# ETHNOGRAPHY AND TRANSLATION[1]
# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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## Introduction

The world may be shrinking and we may be living in a "global village" or on "spaceship earth," but the panoply of a polyglot world remains. The "language gap" separates humans beings more than any other human characteristic. The only way we can bridge the gap separating us from another culture is through learning their language or through translation. Therefore, translation as the *approximation*[3] to other cultural worlds is inevitable.

Translation is the most fundamental problem of inter-cultural communication and therefore of ethnography. Ethnographers experience another culture deeply embedded within the medium of its language. Understanding that language requires translation. Even in situations where the ethnographic encounter takes place within different strata of the ethnographer's own society we must translate the language, dialect, pidgin, technical terminology, jargon, argot, etc., into the language of our readership.

Translation and especially ethnographic translation is not always recognized as central to ethnography. Often it is pushed to the periphery of the problematization of the ethnographic encounter[4]. However, considering that ethnographies often deal with subtleties of world view, it is difficult to see how such topics can be discussed with native consultants without the competent use of the natives' language. Thus the problem of ethnography is intertwined with the problem of translation (cf. Bohannan 1954, Colby 1966).

In this paper I propose a new view of ethnographic translation (section 1.). With this theoretical background I set the stage for a critique

of ethnographique practice.

My theoretical discussion starts with a definition of translation (Section 1.1). Next I introduce (Figure 1) the two continua of types of translation : the first continuum from Word-for-Word (or better Morpheme-by-Morpheme) Translation to Stimulus or Projective translation; the second continuum from Front Stage to Background Translation. I illustrate these concepts with examples (sections 1.2, 1.3 & 1.4). Finally, I touch briefly upon the question of translatability, and the issue of evaluating the quality of translating (sections 1.5, 1.6 & 1.7).

In the second half of this paper I turn to ethnography (section 2.). I start with a definition of ethnography and review next the charter practices of the "grandfathers" of our profession, Franz Boas in the United States, and Bronislaw Malinowski in England. These men, took native languages seriously and thus contributed to a higher standard of translations[5]. (section 2.1). I illustrate my assertion by quotations and examples from their work.

The students of Boas and Malinowski, and the students of their students accept, intensive participant observation and some theoretical notions of the founders, yet they tend to neglect, the Boasian and Malinowskian deep immersion and mastery of native languages (Hymes 1970:253). Consequently they also fail to address the translation problem, including the use of interpreters, and the training of native co-researchers (section 2.2).

Finally, I apply the insights of section 1. to the modern (and post-modern ?) practice of ethnography (section 2.3). I conclude reflecting on a renewed approach to ethnography that returns language and ethnographic translation to the central position that Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski assigned to it almost a century ago.

## 1. Translation

The translation of native texts is central to ethnography. It is fundamental for understanding another culture. At its best it results in a

usable approximation of the other culture, at its worst, it can degenerate into sheer fabrication.[6]

## 1.1 Translation Defined

Translation is the transfer of spoken language[7] or the written word[8] from one language into spoken or written forms of another.

The requirement of the preservation of meaning across a translation is elusive. Most bilinguals have an intuitive notion about good translation. However, the tolerances of where to draw the line vary with taste, experience, and the goals of the translation.

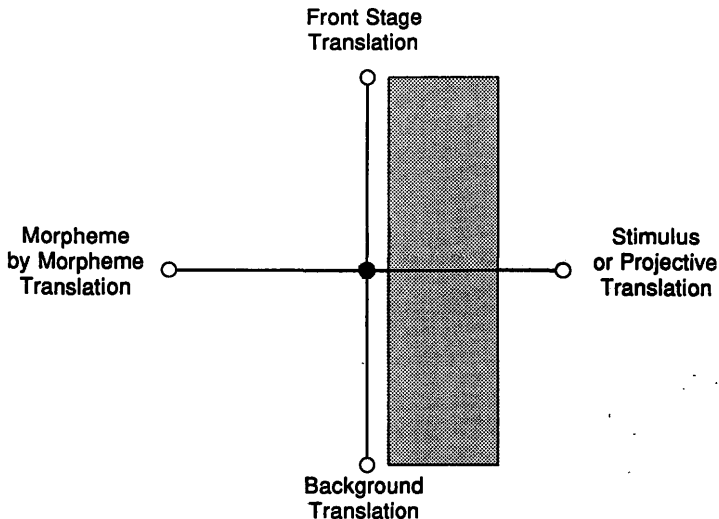All translation is located on two continua. Let me illustrate.



Figure 1
The Two Continua of Translation. The first continuum is Word-for-Word, or better Morpheme-by-Morpheme Translation *versus* Stimulus or Projective Translation; the second continuum is short, Front Stage Translation *versus* extensive, encyclopaedic translator's notes or

Background Translation. The shaded area makes the variable location of all ethnographic translation (except extreme exotic or morpheme-by-morpheme translation) toward the stimulus end of the first continuum. Extreme Stimulus or Projective Translation borders on pure fabrication.

All translation moves along a path (see Figure 1.) from literal, word-for-word, or better Morpheme-by-Morpheme Translation on the one extreme, toward Stimulus or Projective Translation on the other[9]. The result ends up somewhere right of center in the shaded area. I illustrate this movement with two examples from the language of the Navajo Indians of the US Southwest.

All translation involves some form of multi stage translation, even though it may not be made explicit. Making the steps explicit is particularly revealing in the case of ethnographic translation (see examples)[10].

The second continuum shows on one end short translations that match the succinctness of the original. I call such translations "Front Stage" Translations[11]. In ethnographic contexts, when bridging a cultural gap, such short translations are rarely intelligible to the uninitiated reader. S/he needs explanatory notes, or a background encyclopaedia. Such "Background Translation" represents the other end of this continuum : a supporting document that explains the culture laden concepts appearing in a Front Stage Translation[12].

## 1.2 Multi Stage Translation

Multi stage translation was first proposed by the Voegelins (Voegelin & Voegelin 1967). My goal is to illustrate it as a method of ethnographic translation and through it to exemplify the nature of all translation : the movement from source language to target language (ending up somewhere in the shaded area in Figure 1.)

Multi Stage Translation consists of the following five steps :

(1) Select a sentence to be translated from the Source Language into the Target Language.

For example, I translate the following Navajo sentence (in the official Navajo orthography) into English[13] :

(i)     Tł'éé'dą́ą́' níchiilgo shizhé'é tsin yídeesgoh.[14]

Following the multi-stage procedure I translate this Navajo source language sentence step by step into a free English translation[15,16].

(2) Provide the sentence with an interlinear morpheme by morpheme translation.

I segment the Navajo sentence (i) into morphemes as follows :[17]

(ii)    Tł'éé'---dą́ą́'  níchiil----go  shi-----zhé'é  tsin  yí----deesgoh.
        night-----past  snow---while  my---father  tree  it----he bumped
              (last) storm                                         against
                    (to have one)

(3) Reorder sentence (ii) following English syntax

(iii)   last (past) night while [there was] a snow storm my father he
        bumped against it tree.

Note that this step obliterates any obvious relationship between sentence (i) and (iii). Without sentence (ii) we can only guess which parts of (i) appear in which position in (iii). We are moving away from Navajo to an English conceptualization.

(4) Add all necessary morphemes required by English that are missing in the Navajo version.

After step (4) a sentence should show *all* obligatory items in *both* languages. The resulting sentence is thus loaded down with the baggage

of both languages.

(iv)     last (past) night during while there was a/the snow storm my
         father he bumped against it a/the tree.

         (5) Eliminate in (iv) all morphemes not obligatory in English.

         The result is a free translation of (i), now quite removed from the
Navajo original.

(v)      Last night during a (the ?) snow storm my father bumped against
         a (the ?) tree.

         The procedure becomes more complex when the source language
contains idioms, euphemisms, metaphorical expressions, etc. Another
example illustrates this :

Step (1) :

(vi)     Tł'ę́ę́'dą́ą́' shicheii yę́ę́' bigáál dah nídiit'i'.[18]

Step (2) :

(vii)    Tł'ę́ę́'dą́ą́'  shi----cheii   yéé'  bi----gáál   dah   nídiit'i'
         night last  my maternal late  his power off/up  started extending
              (past) grandfather       of movement       in a line

Steps (3) & (4) :

(viii)   last (past) night my late maternal grandfather's, his powers of
         movement started extending off in a line.

Step (5) :

(ix)     Last night my late grandfather's powers of movement started
         extending off in a line

or an even freer translation of the euphemism/metaphor

(x)     Last night my grandfather started losing his powers of movement and died.

The clause "and died" can be justified by noting that -yéé', translated as "the late," implies that the grandfather is now dead, while according to the verb he only *started* to lose his powers of movement. Young and Morgan (1987:620) render bigą́ą́l as "his faculties" and translate this sentence even simpler and freer than (x) above.

(xi)    Last night my grandfather passed away.

The transitions from sentence (vi) to (xi) show the movement of this sentence from a morpheme-by-morpheme translation toward sentence (xi), that is, an increasingly freer, but also toward an increased conformity with English — away from the subtleties of Navajo.

As the translation becomes free-er the role of the English imagination becomes increasingly larger. By sentence (xi) the English has become "a variation on the theme" of the original. Sentence (xi) retains merely a "family resemblance" to the Navajo. It may "say similar things" but the way it says it is different.

For ethnographic translation the interpretation of dah yídiit'i' is crucial : Is it a live metaphor ? Are the constituents still understood separately ? And does reasonable awareness exist that "extension into the distance of a wire like object starting to deteriorate" has an interpretable, "literal" sense ? In languages like Navajo, separating dead from live metaphors is difficult.

