and visual evidence thus conflict, and it is the visual evidence, the myth suggests, that is to be trusted.

The young man's desire for firm knowledge is indicated in the two instances of inner speech found in this narrative. The first occurs prior to the young man's encounter with the father: "I will see what he is up to. What could he be up to?" Importantly, he stresses in his own inner speech "seeing." The second instance occurs after he has witnessed the man give the wax ball with the hair in it to the snake: "So that's how he did it, how he tormented those men." These occurrences of inner speech point out another function of discourse, namely, to facilitate silent reasoning. But the reasoning in this case is directed specifically at the question of visual versus verbal evidence of solidarity, and it is this contrast that dominates the aesthetic organization of the narrative.

The final instance of reported speech in the narrative involves a command. This time, however, from the mother to her daughter rather than "father" to son: "Kaklozàl, go wash yourself." This situation contrasts markedly with the earlier one where the father tells the youths to lie with his daughter. Here the command arises within a genuinely solidary bond, one based upon a long history of personal involvement. There the command arose within a false, purely verbally expressed solidarity. Here the command is in the best interests of the daughter; the mother wishes to cure her. There the command was part of an endeavor by the "father" to lull the young men into complacency; he wished to kill them. The aesthetic value within the narrative of this last instance of reported speech, therefore, seems to be to suggest that even the good intentions of the mother could not undo the wickedness of the father, even though the latter was originally disguised beneath a veneer of civility and solidary relations.

The myth thus has as its overall pragmatic lesson this: *trust not in purely verbal expressions of solidarity; rather, seek collateral evidence.* This skepticism is appropriate in a society where solidarity tends to arise primarily out of personal involvement over a long period, the personal involvement of the domestic group and community. Such a discourse norm facilitates the replication of a tightly knit, family-based system. Simultaneously, it fuels the doubts that lead to factional schism and that contribute to the sealing off of the local group from the outside world.

Group boundary maintenance and collective deliberation

Another possible function of discourse is to facilitate collective deliberation. Here the goal of discourse, in the form of conversation or dialogue, is not to pass on or obtain information *per se*, although this may form one part of the process. Nor is it to coordinate action imperatively, though such coordination may arise out of the deliberations. Nor is it again primarily to build solidarity, although, insofar as the individuals involved are happy with the outcomes, overall solidarity may be achieved. The goal is rather to allow a number of different voices to bounce off one another, to jostle about, so that a single voice, a “we,” which is hopefully distinct from any one of the original voices, may emerge.

From the point of view of represented goal functions, what distinguishes collective deliberation is that the reported speech, which involves the group as speaker and/or hearer, is related to descriptions of action focused on the question of what the group is going to do. In the “Origin of honey,” discussed earlier, three instances of reported speech involve a group voice. However, in no case is the discourse oriented to the question of group conduct. We can say that the collective deliberation function is highlighted where the topic of the reported speech is the future conduct of the group, and where the descriptions of subsequent collective actions show that the reported speech was relevant to them.

Only one myth of the five investigated here shows an instance of genuine collective deliberation of this sort. Indeed, in this myth, which is here entitled “Owl spirit,” group decision-making is the central theme. Even here, however, the multivoicedness of the deliberation is not notably stressed. The norm has nothing to do with encouraging individuals to participate in collective discussions or to get their voice heard. Rather, the concern is with the exclusion of certain voices from the debate, namely, of those emanating from outside the local group. In this myth, the inside/outside contrast is represented in human/supernatural terms:

Owl spirit

Synopsis: Many women were out gathering *Araucaria* pine nuts until late in the day. They found that they could not make it back to the village before nightfall, and so they stayed in the forest. However, they had no fire and it was cold. One woman saw someone in the distance whom she thought was carrying fire. She told another to ask him for fire, and the other woman called out to the man. However, the man was really an evil spirit, and he was not carrying fire, he was himself on fire. He came and had sex with each woman and then she would die. One woman lived long enough to return to the village and tell the others, but then herself died. Everyone wondered what they should do to protect themselves. Finally, they decided to ascend into the trees and make a camp up there. They did so, but one woman was ritually wailing. Consequently, the spirit heard this and approached. But a man, who was her ceremonial son, was also a powerful shaman, and he became angry and let out the sound “*kliŋ kliŋ kliŋ kliŋ*” and the evil spirit shattered and burst into many little pieces, which became the owls we see today.