In a whimsical mood, it is a small step to embellish sentence (xi) so that it conforms, for example, to an "American Indian stereotype," though alien to Navajo in both content and spirit.

(xii)   Last night my grandfather went to his happy hunting grounds[19].

In ethnographic practice Malinowski (1935) often presents native texts in several stages of translation[20]. This represents the most effective way of displaying the process of ethnographic translation[21] and showing the transformation of the original in the process. The advantage of the Malinowskian approach is that his native texts are sufficiently rich so that revisions can be made to bring his translations to contemporary standards[22,23].

Good ethnographic translation demands the presence of both front stage (foreground) and back stage (background) translation. The former makes the other culture accessible because it approximates the length of the original. The later provides the anchor within the rich context of the source culture. The two documents should be physically separate because the terseness has its own aesthetics that need to be preserved[24,25].

## 1.3 Stimulus/Projective Translation

The notion of stimulus or projective translation needs to be amplified. I do this by way of an experiment in the translation of poetry. The American poet Robert Frost said rather pointedly : "What gets lost in translation is the poetry." Stating it another way, to translate means to create another poem in the target language.

Extending this notion of re-creation to *all texts* is the definition of stimulus/projective translation. Therefore, strictly speaking, stimulus translation of a text is not translation in the ordinary sense of the word. It is the creation of a new text *stimulated* by the source language original. This stimulation precipitates a projective response based on the "translators" own cultural background. It may therefore also be called translation by cultural transmutation[26,27].

I illustrate stimulus/projective translation by a translation experiment on a verse of the American poet Ogden Nash[28] (see Example 3.)

(xiii)   Crossing the Border
         by Ogden nash

         Senescence begins
         And middle age ends
         The day your descendants
         Outnumber you friends

(xiv)   Der Grenzeübergang
         by Ogden Nash (Mari B. Olsen, translator)

         Das Alter beginnt
         Und das mittlere Alter endet
         Am Tage da man mehr
         Nachkommen hat als Freunde.

Mari Olsen's translation is simple, "artless" and somewhat humorless, though in general it is "accurate." In the next two translations I tried to capture Nash's whimsical tone by creating two poems *stimulated* by the original[29] :

(xv)    Wenn Du mehr Erben hast als Freunde,
         beginnt das Greisenalter, leider.

The rhyme leaves something to be desired, though the basic idea comes across. The "border crossing" from "middle age" to "senescence" disappears[30]. The "leider-alas" tone, is of course, only implicit in the irony of the original.
         Here is another attempt :

(xvi)   Wenige Freunde — viele Erben
         Da bist ein Greis and kannst nun sterben.

By mentioning "death," I depart even further from the original. This can be felt more strongly when (xvi) is back-translated into English. In the process, I have gone through *two* "variations on a theme" of Ogden

Nash and *two* stimulus/projective translations — creations :

(xvii)  Many descendants — fewer friends,
        You've gotten old and life soon ends.[31,32]

Stimulus or projective translation is the only method we have to make another culture *accessible* to a reading/listening audience. This does not mean that stimulus translation cannot retain some authenticity, or that it necessarily has to be fanciful or embellished. Some degree of stimulus/ projective translation is *inevitable*. It represents the only way we can approximate the cultural knowledge of others. In ethnographic translation we must try for *close* "family resemblances"[33].

Only language proficiency in the native language, the collection of native texts, and a close cooperative arrangement with a native speaker/ translator/ interpreter, can create a climate for a translation to become as authentic as possible.

## 1.4 Translatability

Translation from one language to another rests on the assumption that all human languages are intertranslatable[34,35,36]

## 1.5 Formal Considerations

The only form of intertranslatability I consider here are cross language definitions. The Aristotelian form of definitions is

(xviii) Definiendum equals Genus and Differentiae[37,38]

Stated explicitly : For any word ($A_1$) standing for a concept in any source language ($L_1$), there exists an appropriate genus ($B_2$) (or a set of genera) and an appropriate set of modifiers $\{C_2\}$ in the target language ($L_2$).

This means that :

*A definition can be created for any source language term in any target language*[39].

That the translator is not constrained by time or text length is a corollary. For complex, abstract concepts the set differentiae $\{C_2\}$ may become large — even monograph length[40]

Ethnographers sometimes refuse to use easily misleading target language *glosses* — especially in the case of abstract, folk-theoretical terms. For example, Bohannan & Bohannan (1953) assume that the translation of the Tiv concept *tsav* is problematic and use their monograph to construct (informally) a definition of it[41] (see Figure 2.)[42,43,44].

**Tsav**

- is a **force**
    force that is neutral
      force that is positive
      force that is supra-normal
- can be good
- [can be] possessed
          possession of *tsav* does not indicate a witch
- is possessed by [all?] old people
- is an attribute
        attribute which endows its possessor
                  the possessor may be unaware [of this]
        attribute that may lead to actions
        attribute that may lead a force
                force greater than the possessor intended
                    intended consciously
- is like **power** (some aspects of it)
      power that is personal
      power that is like charisma
      power that is like mana
      power that is like wakanda
      power [shows] evidence
                evidence [that a man is] enabled
                  enabled to dominate a situation
                  enabled to turn event the way he wishes

                                        enabled to command obedience
                                        enabled to attract loyalty
                                        enabled through charm
                                                      persuasion
                                                      bullying
                                                      whatever means
- [is]  talent
        talent that is present at birth
        talent that must be developed
                may be developed slowly without a loss
                                        loss to neighbors
                                        loss that is apparent
                                        loss that is sudden
- is having ability
            ability in the sense of talent
                    in the sense of wealth
                    in the sense of affluence
- [means having]  many wives
                  many children
                  farms [that are] large and provide large harvests
- attracts people
- can  promote health
       promote fertility
- can ward off attacks of enemies

- can be bad
- gives  power
        power over other people
        power that sets the possessor apart [from others]
        power that is distrusted
        power that can be kept at bay
                        kept at bay only through a *tsav* that is greater
- can be used to fight   *tsav*
                        *tsav* that is misused
                            that is used meanly
                            that is used selfishly
- is directed by the possessor
- [can be used] to bewitch another
                to send  omens of evil
                         omens [through] dreams
- [can be used] to make   poisons
                          poisons that kill men

- is **dangerous**
    danger [is] mystical

- is **a substance**
    a substance   that grows
                  that grows on the heart
                              the hearts of some humans
                              the hearts of some animals
    a substance connected with witchcraft
    a substance required to become a witch
- looks like   the liver
               [the liver is larger] (tsav is smaller than the liver)
- can be good
  [when] good it has  edges
                      edges that are rounded
- can be bad
  [when] bad it has edges
                    edges that are notched
             it is  made
                    made by a diet of human flesh
- can be   red
           black
           white
           a mixture of colors
- [can]  grow
         grow claws in the last stage of degradation


### Figure 2

A Systematized Constructed Definition of the Tiv Concept *Tsav* from Bohannan & Bohannan 1953:84-85 Compiled by Cheryl Brown. *Tsav* seems to be the mark of exceptional individuals. It is difficult to tell to what extent *tsav* is a substance and to what extent the substantial parts of it are metaphors. A person's *tsav* "having claws" may be part of a very effective way of persuasion, for example, against a witch. I have marked some of the genera that are modified in this encyclopaedic definition in bold face type.

Why is it then that we hear the expression, "There is no word for that in my language ?" or "That cannot be translated"[45].

Figure 2 demonstrates that the Tiv word *tsav* can be translated into English as a background text, but it has no easy translation label[46]. In "ordinary" (usually literary) translation the translator needs translation labels or the translation becomes too encumbered with translator's notes[47].

However, ethnographic translation cannot function under such constraint. It is precisely that species of translation that provides explanations of a native text, either in the form of translators notes (e.g., Sapir and Hoijer 1942), or as a background encyclopaedic dictionary (e.g., Nielson & Nessheim (1962) Lapp, Franciscan Fathers (1912) Navajo, Albisetti and Venturelli (1962) Bororo, or the 16th century ethnographic encyclopaedia of the Aztecs by Sahagún (Edmonson 1974)[48].

## 1.6 Translation Quality

The evaluation of quality is crucial for judging translation[49]. Quality of ethnographic translation can be evaluated along two independent continua (Krupat 1992:4) : *authenticity (accuracy, fidelity) versus accessibility (artistry/style).*
In Figure 3. I imagine both continua evaluated on a five point scale. The dimension of accessibility contains aesthetics. However, the dimension of authenticity or accuracy does not favor artistic expression[50].