Two types of discourse interaction are played off against one another in this myth: (1) communicative interaction or discussion within the boundaries of the social group and (2) interactions outside the group boundaries. Aesthetically, the myth is organized around the pairing of these two. There are two such pairs, with an instance of information transmission intervening between, and the contrast between the two pairs encodes the normative lesson of the myth.

The first pair is really a single instance of reported speech in the sense that the discourse interactions within and outside the group are continuous, forming part of one and the same event:

“Ah, there comes someone with fire.”

“Yes,” they said.

However, one woman said to them: “Ask him for fire. Surely it is someone,” (she) said.

And she said, “Whoever is bringing fire, give some to me. Did you hear me? Give me fire,” (she) said.

He listened and brought it.

The immediately preceding description sets up the collective problem that the women face – they have no fire. The reported dialogue takes the listener into what was apparently an ongoing conversation whose topic was what to do about the problem. Interestingly, the observation by the first speaker is followed by a “yes,” emanating from the collectivity. The reporting of such a “yes” occurs also in the second collective deliberation discussed below. It is found nowhere else in the reported speech I have examined thus far. Evidently, it is a marker that indicates to the listener the participation of the collectivity in the discussion.

In any case, the ratification of the observation leads one woman to propose that the group request of the stranger they have spotted that he give them fire. This is the fatal mistake that provides the main plot of the narrative. In an act that is continuous with the ongoing discussion, another woman addresses the stranger as if he were part of the collective deliberation. The listener, however, already knows that the stranger is really an evil creature – the spirit of the owl. Ominously, the stranger does not respond but instead only “listens.” The inference regarding discourse is obvious: the women should not have addressed the stranger, treating him as just another participant in the collective conversation. The subsequent description of events bears this out. All of the women eventually die, though one lives long enough to report back to the base community.

The second deliberation is more extensive, with the topic of collective conduct being formulated at the outset:

And they (said), “What are we going to do to escape from the evil spirit?”

“We will ascend.

We will tie bands around the dry Araucaria pine and ascend there.

And we will cut wood.

And we will weave across the branches.

And we will make baskets to put earth in.

And we will ascend.

And we will throw (the earth) in and stay up there.

And we will make baskets for the women and we will ascend," (they) said.
 And they (said), "Yes," (they) said.
 "You have spoken well."

The "yes" response at the end again marks the involvement of the collectivity. However, from this discourse interaction the stranger is, wisely, excluded. A description of the group's activities in moving their encampment up into the trees intervenes between this instance of reported speech and the last one.

Interestingly, it appears that what attracts the owl spirit in each case is discourse. In the first instance, it is a statement directly addressed to him. Here it is ritual wailing, which in Shokleng is fully propositional (Urban 1985, 1988). However, ritual wailing is a form of discourse that has no real-world addressee. It is intended instead to be "overheard." Therefore, the group has at least endeavored to exclude the evil spirit from discourse interaction by denying him the status of addressee. Nevertheless, the spirit overhears and, possessed apparently of a linguistic homing device, approaches the group.

Now, however, he is treated in the non-propositional way that he deserves. The final instance of reported speech focuses upon a shaman, who becomes angry (lit. "his heart split") when he hears his ceremonial mother wail and sees the evil spirit approach:

... then he went "zīn."

And "klīŋ klīŋ klīŋ klīŋ" (he) said and it broke into pieces.

These nonsensical sounds contrast with the propositional discourse which attracted the spirit in the first place. Now the spirit explodes, shattering into numerous pieces, and so the threat to the collectivity is averted.