As *accessibility* increases accuracy *decreases*. My first approximation is a linear function. It is clear that the axes are more accurately linked by a curve (a circle segment, dot and dashed line) : Accuracy decreases rapidly as the translator increases accessibility. On the other end of the scale, when accessibility is very high there is very little authenticity left. The optimal point (see intersection of dashed lines) seems to be relatively low on accuracy *and* on accessibility.
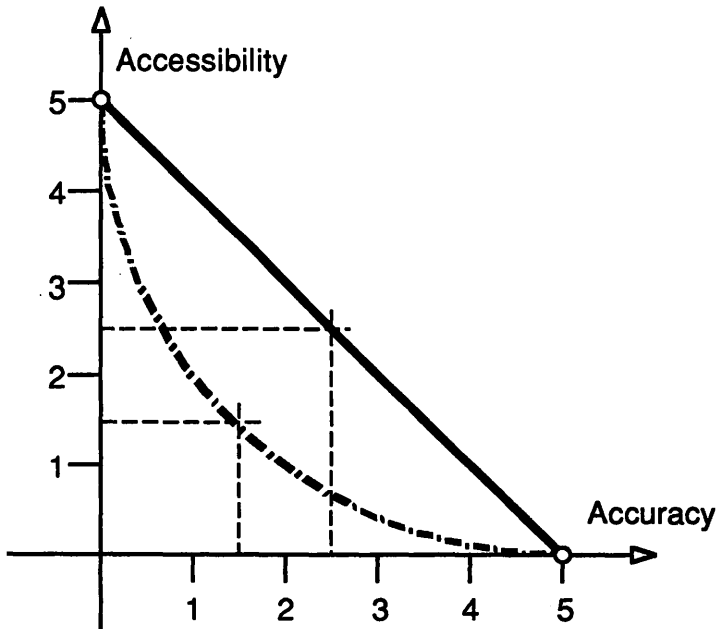
Figure 3
The Two Continua for the Evaluation of Translation

Near the accuracy end of the scale is what is sometimes called "artless" translation that may be high in authenticity or accuracy, but fails to reflect the artistry of the source language. This highlights the difficulty of accurate *and* an aesthetically pleasing translation.

On the other end of the scale, translation that reproduces the artistic styles of the target language necessarily departs from accuracy[51].

In ethnographic translation we must evaluate a target language text on its authenticity. Only after the authenticity of the Front Stage Translation document has been judged adequate, and there exists a background encyclopaedia (or translator's notes), should we prepare translations for general audiences that require greater accessibility — inevitably at the expense of authenticity[52,53].

Not surprisingly, poems in translation are often presented side by side with the original. The bilingual reader can evaluate the target language creations by him/her/self.

This practice needs to become even more stringent in ethnographic translation. It should contain :
       (1) The original texts,
       (2) the multi stage translation process,
       (3) free *translations*[54], and
       (4) the background encyclopaedic document

This standard may be relaxed for topics more or less periferal to the goals of the ethnography.

## 2. Ethnography

So far I have focused on translation. Now I turn to the application of translation to ethnography. I start with a long overdue definition of ethnography (2.1). I continue with the two founders of modern anthropology, Boas and Malinowski, concentrating on the role of language in their fieldwork (2.2). This topic inevitably leads to ethnographic translation.

Next I look at language use in field work by a number of post-Boasian, and post-Malinowskian ethnographers (2.3). Finally, I evaluate and critique modern and so called post-modern ethnographic practice (2.4 & 3.).

### 2.1 Ethnography Defined

An ethnography is the description of another culture so that members of the ethnographer's culture can begin to understand its basic patterns[55]. Of special importance is the natives' voice in the description of their own life. An ethnography cannot present simply the ethnographer's voice.

Culture is a complex structure that *accrues* to any human group over

time. A human individual is the smallest unit of culture. A human dyad of intimately connected individuals is also a culture. Finally, all human groups and groups within groups each have a culture, all the way up to the "global culture" of all terrestrial humans — the largest unit of culture. Thus, following Colby (1973), a culture is logically a bound variable, always "the culture of X", where the X designates an human group[56].

For the readers of an ethnography the world, or better, the knowledge of the world, of the natives is of focal interest. Less interesting are the ethnographer's feelings, opinions, even theories about the other culture. The ethnographer's voice should not monopolize the description.

In order to use, compare and contrast cultures we must have reliable pictures of other cultures — as they see themselves and talk about their experiences in their own language. The collection of native language texts is thus indispensable.

## 2.2 Boas and Malinowski

"All ethnography is translation" (Colby 1966)[57]. The founding fathers of modern ethnography, Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski knew this well. However, they did not explicitly recognize the power of background Translation[58]. Nevertheless, both collected native language texts and recognized and proclaimed their ethnographic worth. Such texts may be viewed as equivalent to background encyclopaedias though they are less systematic[59].

Boas's and Malinowski's practice has left us a rich corpus of texts in a form (with literal and free translations) that can be used and re-analyzed today with new techniques and new ideas (see Swann 1992a, especially Berman 1992 and 1.3).

What sets both Boas and Malinowski apart from most post-Boasians[60] and post-Malinowskians is the emphasis on language : proficiency in the native language coupled with an emphasis on the collection of extensive native language texts.

Language proficiency is related to the length of field work. Malinowski spent more than two years in the Trobriand Islands (an extraordinarily long time by today's standards). Boas spent years (off-and-on) in the northwest of the North American continent but never achieved Malinowski's language competence in any native language (Eckert 1973). At the same time he collected extensive texts in several native languages of the area.

However, Boas did the next best thing to expert language competence : he trained George Hunt, who was a Kwakiutl (Kwakw'la) speaker and provided Boas with information that he himself could not obtain[61,62].

Most surprising in the history of modern and post-modern ethnography is the limited extent to which native consultants/speakers have been brought into ethnographic process. Rarely are these collaborators mentioned explicitly. Even less frequently do collaborators appear on the title pages of publications.

In recent years, only more or less "positivist" ethnographers seem to have published with their consultants' names listed as co-authors[63].

The innovation is not the use of native research collaborators, but that the collaborators are taught to write their own languages, to conduct ethnographic or linguistic analyses independently, and, most importantly, that they receive recognition on the front pages of ethnographic papers and monographs.

Given the time and effort it takes to teach consultants literacy in their native language and proficiency in ethnographic methods, it is not surprising that so few have followed Boas' example[64].

Berman (1992), after severely criticizing some of Boas's translations, summarizes his contribution :

"I believe his goals were sound. Too often ethnographers tell us *what they think people are like, without telling us what people say*

*themselves*" (Berman 1992:157, emphasis mine)[65].

Without native texts, native thought is presented second-hand in questionable stimulus translation (see below) rather than in the authentic voice of the consultants.

Boas decried this double standard that is applied differently to the study of "civilized people" than to the study of non-literate cultures. He writes :

"Nobody would expect an authoritative account of the civilization of China or Japan from a man who does not speak the language readily, and who has not mastered their literatures. The student of antiquity is expected to have thorough mastery of the ancient languages" (Boas 1966 : 56).

and again closer to native languages

"I have spared no trouble to collect...[texts] in the language of the Indians, because in these the points that seem important to him are emphasized" (Boas 1909:309)[66].

Long after it has ceased to be fashionable to speak about "primitives", "savages," and "barbarians" in the context of ethnography, long after the demise of the most blatant forms of colonialism, an intellectual imperial-ism remains that asserts that a trained ethnographer can figure out things that are beyond the intellectual capacity of the natives. Evans-Prichard has stated this perhaps most blatantly (Evans-Prichard 1968:51)[67]. That these "primitive" languages can be *used*, but do not have to be learned, and learning them constitutes frivolous virtuosity was Mead's assertion (1939). The most extreme form of this view comes from Levi-Strauss (1963) who wants us to believe that the quality of translation does not matter at all in the interpretation of native American mythology[68].

Malinowski saw the problem of translation in ethnography. He writes, "It is a long way from the mouth of the native informant to the mind of

an English reader (Malinowsky 1935.2:4).

Malinowski was multilingual in at least Polish, German, French, some Spanish, and English. He studied the classical languages of Greek and Latin. In addition he spoke good Kilivila (Trobriand)[69], New Guinea Pidgin, and some Motu. He understood the potential distortion of bad translation on ethnographic quality[70].

Malinowski's views on language parallels Boas's[71]. He clearly saw the utility of word-for-word translation[72]. By publishing many of these he left us a legacy of better understanding the Trobriand islanders. Berman's critique and accolade of Boas apply to Malinowsky as well[73].

## 2.3 The Second Generation and Beyond

The second and third ethnographic generation after Boas and Malinowski skimped on language proficiency and on detailed attention to translation[74,75].

In the work of many ethnographers the contact language is often a Pidgin. Boas was aware of the limitations of working in Pidgin jargons[76]. "Despite the inferiority of trade languages," Boas writes, "most ethnographers use them to elucidate '... the *innermost thoughts and feelings* of a people'" (Eckert 1973:2, quoting Boas [1911] 1966:56, emphasis added). While Chinook Jargon was Boas's contact language he collected texts in native languages.

Malinowski's views on the use of Pidgins are similar. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski, who used limited Motu and Mailu in his early fieldwork (1967), emphasized the inadequacy of Pidgin-English (1922:5) for expressing ideas and suggests that until the [ethnographer] can control the native language he will forego free communication (Eckert 1973:5)[77].

But even the use of a Pidgin may be admissible if its use is noted and it is accompanied by the original texts that can answer the question :

"what exactly did the consultants say in their Pidgin ?"[78].

By the end of World War II anthropologists specialized. Dealing with languages was left to linguistic anthropology. The four-field approach strained to survive. Often courses in linguistic anthropology became electives and recently departments around the United States started to abolish linguistic anthropology positions.

The trend to de-emphasize language proficiency in field work, started much earlier. With a few exceptions, Boas's and Malinowski's students, who did not specifically concentrate on linguistics, abandoned intimate knowledge of native languages. Neither did they follow intensive collaboration with native speakers.

It is difficult to assess the language competence of the post-Boasian and post-Malinowskian generations of ethnographers : their understanding and speaking of native languages and, at least indirectly, their ability to translate competently from these languages into the languages of their readers.

We have to rely almost exclusively on self-reports. These are notorious for claiming more than they can deliver. Through reading their ethnographies, life histories (whenever available), reading between the lines, or relying on the reports of their students, Eckert (1973), Rohner (1975), Franklin (1992), and Brown (1992) manage to evaluate the language competence of a number of ethnographers. Their results are summarized in the following table[79,80] (Figure 4).

Nida's (1957) five point scale for evaluating the language competence of non-native speakers is followed by my comments[81].

(1) Familiarity with a few words and phrases. Ability to greet and take leave plus make known very elementary needs. This involves a vocabulary of probably two to three hundred words (Nida 1957:11).

| Ethnographer (Language) | Reduced Verbal Code | | | | Normal Code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Ashton (Sotho)* | | | | • | ——≫? |
| Bateson (Itamul)** | • | | | | |
| Boas (Kwakiutl)*** | | • | | | |
| Bohannans (Tiv)*** | | | | • | ——≫? |
| Evans-Prichard (Nuer)*** | • | | | | |
| Firth (Tikopia)*** | | • | ——≫? | | |
| Fortes (Talensi)* | • | | | | |
| Henry (Kaingang) | | | • | ——≫? | |
| Herskovits (Fon)* | • | | | | |
| Leach (Burma-Jinghpaw)*** | | | • | ——≫? | |
| Levine (Gusi)* | | • | | | |
| Levi Strauss (?)*** | • | | | | |
| Lowie (Crow)*** | ?≪—— • | | | | |
| Malinowski (Trobriand)*** | | | | • | ——≫? |
| Mead (several)*** | • | | | | |
| Nadel (Nupe)* | | • | | | |
| Radcliffe-Brown(Andaman)*** | ?≪—— • | | | | |
| Richards (Bemba)*** | | • | | | |

Figure 4
Some Well Known Ethnographers Tabulated by Native Language
Fluency (adapted and expanded based on Eckert 1973)

Commentary re (1) :

Lowie (1935) describes with unusual candor and integrity his Crow proficiency and illuminates a perennial problem in work with Native Americans. It is worthwhile quoting him in full

> "I know several thousand words, have made some progress with the study of grammar and am able to bandy routine phrases with a passer-by, can sample ethnographic queries unaided. Yet I can follow Crow conversation only when I am conversant with the subject matter, and absolutely disclaim any ability to deliver a speech or tell a story of my own in half idiomatic Crow; I can avoid error only by slavishly clinging to the forms I learnt" (Lowie 1935:xix).

I suspect Lowie's including predicament is characteristic of many ethnographers. Those inclusing lexicographic investigations — with folk definitions, or collecting extensive texts — easily fall into the same category as Lowie[82]. Yet none of Nida's categories can do Lowie, or these ethnographers, full justice. Lowie, like Boas and Malinowski, was multilingual and knew first hand what it means to be a competent bilingual[83].

Bateson's honest assessment of his language deficiencies in Itamul (1932)[84] places him clearly into Nida's first category. I quote him at some length.

> A great deal of time was devoted to language; but I only succeeded in speaking a *kind of jargon*, by means of which much of my information was collected. Most of my material is, however, in the form of dictated texts which even now I can only partially translate. In these text phrases of jargon are mixed with correct Itamül syntax.

> I was never able to understand natives when they conversed amongst themselves, and of course it was quite impossible for me to understand what they said when excited, as in the continual violent

quarrels which took place in the village. I was dependent upon informants who were either trained to dictate or trained to use my *miserable jargon of their language* (Bateson 1932:245, emphasis Eckert's 1973:21)[85].

In Nida's classification I move Lowie's "tendency" up to column (2), and the arrow down to (1) even though he was probably harsher on himself, given his record of candor and honesty[86,87]. Nadel, with his toneless Nupe, and Evans-Prichard, who started his brief field work with a smattering of marginally relevant Arabic,[88] are also firmly in this category. How he was able to collect anything and learn the language without an interpreter borders on the miraculous. Boas in column (2) should probably have an arrow pointing to (1).

(2) Practical use of language in very restricted circumstances, such as giving instruction to helpers or buying food. Ability to follow the gist of a conversation if subject matter is familiar (Nida 1957:11).

Commentary re (2) :

Nida's scale fails to specify whether or not the ethnographer has learned the so called "contact language" which is often a local Pidgin, or some other forms of speech such as Leach's Jinghpaw (1954), that is an elite *lingua franca*. How this may have affected his research is anybody's guess considering the importance of language as a mesure of status in highland Burma.[89]

Nadel's assertion that he learned an adequate but simplified and *toneless* Nupe is suspect. His statement speaks for itself, "It took me six month to master *a Nupe* language, which has no tones, and a simple grammar, but is unrecorded" (Nadel 1951:46 in Eckert 1973:19, emphasis mine). Speaking African languages without tone may be compared to speaking English without vowels[90].

(3) Ability to understand speech with fair comprehension of subject matter not too foreign to receptor's own experience. Ability to make

speeches, if prepared in advance, using a limited vocabulary (Nida 1957:11).

Commentary re (3) :

Ability to make speeches implies fluency in the language. But "fluency" in a language can be very misleading as I have shown in my dissertation (Werner 1963, confirmed by Eckert 1973, and Franklin 1992). Even speakers of very limited Pidgins can become amazingly fluent in their oversimplified speech as long as they stay within a limited set of cultural domains. Native speakers dealing regularly with such a speaker become accustomed to it.

In the case of languages where neither a standard, nor a standard orthography, a grammar, nor a literature exists, it is very easy to learn an *ad hoc* pidgin : fluently but very imperfectly. Under these conditions ethnographers can make unbelievable blunders[91]. Good natured blunders can break the ice. They can also be insulting, destroy communication, and, worst of all, can lead to counterfeit information.

(4) Ability to understand rapid conversation on practically all subjects plus ability to participate in such conversations on familiar themes. "One does not have to grope for correct grammatical forms, and for all practical purposes one is fluent in the language, though not necessarily an expert" (Nida 1957:11).

Commentary re (4) :

One does not have to grope for correct grammatical form, but the form that comes fluently may be drastically simplified or pidginized (see item 3.). Mastering "practically all subjects" is unrealistic, considering that natives have to be *trained* in technical vocabularies of special trades, professions, and roles, etc., before they can effectively translate and interpret[92]. My caveats about fluent *ad hoc* Pidgins[93] apply here again.

(5) Exhibiting complete facility as evidenced by ability to joke and

pun, and to employ specialized idioms and proverbial statement in their proper context (Nida 1957:11).

Commentary re (5) :

Among well known anthropologists Malinowski[94], the Bohannans, and less probably Henry[95] and Leach may have reached this stage. The Bohannans spent at least three years with the Tiv, Malinowski at least two on Trobriand, and Henry was (at least according to his own report) a gifted polyglot[96]. Again, it is worthwhile to quote Malinowski in full

> It took me about one year to speak easily, and I acquired full proficiency only after some *eighteen month* of practice, that is, towards the middle of my second expedition (Malinowski 1935:xi in Eckert 1973:20)[97,98].

Malinowski was a polyglot. His extensive texts underline his skills. It is difficult to evaluate to what extent if any he used native interpreters on Trobriand. Concerning his early field work in New Guinea his diaries are explicit. He used interpreters with Motu and Mailu[99].

Strangely, many ethnographers with marginal language proficiency (e.g., Mead 1939, Nadel 1951, and Leach 1954) "dispense with" the use of interpreters as if they were disposable and there was some magic in doing ethnography "all by oneself"[100].

The role of interpreters is not appreciated throughout history. Those totally dependent on them are loathing them most (Klaniczay personal communication[101]). Ethnographers should know better.

This feeling of being at the mercy of interpreters and translators is well summed up by the wisdom expressed in Italian "Tradutore traditore" — to translate is to betray. Lowie once more hits the nail on the head with his candor : "We use interpreters not because we like to, but because we have no other choice" (Lowie 1940:89)[102].

### 2.3.1 Comments by 'Native' Ethnographers

When former natives talk back the results are disturbing. Maxwell Owusu's (1978) critique of Africanists is a case in point. Again and again he returns to the problem of ethnographers not speaking the native language well enough to produce reliable ethnographies[103,104].

Owusu repeats Boas' statement (see p.5) about ethnographic standards that must meet the criteria of language proficiency in the study of complex, literate societies — including our own. He cites with approval Schneider (1968), who argues in favor of the central role of the native scholar in ethnographic fieldwork — dealing with American kinship[105].

Owusu ridicules Fortes for sidestepping the issue by "...cleverly elevating the difficulties [lack of language familiarity and the ethno-grapher as an outsider] into cardinal and universal principle of value-free scientific [ethnography]" (Owusu 1978:322)[106].

Owusu continues,

"... if we were to take Fortes' comments seriously one would have to reject as scientifically useless what western social scientists write about their own society. Schneider's American Kinship, for example, would have to be scientifically worthless." (Owusu 1978:331 endnote).

So would not, for example, William Foote White's (1943) classic *Streetcorner Society* and many other ethnographies of European and American groups.

And

"[Western ethnographers]... continue to produce "authoritative" monographs and essays on African culture without seriously worrying about the degrading effects of their language deficiencies on the quality of the data" (Owusu 1978:327)[107].

Amerigo Paredes's (1977) review of ethnographies about the Chicano, Border Spanish speakers of the United States, is another example. In many respects his critique parallels Owusu's. He too is concerned about methodology and language proficiency[108].

His point is even more damaging to ethnographic practice if we consider that most of the ethnographers on his critical list *do speak Spanish*. They failed, however, to appreciate the *subtleties* of the local dialect.

Paredes mentions numerous examples of otherwise respectable ethnographers misinterpreting the Border Spanish — a language in which circumspection and indirection were for centuries (?) the better part of valor.

Three sources of error are singled out by Parades, a folklorist :

First, lack of subtlety of language, which the ethnographers may or may not control in their acquired formal Spanish, but do not control in the local dialect.