The lesson associated with this myth may be formulated as follows: *confine linguistic interactions and deliberations to the social group*. From the point of view of this discourse norm, the myth is actually realistic in its portrayal of dangers from without. Historically, the local group was threatened by other bands of Shokleng, who would prey especially upon the women, endeavoring to capture them and kill off the men. In modern times, threats come from the Brazilians, who likewise carry off the women, albeit not forcibly, or who marry them and remain on Indian land. At another plane, however, the myth has to do with the maintenance of autonomy. To the extent that other voices gain access to collective deliberations, to that extent is local autonomy potentially threatened. This discourse norm is designed to protect the autonomy of the local group.

Emotion triggering

If there are dangers from without that the local group confronts, there are also dangers from within. Specifically, discourse can play a role in kindling emotions, and certain emotions, at least, are potentially group threatening. In the myths investigated thus far, discourse is rarely shown as evoking feelings. Here and there feelings are described. For example, the previous myth states that the shaman, prior to destroying

the evil spirit, “became angry” (lit. “his heart split”). However, the anger is not in response to a linguistic provocation. Only one myth takes as its theme the question of verbal provocation.

What is particularly intriguing about this myth is the way it implicitly distinguishes *propositional* from *pragmatic* discourse meaning, confining the emotion-triggering qualities to the latter. The reported “speech” which expresses anger and provokes is really reported song. It is not translatable or interpretable in terms of sentences. While Shokleng songs contain words and phrases, they are nonsensical from a propositional point of view. They are intermediate between genuine linguistic discourse and non-linguistic sound. In the continuum between language and sound, songs are closer to the language end, and the representations such as occurred in the previous myth (“klīŋ klīŋ klīŋ klīŋ”) are closer to the sound end.

Yet at the same time songs are conduits for affective meanings. It is unclear precisely wherein the emotional value lies. In part it is probably the isolated lexical items, in part the musical factors. From the point of view of represented goal functions, however, the key is that reported songs are related to the reported actions and emotional states of the characters in such a way that the listener infers that the songs have an emotion-triggering effect. They are the means of accomplishing, in the present myth, the goal of provocation:

The festival of the animals

Synopsis: Back when animals were more like humans, a great festival was held for them. The jaguar was next to the tapir, and the wildcat was next to the deer, and the large falcon was next to the porcupine, the one in each case wanting to kill the other. The falcon told the armadillo to dance with the porcupine, since the armadillo had a hard shell. And he sang, poking fun at them. Meanwhile, the jaguar sang, provoking the tapir, and the tapir did the same to him in return, and the jaguar did back to him likewise again. At the same time, the wildcat was singing at the deer, provoking him, and the deer did the same back to him. Then he sang provocatively at both the jaguar and the wildcat. The jaguar questioned the deer about the meaning of his song, but the deer responded with another song. Then the jaguar sprang upon the deer and killed him. Then he chased the tapir, but the tapir escaped into the water. Meanwhile, the falcon sprang upon the porcupine. Then another kind of wildcat known as the *ngòlò* sprang upon the armadillo, but the armadillo dug underground and then exited from a hole some way away. The wildcat was left singing about how angry he was at the armadillo. At this point, the wild pig transformed into the wild pig we know today, the monkey into the animal of that name, and so on with the howler monkey, the coati, and certain varieties of plants.

Aesthetically, the myth is organized around the transformation of the animals from a more human to a more animal state – from culture, that is to say, to nature. The basic contrast is between the reported speech and song, on the one side, which occurs at the beginning, and the reported nonsensical animal sounds, e.g., *mlal*, *ŋuŋuŋ*, *ceŋceŋ*, which occur at the end. The basic inference made by the listener is that provocative discourse usages lead to an undesirable consequence, namely, the outbreak of fighting and the eventual degeneration into animal form.

Much of this myth actually consists of reported speech or song. There are eight total instances of reported discourse, and four of them contain reported songs, two of these instances consisting of three songs each. One example, from among the eight reported songs contained in this narrative, is the following:

Thus he said, however, the *how* (a wildcat) went with the jaguar:
 “The jaguar’s place [wi we]
 the jaguar’s place don’t eat
 the peroba tree
 behind the tree”
 the deer was singing thusly ...