Second, a lack of understanding of verbal art, and

Third, a lack of knowledge of border Hispanic folklore. As a result conventionalized tales are sometimes recorded as facts (Paredes 1977)[109, 110].

## 2.4 Discussion : Ethnography and Stimulus Translation[111]

If the ethnographer does not control the language, or if s/he communicates through a Pidgin, chances are that s/he maintains "field notes" in his or her own language perhaps with a sprinkling of native terms and occasional phrases, perhaps later in the course of field work[112].

Nevertheless, *the source language and culture are both experienced in the language of the natives, which the ethnographer controls,*

*marginally at best. The final ethnographic report is thus based entirely on field notes and all analysis is undertaken entirely on texts in the ethnographer's language.*

Careful, systematic translation never enters the equation There are no native texts, no transcriptions of interviews or conversation in the native language — only field notes in the language of the ethnographer[113].

The experience of the native culture and language act as a stimulus — no matter how intensively the ethnographer participates — and the ethnographer's response is projective in his or her own language/culture (see 1.4 and Werner 1993:25). The life and ways of the natives become mere inkblots to be interpreted by the *ethnographer's psyche*. In the process we may find out more about the quirks of the ethnographer than what interests us most : an understanding of another culture.

The sprinkling of native terms in the ethnographic text is a step in the right direction, though it is still based to a high degree on projections based on the ethnographer's own biases. The reasons are simple : The ethnographer takes a sucessful first step, but fails to undertake the next step of systematic ethnography *in the native's language*. The translation process remains unsystematic. No intermediate native texts exist.

A strange post-modern critique leads Clifford to deny the most basic humanity of the natives, which lies in their ability to comment *in their native language* on native life as well as on the ethnographer's descriptions of it. He does this by taking Lowie to task for taking native languages seriously in the famous Mead-Lowie et al. debate (1939-1941)[114] on the uses of field languages. Clifford comments :

"Lowie (1940) [was] writing from an older Boasian tradition, more philological in orientation. But this was rear guard action; the point has been generally established that valid research could, in practice, be accomplished on the basis of one or two years 'familiarity with a foreign vernacular" (Clifford 1983:30)[115].

Clifford is correct if we consider Pidgin ethnographies "valid research." I do not think any human language can be learned well enough for sensitive field work in one year[116]. Clifford contradicts himself in his next sentence. In his view.

"... even though as Lowie suggested, no one would credit a translation of Proust that was based on an equivalent knowledge of French" (Clifford 1983:30-31).

Clifford's statement reiterates the unacceptable position that Boas denounced two generations ago : French literature must be clearly superior to any "primitive" language text.

Yet this double standard is alive in post-modern ethnographic thinking. In this view, to comprehend "primitive culture" learning their language is superfluous or can be accomplished in a few months. Margaret Mead can do it speechless but with her "extraordinary powers of visual analysis" (Clifford 1983:31). She can understand the rules of a game and what she observes with such "great visual acuity" without consulting the natives' in their languages. It is not surprising that Clifford thinks that "we are seeing signs that the privilege given to natural language and, as it were, natural culture, is dissolving" (1983:95); Equally dissolving is the accountability of the ethnographer to produce a defensible account of another culture[117].

But what is this privilege of natural language ? Human language is the most humanistic power tool that human beings use to talk about their cultural experience and pass much of it on to the next generation. Language is the vehicle for praise, for critique, for raising questions about the *Predicament of Culture* (Clifford 1983). Ultimately, Clifford denies that there is any need for translation. In his book mere casual travelogues can serve as ethnographies, based on reports of lurking, mute travelers[118].

In the post-modern view it is not clear who "owns" the field notes (Clifford 1983:45). But that is only a problem as long as we speak of

"generalized field notes" and exclude native texts. Traditional field notes are clearly the result of stimulus/projective translation. The natives live their culture and language. The ethnographer records everything in his or her language. There are no native texts to translate. The description goes from native "reality" directly into English text recklessly out of control.

As soon as we separate "field notes" into the Journal (predominantly in the language of the ethnographer), from the verbatim transcriptions of native utterances (interviews or conversations) the problem disappears. A reliable ethnography emerges from the creative interplay of these two documents. That the relation of these two documents to each other is not symmetrical need not concern us here[119,120].

Without extensive native texts it is impossible to collate definitions (constructed)[121] that explain how native terms are used in native *con-texts* — the *sine qua non* of the Malinowskian and less explicitly Boasian approach to ethnography. It may be old fashioned but if we want ethnographies that resemble native cultures there is no more fundamental approach[122].

The process of verbatim transcription and translation is time consuming and expensive. It is well worth the accuracy that is based upon the proper understanding of carefully defined native terms or at least concepts that are exemplified within native texts. The fact that human cultures are complex and multiple interpretations are possible make this labor intensive ethnography even more imperative[123].

Current ideologies in ethnography do not help ethnographic practice. Claiming that all cultural description is fiction invented by the ethnographer (Clifford 1983, Wagner 1975) denies the reality of the native's language and culture. It is a denial of their humanity. It negates the problem as well as the possibility of careful, systematic, translation and ethnography.

Pushed to its logical conclusion it negates the need for ethnographic field work. If all ethnography is "fiction" or is "invented" then why

bother with the inconvenience and indignities of doing field work ?

In the sense in which I use "stimulus translation" in this paper, as an imaginative re-creation of a text in another language/culture system, the "culture as fiction" view of ethnography is correct. But then the ethnography becomes analogous to the Italian folk tale about the "Cock and the Mouse" that Cushing told his Zuni Indian friends. A year later it was retold by a Zuni story teller (Cushing 1901:411-422) in transformed Zuni-ized form. The ethnography becomes a recreation (if not fabrication) of the other culture by fanciful stimulus/projective translation by an ethnographer who experiences the native's culture *without the benefit of language*. Simultaneously s/he is highly articulate in his or her own culture proclaiming the value of his or her description of the culture of the natives. While the ethnographer is presumably "enriching" the fictional literature (verbal culture) of his home culture the verbal culture of the natives is ignored. The asymmetry of this equation is grotesque.
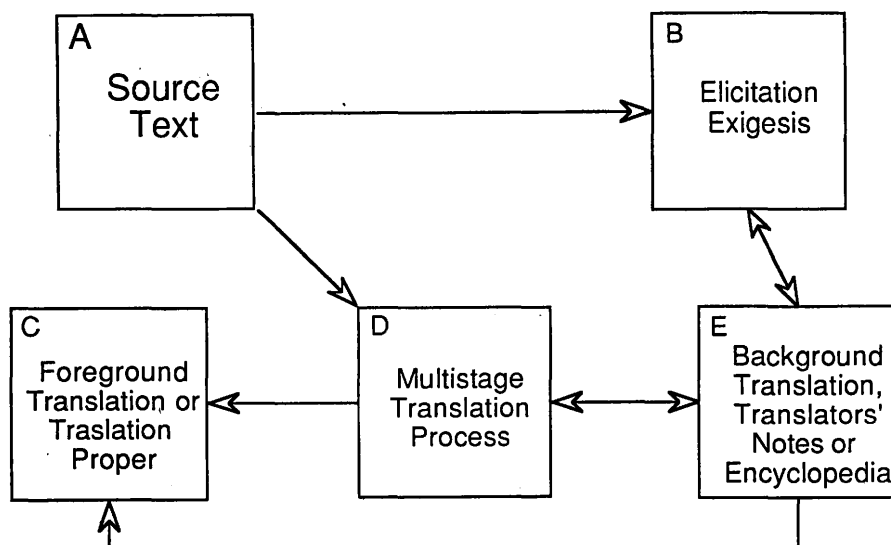
But cultural description as a projective response as the *only* ethnographic alternative can only be maintained by denying the possibility of, or even the need for, controlled translation that transfers cultural knowledge from one culture/language system into another — the ethnographer's — *with some degree of fidelity*[124].

Ignoring the native language and the translation problem may account for Naroll's (1962) disturbing finding that there is no difference between the quality of ethnographies written by amateurs and professional ethnographers. Since both are based almost entirely, or even exclusively, on stimulus/projective translation with no attempt at controlling the translation process, a convergence toward an unprofessional, common denominator becomes completely predictable[125].

That this fact has not created a scandal in our profession represents a metascandal and a sad comment in itself on the state of the craft and also the art of ethnography.

## 3. Conclusions

I summarize my arguments on translation by the following graph, or flow chart of the ethnographic translation process.

```
┌─────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────┐
│ A               │                    │ B               │
│                 │                    │                 │
│    Source       │─────────────────▷ │   Elicitation   │
│     Text        │                    │   Exigesis      │
│                 │                    │                 │
│                 │╲                   │                 │
└─────────────────┘ ╲                  └─────────────────┘
                     ╲                          ▲│
                      ╲                         │▽
┌───────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐   ┌───────────────────┐
│ C             │    │ D           │   │ E                 │
│  Foreground   │    │             │   │  Background       │
│ Translation or│◁───│ Multistage  │◁─▷│  Translation,     │
│  Traslation   │    │ Translation │   │  Translators'     │
│   Proper      │    │  Process    │   │  Notes or         │
│               │    │             │   │  Encyclopedia     │
└───────────────┘    └─────────────┘   └───────────────────┘
        ▲                                        │
        └────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 5
Steps in Ethnographic Translation

Source text (A) and elicitation (C) contribute to an encyclopaedic background document (D) that is explicit and is used by the readers as a substitute for the cultural knowledge of the native. It aids in the interpretation of the "free" or target language "smooth", "foreground" or "front stage" translation (E) that was created through the multi stage translation process (B).

All translation is localized somewhere between morpheme-by-morpheme translation and stimulus or projective translation. Even in highly controlled multistage translation the final "free" translation requires a degree of creative, culture bound, target language imagination. That is, all "free" translation is culture bound to the target culture. How-

ever, as Figure 3 indicates, there may be an optimal point (or area) of accuracy and acceptable accessibility. If in doubt, it is better to err on the side of authenticity and minimize accessibility. Accessibility over accuracy can be considered seriously only for lay audience.

Ethnographers who eschew reliance on native texts, whose field notes are in the ethnographer's language while experiencing the natives in the context of their own language and culture, create unnecessarily culture bound ethnographies — or sheer fiction, that in final analysis requires no field work at all.

Finally, the legacy of the founders of our profession, Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski, calls for a return to the collection of native texts and to giving the natives a voice in their own ethnographies. First in their native languages and then in careful translations of their texts.

The training of native ethnographers is an important and inevitable by product of this process. They must share the accountability as well as the prestige of publication. We cannot afford to wait until all host cultures of the world have produced their own equivalents to Doctorates in Anthropology.

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## Notes

1.    This paper has had several ancestral forms. The first was a presentation in a seminar on the philosophy of science at Northwestern University (The CISST seminar) in February 1993. I

presented a somewhat improved version in the Linguistics Department at Northwestern in April 1993. Next were two versions at a colloquium and in an open seminar at the University of Gent, Belgium. Finally, I presented a shorter version at a conference at the Janus Pannonius University in Pécs, Hungary, entitled The Self, the Other and the Foreign in Anthropology" on November 13, 1993. All of these papers owe much to the seminars on translation I taught at Northwestern in 1990 and 1992 and the students who participated. I am specifically grateful for ideas from Mari Olsen, Cheryl Brown, and Julia Sheurr. Several colleagues have read various drafts and commented, among these I was particularly grateful for comments by Donald T. Campbell, Barbara Frankel, Phil Bock, Christina von Nolken, Kostas Kazazis, Bob Launay, Bill Nichols, Dan Strauss, Rik Pinxten and many others.

3.     "Approximation" in both senses of getting closer and asymptotically getting to know better and better without ever reaching "total" knowledge, which may be inherently impossible.
The severity of the problem of translation is underlined by estimates of the number of human languages on this earth that range from a couple of thousand to over five thousand. Beyond the less than half dozen world languages with hundreds of millions of speakers lies the universe of thousands of small languages that almost by default are the domain of anthropology and ethnography.

4.     Some modern variants of ethnographic critiques (e.g., Clifford 1983:95) question the dependence of ethnography on language and on translation by implication.

5.     This is not the place to discuss the shortcomings of Boas's and Malinowski's work.

6.     In view of what has been said in recent years about ethnography it is important to remember that I view it as a description — first

and foremost.

Some may accuse me that this is "butterfly collecting." My answer is that we are or should be still at the natural history stage of our science and have not yet learned the best ways to collect our "butterflies".

To what extent it is a "fabrication" by the ethnographer depends on the quality of the ethnographer's work. First, I hope to show the importance of taking the native language and the translation problem seriously, and second, on doing something about it.

To some, my argument may give the appearance of beating a dead horse. However, ethnographers need to be reminded that taking language and translation seriously is neither self evident, nor is it to be taken lightly, nor does past practice provide a source of sanguine complacency.

The more seriously ethnographers consider the implications of language and the translation process, the more they approximate the other culture. The chances of gross ethnocentric and misleading interpretations decrease.

I hope to show later how the notion of "invention of culture" in ethnography is based on a flawed ethnographic methodology that neglects systematic translation, or even flaunts its absence.

7.    Also called "textless translation."

8.    Also called "texted translation."

9.    This "movement" is not necessarily explicit. The strength of multi-stage translation is that it makes this process explicit (see below).

10.   Malinowski's ethnography focuses a lot of energy on his three-step translation process : (1) Identify the general context of the situation in which the word is used.(2) Give the approximate English translation label. (3) Redefine that label through fuller paraphrase, which is related to the reader's knowledge of how land is cultivated in the Trobriands (Brown 1992:8). This

procedure could be viewed as a precursor of multi-stage-translation although it also includes the creation of a background document.

11.    I am borrowing these terms freely from Goffman's (1959) "front stage" and "back stage" behavior. I use "front stage," "up front," "foreground translation" and "back stage," "background," and "back up translation" interchangeably.

12.    My preferred usage is "front stage translation" for a translation that approximates the length of the original, and "background translation" for the long explanatory, encyclopaedic text.

13.    There are many good reasons for selecting Navajo — A Native American Indian language — in addition to my familiarity with this language and culture. The main reason is that the architecture of the Navajo language, and the "strangeness" of Navajo culture maximize the cultural and language gap and thus highlight the translation problem more than more closely related languages or cultures could.

14.    This example appears in Young & Morgan 1987:185.

15.    Thus words can be translated by finding near synonyms in the target language — I call this Front Stage Translation. Most bi-lingual dictionaries follow this procedure. With culture-bound complex concepts, a better approach consists of using folk-definitions (in the native language) — I call this Background Translation (more below).
Only in the case of sentences can a translator provide "free" or "smooth" translations. However, care must be taken — if the culture gap is great — that the "translation labels" used (Front Stage Translation) in any "freely" translated target language sentence are sufficiently explained by translator's notes or a background (translation) encyclopaedia. Otherwise culture bound, cross language, near synonyms can make the target language

sentence quite misleading.

16.  Longacre (1958) suggests that the longer the text the easier it is to translate it.

17.  The Navajo verb mode-aspect system is so closely intertwined with the subject marker that for the sake of this exercise and brevity there is nothing to be gained from breaking down this complex morphology any further.

18.  This example is taken from Young & Morgan 1987:620.

19.  Many more or less fanciful "free" translations of this sentence are possible. The "full" spirit of the Navajo original remains elusive, except for the multi stage translation process that shows how this sentence moves from the original to the "free" translations (ix), (x), (xi), and (xii). Ultimately, fidelity, accuracy of translation, and accessibility can be maintained only with side by side analysis showing the reader the entire multi-stage translation process.

20.  Of course Boas used and demanded that his linguistic anthropology students use interlinear (at its best morpheme-by- morpheme) and free translation.

21.  Several of the authors in Swann (1992a) recommend this procedure in one way or another. It is the most effective way of showing what "liberties" have been taken with the native text.

22.  The reader can judge the adequacy of my editorial changes and comments on this text for her/him/self. Berman's restudy of a badly translated text by Boas is also instructive (Berman 1992).

23.  In this example Malinowski (1935:194) talks about a repayment of yams. He starts with a word for word (rather than a morpheme-by-morpheme) translation which may be due to the unavailability of a Kilivila (Trobriand) grammar. He then offers a free transla-

tion not interlinearly, but separately following the original text and the literal translation. This translation appears below. It is wordy (more on that later) and therefore I have provided a free translation of my own that stays closer to the original text.
In the illustration BM stands for Malinowski's texts, OW for my translations — I have also added numbers to keep track of changes in word order :

(xiii)   Lowa(1) mina-Wakayse(2),
BM      yesterday(1) people (a village)(2),
OW      Yesterday(1) [it was the] Wakayse-people(2)
        Yesterday the Wakayse-people [repaid them];

(xiv)    Lagayla(1) mine-Kabwaku(2) i-mapu-si(3) iwokwo(4);
MB      today(1) people (a village)(2) they repay(3) he is over(4);
OS      today(1) [it was the] Kabwalu-people(2) they repai[d
        it/them](3) it [was] done (4);
        Today the Kabwalu-people finished repaying them;

(xv)     Tuwayla(1) i-keula-si(2) kala mata(3).
MB      still(1) they transport(2) his eyes(3),
OW      still(1) they bring it/them(2) in excess(3),
        Still they brought more of them.

(xvi)    i-sakay-se(1) mina-Wakayse(2).
BM      they give(1) people (a village)(2).
OW      They gave it/them(1) Wakayse-people(2).
        They gave them [to the] Wakayse-people.

Now my complete free translation :

(xvii)
OW      Yesterday the Wakayse-people [repaid],
        Today the Kabwalu-people finished repaying them;
        Still they brought more of them,
        They gave them to the Wakayse-people.

Malinowski's free translation follows (I provided the line breaks to follow the presentation of the sentences above) :

(xviii)
BM     Yesterday the people of Wakayse brought the yams. Today the people of Kabwaku repaid them in full, and over and above they brought the excess contribution and presented it to the people of Wakayse.

The translation of Malinowski is verbose. The original is terse, for the native speakers the details are "self evident" and understood. His embellished long translation may be viewed as a combination of Front Stage Translation and translator's notes (or the background encyclopaedia). I prefer to give the explanation in translator's notes to preserve the stylistic terseness of the original. Nevertheless I had to introduce the notion of repayment (line 1.) which is implied only by line 2. in the original. My translation fails to mention the excess of the contribution. This may be an important omission.