While the deer’s song makes no overall sense, it is evident from the reported speech following the song that it is interpreted as an insult. The jaguar says: “It appears that you are singing with me (i.e., insulting me).” The utterance is given an angry tone by the narrator, and this makes the pragmatic, emotion-triggering character of the previous song apparent to the listener. Here the deer endeavors to deny the provocation:

And he (said)
 “No, (all I said was)
 ‘deer
 shitting place
 behind the tree’
 that’s what I was saying.”
 Thus, he went about saying.

This song is in what is virtually a ritual wailing, rather than singing, voice (Urban 1985, 1988). But the pragmatic significance remains, and the subsequent narrative describes the jaguar as leaping upon the deer. There can be no doubt in the listener’s mind at this point that the singing has a emotion-triggering effect.

Interestingly, the very first instance of reported discourse in the myth shows the animals using fully propositional speech:

And he (the falcon) said to the armadillo,
 “My ceremonial father, dance with him for me.
 It is you who have a hard shell.”

In the next two instances, the animals engage only in singing. The fourth instance, which is the one discussed earlier, contains both singing and propositional speech, although the latter is given an angry voice quality by the narrator, making its pragmatic component more obvious to the listener.

In any case, thereafter the animals engage in no more propositional speech in the entire narrative. By the end, when they disperse, they are described as emitting only animal sounds:

The wild pig, which had been in human form, now transformed into a wild pig and went away saying “mlal.”

Meanwhile, the monkey went about in the trees saying “ñuññuñuñ.”

The howler monkey ascended saying “ñuñuñ.”

The coati ascended saying “ceñceñ.”

So the lesson of the myth is complete: using discourse pragmatically to provoke leads to undesirable consequences. Humans become animals and solidarity gives way to dispersion. The discourse norm may be formulated as follows: *never use discourse to provoke*.

This norm is linked to the actual problem of maintaining solidarity within the local community, given that its boundaries have been sealed in accord with the previous norms. In fact, the situation described in the myth is a thinly disguised version of reality. Shokleng history is replete with accounts of fights that break out at major ceremonies, and such fighting occurs even today at dances or other festive occasions.

Conclusion and further implications

If one studies what a listener could reasonably infer from the relationship between reported speech and described action, one readily appreciates that Shokleng myths make use of parallelism in goal function as one basis of their aesthetic organization. Table 9.1 demonstrates this. Goal functions are not distributed uniformly across myths. While some goal functions, notably imperative coordination, are more widespread than others, each myth tends to be dominated by a single function. In each case, half or more of the instances of quotation within a given myth are of a single functional type.

However, the issue goes beyond internal aesthetic organization. Myths as well encode normative lessons regarding language use. The listener is able to infer right and wrong, good and bad, from reflection upon what happens to the characters as a result of what they do. What consequence befalls the hummingbird for lying to the group, or the animals for provoking one another by means of song? What is the result of following instructions carefully, or of accepting the words of an unknown other at face value, without seeking collateral evidence? These are questions that a listener is left to ponder.

But one may reasonably ask: why leave the listener to ponder, infer, and reflect? Why not simply formulate the norm of language use explicitly? After all, it is difficult enough for analysis to reveal the regularities that are inferable from the relationships between reported speech and action. To leave the listener to his or her own devices in this regard is to risk failing to communicate the norm at all. This issue leads to the central enigma of how discourse can be normative or regulative of conduct in the absence of a structure of power and authority.

For if there is a risk of failing to communicate the norm because it is too implicit, because it is too delicately formulated, there is also an opposed risk, namely, that an explicitly formulated norm can be explicitly rejected. In the absence of hierarchy or a system for enforcement of rules, any endeavor to formulate rules is itself a contestable political act. The formulation would be an instance of discourse usage, and participants

Table 9.1 *Tabulation of instances of principal goal functions*

	Honey	Falcon	Snake	Owl	Festival
Information transmission	6*	4*	0	1	0
Imperative coordination	1	7	4*	1	2
Solidarity building	0	2*	3	0	1
Collective deliberation	0	0	0	2	0
Emotion triggering	0	0	0	0	5

* At least some of these functions occur as an intermediate layer with respect to some higher level of goal functioning.

could attribute pragmatic significance to it. They will tend, understandably, to see the rule as something that benefits its formulator. So how can what is in the collective interest be expressed in such a way that it is understood to be in the collective interest? The answer is that the normative moment must be only an implicit, pragmatically inferable part of something else.