Malinowski's free translation tries to combine foreground or front stage translation and background or back stage translation, creating an example of a stimulus/projective translation in the process. The native text stimulated, or more appropriately Malinowski's knowledge of the native culture stimulated his verbose response. This example seems to imply that there may be different types of stimulus/projective translation. This one is based on Malinowski's profound knowledge of Trobriand culture, other responses may range from a little knowledge to a total ignorance of the native culture. This translation then is a mixture of Trobriand culture and Malinowski's interpretation of it, including his assessment of how much background an English speaking reader may need.

Similarly in a recent reanalysis of one of Boas' Pentlach (Pentlach is a North American, Northwest coast Native American language) texts Kinkade observes that "... the most striking difference between the two versions stems from a lack of laconicism in the

German version. Jackobs' feature 19 [out of 21 classes of features found in Northwest myths and legends] notes that '...all the evidence points to an extreme of laconicism in depiction of action, movement, travel, feeling, relationships of personalities ...'" (Kinkade 1992:172 quoting Jacobs 1972:16). This example and the above example from the Trobriands are instances of what E.T. Hall (1959) calls "high context" communication that inherently needs to be less explicit than "low context" communication.
Ethnographic translation should attempt to preserve the laconicism of the original in the foreground version. However, a non native ethnographic audience/reader needs the source cultural context of the text. The necessary high context for terse translations can, of course, be provided only by copious translator's notes or a background encyclopaedia. A background encyclopaedia or extensive translator's notes can prevent, or at least ameliorate, the most blatant fabrication through stimulus/projective translation based on misconception or ignorance.

24. Bill Nichols pointed out to me that the shortest verse in the Bible "And Jesus wept," is significant because of its terseness that a target language version must preserve (personal communication). However it should be noted that Bible or Literary translation is different from ethnographic translation. Somehow the ethnographer must provide the context even for the shortest verse of a Bible-like document, but it may be done most effectively by a background encyclopaedia or copious translator's notes. I am grateful to Bill for convincing me that "front stage" (foreground) and "back stage (background) translation complement each other and both are needed by the ethnographer and her or his readers.

25. The front stage can be seen as a textual "figure," against the background encyclopaedia or translator's notes providing an ethnographically explicit textual "ground"

26. This term was suggested in discussion with Rik Pinxten at a colloquium in Gent, Belgium in the fall of 1993.

27.    A classic example of stimulus/projective translation is the Italian
       fairy tale that Frank Cushing told his Zuni friends and then
       "collected" in Zuni-ized form a few years later (Cushing 1901).
       An Italian folk tale made into a Zuni folk tale without the benefit
       of a texted translation is precisely the kind of re-creation that the
       notion of stimulus/projective translation tries to capture.
       An extreme form of stimulus/projective translation is the case all
       Navajo ethnographers had occasion to observe. In a heated
       political discussion an old Medicine Man gives a 20 minute
       impassioned speech in forceful Navajo. After he is finished the
       interpreter gets up and states simply, "He says no."

28.    I am grateful to Mari Broman Olsen for this example which she
       presented in the 1990 seminar on translation. I edited her version
       slightly. The other poems are my own and I take all responsibility
       for them.

29.    The following examples are experiments. I have no pretensions of
       being a poet or concerning the value of my poetry — even as a
       translator.

30.    This may be mostly due to my feeling awkward about "das
       mitlere Alter." My colloquial German is just not sufficiently up to
       date.

31.    The experiment also prompted this response
               The trouble with the verse of Nash
               is that in translation it won't wash.
       Of course this is not the poet's fault.

32.    I would hesitate to title this version "Crossing the Border." A
       more appropriate title may be "Old Age" or some variation on
       that. Stimulus translation or projective translation is at best a
       variation on a theme that is loosely linked to the original. At the
       same time it is a creation or performance in its own right — a
       new text. But because *all translation* consists to some degree of

stimulus translation (as I demonstrated with multi-stage translation) this type of transmutation must remain, even though it may be a remote approximation of the source language original, within the concept of translation. Only the *degree* to which a text's translation may be stimulus or projective translation does vary.
The separation of "true" translation from a translation by transmutation was suggested in the Gent Seminar mentioned in footnote 26. But since all translation is to some degree "transmutation" (see 1.3 on Multi stage translation) it is best kept as one extreme form of translation. On the other hand, of course, stimulus translation is not that much more extreme than morpheme-by-morpheme translation — the other pole of translation.

33. An analogy may help. A cubist portrait of, for example, a woman, may represent great art. However, no one would expect to recognize her based on this portrait. A good ethnography should be more analogous to a photograph. The natives and the readers should be able to recognize the culture depicted in the ethnography.

34. There may be four related reasons for this :
First, we are all one species of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Through our common genetic makeup we bring the same predisposition for human language with us.
Two, all human beings have an innate capacity for *human* language. This capacity is related to point 1.
Three, human languages are fundamentally similar in their deep structure. This is why we can translate and learn languages distant from our mother tongues.
And four, all humans live in *Merkwelten* — perceptual worlds — that are very similar.
*Merkwelten* is the plural of *Merkwelt* (von Uexkuel 1928). This concept represents that aspect of the perceptual world of an organism (such as a human being) that it is capable of noticing or taking into account. *Merkwelt* can then be contrasted with

*Wirkwelt*, that aspect of the world that an organism is capable of affecting.

This discussion presupposes a weak version of the Linguistic Relativity Principle of Whorf (1956) and Sapir (1963). That is, the language a human being speaks predisposes toward a certain way of thinking but does not determine thought.

35. Different human languages may categorize the continuum of experience somewhat differently, but there remain the similarities in human sense experience (I am assuming that the similarities in human perception are greater than the differences. Such an assumption becomes much more problematic across species). There exists a considerable overlap even between unrelated languages or translation would be impossible.

Relatedness or unrelatedness of two languages represents probably the wrong criterion for judging conceptual overlaps between them. Much more important is the fact that the two languages share the same culture area. The very fact that vastly different languages (e.g., the West European languages and Hungarian) can share a common culture, and that such languages can easily adapt to a near common culture speaks for the flexibility of human languages. The adaptation does not have to take place in one generation. It is clear that any language is capable of entertaining any idea, no matter how abstract and outlandish. This is another reason for the intertranslatability of languages.

Human beings see the same spectrum, but uniformly fail to see electromagnetic rays beyond red and past violet. Human language may have few or many color terms but only within these limits : there exists no color terms for infra-red and ultra-violet in any language. Similarly, we cannot hear sound much below 10 and only a few can hear much above 15,000 cycles per second. There exists no musical notation for very low frequencies and very high ultra sound. These "sounds" do not even qualify for "noise" because we cannot hear them.

The empirical evidence is overwhelming : we have so far failed at interspecies communication, but have never encountered a

human language into which, for example, the Bible could not be translated.

36. Arguably, because of the great distance of the New World cultures and languages from the cradle of *sapiens* humanity in East Africa, we would expect Native American Indian languages to be most different from Old World languages. Yet Cortez and his *conquistadores,* or Pizarro and his comrades, and their interpreters, had relatively little difficulty learning Nahuatl, Quechua, or Spanish respectively and translate in and out of these languages (e.g., Fr. Bernardino de Shahagún's Aztec ethnographies, Edmondson 1974). Of course, we know very little about the quality of these translations. However, within a generation (or two) there came into existence a talented cadre of bilingual interpreters. While Native American Indian languages are formidable, ethnographers and folklorists have succeeded in making Native American Indian literature accessible, for example, in English (see Swann 1992).

37. On a more formal level, the Ethnoscience branch of cultural anthropology claims the universality of two relations between words or phrases. The first relation is called taxonomic (or T), is the hierarchic relation of *genus* to *species*. The most common form the taxonomic T relation takes in English is "A is a (kind of) B" (where A is species and B is genus; and the parenthetical expression is optional). In Navajo the most common form is "A B át'é," etc. The relation T derives from folk taxonomies. The relations M from componential analyses. There are, of course, other ways of deriving these two universal lexical/semantic relation (see Werner, Schoepfle et al. 1987). The second relation of *modification* (or M), which by adding modifiers (increasing intension) constricts the referent range of a naming unit (decreases extension). For example, a red house is a kind of house. The modifier "red" reduces the referent range of the genus "house" exclusively to the red members of the set.
The implications for translation are far reaching. The universality

of the taxonomic and modification relationship entails the universality of Aristotelian definitions.

38.  We can rewrite this in formulaic form using T for taxonomy and M for modification, the term (A) for *definiendum*, (B) for *genus*, and {C} for a set of *differentiae*.

(ii)      $(A) T ((B) M \{C\})$

or stated more explicitly, "(A) is a kind of (B) that is modified by set {C}." Where "A is a kind of B" is one of a few possible manifestations of the taxonomic relation T in English (see footnote 29), and "B is modified by {C}" (where C is usually a set of attributes, simple or complex) is the English version of M. From this it follows that if we have a term in a source language $L_1$ such that

(iii)      $(A_1) T ((B_1) M \{C_1\})$

then there also exists a similar expression in the target language $L_2$ such that

(iv)      $(A_2) T ((B_2) M \{C_2\})$

for any $A_2$. This fact, in turn, implies that there is always some appropriate genus $B_2$ (or a *set of genera*, see definition of the Tiv word *tsav*) and a set of attributes {C2} in $L_2$, such that the following definition can be also constructed :

(v)      $(A_1) T ((B_2) M \{C_2\})$

39.  I cannot stress sufficiently the point which will become clearer with the Tiv definition of the concept *tsav* that ideally the encyclopaedic definition should be first elicited in the native language and the encyclopaedic definition in the target language should be constructed/translated second.