This is where the aesthetic and the normative merge. Myths are something that listeners find fascinating because of their artistic, not their regulative, qualities. They want to learn about the events in the magical world to which they have been given privileged access. To package an implicit normative statement within such an attention-getting device, therefore, is to ensure that the overall discourse will be listened to, and thus that a pragmatic inference regarding norms may be made. But because the norm is only implicit, it can simultaneously escape the beacon of public consciousness, which sweeps the arena of discourse for evidence of self-interest. Myths are perfect vehicles for getting norms past that censor.

Simultaneously, to get past the censor is to become truly public discourse, to be handed down across the generations such that it is no longer a question of individuals controlling other individuals, but rather of discourse patterns (i.e., of culture) coming to dominate social life. The implicit norm is the one that achieves temporal stability. If this proposition is correct, then we should expect myths to (1) employ what is the object of the pragmatic lesson as part of the aesthetic structure, and (2) show stability over time as regards that structure. This chapter has endeavored to demonstrate the former. As regards the latter, my own evidence to date suggests that reported speech within myths is the most replicable portion of the discourse (cf. Urban 1984). While a detailed study in this regard remains to be done, it is now at least imaginable that reported speech may provide one key to understanding the mechanisms whereby culture, as a collective reality, gains its sway over individuals.

Notes

- 1 The Shokleng are Gê-speaking Indians of southern Brazil. Field research among the Shokleng in 1974–6 was funded in part by a Doherty Foundation Program in Latin American Studies grant. Further field research in 1981–2 was assisted by a grant from the Joint Committee on Latin America and the Caribbean of the Social Science Research and the American Council of Learned Societies, by a grant from the University Research Institute of the University of Texas at Austin, and by a summer grant administered through the Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of Texas at Austin from funds granted to the Institute by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. I gratefully acknowledge the support of these institutions.
- 2 Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) conception of "secondary" versus "primary genres" is closely related to the level distinction developed here. Secondary genres are those that can contain within themselves, in the form of direct quotations, more elemental ones, such as conversation or letter writing. Bakhtin was particularly intrigued by the relationship in literature between voices, specifically, the voice of the narrator as opposed to those of the characters. My concern here is somewhat orthogonal to his – although the issue of myth as a genre will surface again at the end. The concern is with the relationship not between voices, but rather between reported speech and described action, and with the regularities that can be detected in this latter regard. See also the closely related study by Hymes (1968, also 1979).
- 3 Two of the myths are already available in full English translation in print, namely, those described on pp. 244 and 246–7 below (Urban 1981, 1984).
- 4 Shokleng myths do not have titles. The titles give here are merely for purposes of identification. While the synopsis is a hopelessly inadequate means of presenting narrative texts, space prohibits presenting the narratives in their full English translation, let alone in the Shokleng versions as well.

References

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. *The dialogic imagination*, C. Emerson and M. Holquist (trans.). (= University of Texas Slavic Series 1). Austin: University of Texas Press.
1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, C. Emerson (trans.) (= Theory and History of Literature 8). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hymes, D. 1968. The 'wife' who 'goes out' like a man: reinterpretation of a Clackamas Chinook myth. *Studies in Semiotics* 7 (3): 173–99.
1979. How to talk like a bear in Takelma. *IJAL* 45: 101–6.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural description. In *Meaning in anthropology*, K. Basso and H. Selby (eds.), pp. 11–55. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Urban, Greg. 1981. Agent- and patient-centricity in myth. *Journal of American Folklore* 94 (373): 323–44.
1984. Speech about speech in speech about action. *Journal of American Folklore* 97 (385): 310–28.
1985. The semiotics of two speech styles in Shokleng. In *Semiotic mediation*, E. Mertz and R. Parmentier (eds.), pp. 311–29. New York: Academic Press.
1988. Ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil. *American Anthropologist* 90 (2): 385–400.