40.  It is important not to confuse "translation label" or gloss for an appropriate definition in the other language. For example, the Navajo word *nahaghá* is often "translated" — read glossed — as "religion," while *nahaghá* seems to refer more appropriately to Navajo ceremonialism, for example *nahaghá nitsaaígíí* "big nahaghá" refers to the set of long Navajo ceremonies that last nine

nights. The gloss "religion" for *nahaghá* is misleading because of the associations it precipitates in its semantic field. Authors/ ethnographers often refer to *nahaghá* as "religion" as a kind of front stage shorthand. Unfortunately, such short cuts, as misleading as they are, are difficult to avoid with a concept that recurs with some regularity in an ethnography (I am grateful to Kostas Kazazis for this insight). The alternative is, of course, to retain the native term as its own gloss, so to speak. The following example of the Bohannans's use of the Tiv word *tsav* does just that. After deciding to use *tsav* instead of a shorthand gloss the Bohannans then had to build up an new set of associations for the concept that is reflected in our constructed definition of the Tiv word (see Figure 2.)

41.    I am using "scare quotes" because, of course, he does translate the term. However, he does not use a Front Stage Translation, but instead gives the reader a Background Translation of *tsav* exclusively.

42.    I am grateful to Cheryl Brown (1992) for compiling this, as we call it, "constructed" definition of *tsav* from the Bohannans's (1953) monograph.

43.    In Bohannan & Bohannan (1969) Source Notebook on Tiv Religion, the Bohannans use an entire volume (II. 288 pages) for discussing (defining) *Tsav*, unfortunately all of it in English.

44.    We constructed the formalization of Bohannan's background translation as follows : every time he mentions *tsav* in his ethnography a reader should keep the definition (below) in mind. Cheryl Brown systematically collected all occurrences of *tsav* and constructed the systematized definition that appears in Figure 2.

45.    The answer is at least as old as the introduction of taxonomies into ethnographies. Conklin (1962) argued against the confusion of *full fledged definitions* (Background translations) and *transla-*

*tion labels* (Front Stage Translations).

46.   We could, of course, translate *tsav* as some sort of power, but Figure 3. demonstrates clearly the strength of constructed definitions and how the gloss "power" would be misleading indeed.

47.   It is interesting to note in this context that bilingual dictionaries are almost devoid of definitions. They usually present only synonymous words or phrases exclusively. That this is possible even between languages such as Navajo and English is astonishing and further evidence for the conceptual overlap between human languages.

48.   Such Background Translation is precisely what its name implies, a background document guarding against too facile interpretations of a foregrounded translation that by necessity must use "superficial" translation labels. I am grateful to Kostas Kazazis for this insight. However, he did not suggest the terminology I am using and should not be held responsible for it. Such responsibility rests entirely with me.
The use of Background Translation is crucial when we are dealing with languages and cultures that are very different from our own.

49.   The articles in a recent book on the translation of Native American literature (Swann 1992) bristle with evaluative statements. Terms such as "mistranslation," "accuracy," "better," "good," "quality," "authenticity," "fidelity," and "accessibility," abound. The importance of the evaluation of translation is sounded already in the introduction by Swann (1992:xv) who quotes Siebert's remarks on William Strachey's Algonquian translations from his early 17th century book (Strachey 1612). His mistranslations range from "minor deviations to unequivocal howlers" (Siebert 1975:292)

50. It is worth while recalling Robert Frost again, "What gets lost in translation is the poetry."

51. Dale Kinkade evaluates one of Franz Boas' Pentlach texts in which he "did embellish the German version of the Northwest [coast] texts, presumably to make them more acceptable [as folk art] to his German audience" (Kinkade 1992:165). This kind of embellishment, considered here negatively, is found, for example, in the Zuni translations of Frank Cushing.

Several of such documents originate from the turn of the century when adjectives such as "primitive" and "savage" were freely used as technical terms even within professional anthropology. Boas, Cushing, and others, saw the need for creating "respect," "appreciation," etc., for the literary traditions of Native Americans. Their embellishments mirror, if not parody, their perception of the literary styles of the day.

From my perspective "embellishment" represents stimulus/ projective translation for making a translation accessible at the expense of authenticity. Authenticity always lies close to the pole of morpheme-by-morpheme translation and appropriate terseness (Figure 1.) "Embellishment" veers in the other direction of unbridled stimulus translation.

Boas's text is particularly vulnerable on this point since he "heard the texts in Chinook Jargon and translated them *directly* into German, without ever preserving the Chinook Jargon version" (Kinkade 1992:165, emphasis added). (The original story was in Pentlach, a North American Northwest coast language. The translation went through three languages : Pentlach, Chinook Jargon, and German. Though Kinkade does not mention it explicitly there was an interpreter at one point and English could have easily been the fourth language to confuse the equation). While it is true that stimulus translation cannot be avoided in any "free" translation (see 1.2 Multi Stage Translation, above) it is clear that the more, by nature and necessity, the ethnographer's biases are projected by stimulus translation into the text the lesser their authenticity. The fact that no source language text was used

further underlines the projective nature of this translation.

This, unfortunately, may be also the case with some recent attempts at introducing line, pause, meter, and other performance features into the translation. These are the "embellishments" of our era. The introduction of such "prosodic" features is an embellishment, that tends to view Native American Literature as poetry in the native language and in English translation. Friedrich (1985) is correct in his assessment that linguistic relativity is most prevalent in the poetics of a language. When we introduce the poetics of the *target* language into the translation we, by necessity, move further away form authenticity to perhaps greater accessibility and a much greater proportion of stimulus/projective translation.

52.  In evaluating a translation the aesthetic dimension of the target version (the embellishments necessary for accessibility) is much easier to evaluate than the authenticity or fidelity to the original language and culture. In order to do that the evaluator must be steeped in the source culture and languages as well as in the target culture and language. Much of the aesthetics of the source version can be transferred authentically into the target language only by way of translator's notes or their Background Translation equivalents.

The extreme form of my argument is reflected by the translation of poetry. Either we accept Robert Frost's statement that what is lost in translation is the poetry or we accept that to translate a poem is to write another poem. In the Frost case we have authenticity, which may be enhanced with translator's notes, in the second case we have problematic stimulus/projective translations : the original source language poem is the stimulus to a projective response that culminates in the creation of another poem in the target language.

53.  Several authors in Swann's (1992) edited volume call for such a presentation of the entire translation process (e.g., Bahr 1992, Gingerich 1992, Berman 1992, and others).

54.    Note the plural "translations."

55.    These may include among others, institutions, beliefs, values, social organization, social control, customs, etc.

56.    Kluckhohn (1949) said it well"in some way no human being is like any other human being, in some way some human beings are like some other human beings, and in some way all human beings are like every other human being." For an elaboration of this view of culture and cultural knowledge see Werner, Schoepfle, et al. 1987.1 :96-100. It is notable that in this view there are no sub-cultures. Every human group has a unique culture that may be more or less similar to other groups. A further corollary is that every human being must be viewed as multi-cultural, or that every social context requires its own set of cultural knowledge.

57.    In *Systematic Fieldwork* we start with this point of view adding our own theoretical notions concerning ethnography. Our (Werner, Schoepfle, et al. 1987) two volumes are based on the notion that the M (modification) and T (taxonomic) relations provide a rich enough structure and are adequate for creating a theory of ethnography. This theory's goal is to select from available alternatives those that are methodologically and epistemologically justifiable and lead to reliable results and can be subsumed in the MT theoretical schema. Translation represents an important application of this schema (see especially Volume 1., pages 354-379). To the best of my knowledge ours is the only ethnographic methods book that deals systematically with the problem of ethnographic translation.
Here we cannot go into detail but the view of translation I present in these pages is completely compatible with the MT schema (see section 1.5). Finally, I see a theory of ethnography as playing an analogous role in the social sciences as measurement theory does in physics and related sciences.
"The ethnographer's task includes collecting data in the language of one's consultants and producing an ethnographic report in the

language of the reader of the report."

"Traditionally, ethnographers started translating the moment they arrived in the field, and ethnographers still do the same today. However, we advocate postponing formal translation until many, or most lexical/semantic fields [in the source culture] have been worked out (Werner, Schoepfle, et al 1987:354).

Stated another way, the ethnographer should not put too much faith in his or her *translation labels* (Conklin 1962), especially during early parts of fieldwork. Translation labels are the first rough and ready equivalents for native terms. Their only use should be to function as "handles" to facilitate further analysis. These labels acquire ethnographic standing only after the approximations are expanded through full fledged definitions, that is, confirmed through lexical/semantic analysis.

Such healthy distrust of early word or phrase equivalents should lead inevitably to extensive encyclopaedic work before progressing beyond the set of provisional "translation labels".

In spirit we are with the Bohannans (1953) and his definition of *tsav* (Figure 2.). In practice we would prefer, first, definitions of key terms *in the native language* and only then translation as a second step. The Bohannans do not show us their first step.

58.  It is interesting that Malinowski is sometimes taken to task (e.g. Clifford 1983) because he never wrote the definitive Trobriand monograph. Clifford's fallacy lies in the fact of seeing ethnography as "fiction" rather than an encyclopaedia. To me seeing ethnography as encyclopaedic implies that Malinowski "understood" the limitations of his ethnography. If we conceive of ethnography as essentially encyclopaedic then it follows that the ethnographer/encyclopaediographer's job is "never done." There exist no definitive monographs, the supplements have to arrive with annual regularity (e.g., the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

59.  Native texts can be viewed as equivalent to encyclopaedic definitions in context, especially if they are collated into constructed definitions as I did in the case of the Tiv word *tsav*.

However, the construction of definitions is, at least first, for the benefit of the ethnographic analyst and not the reader. The presence of extensive native texts is primary. Even without collation into definitions these texts represent background documents anchoring ethnographic observation, interpretation, etc., within the lexical frames that represent the realities of the native's language.

60. There are notable exceptions — not counting linguistic anthropologists such as Edward Sapir — Paul Radin (who preferred near word-for-word translations), Robert Lowie, and others. Most of them American Indianists. Africanists never seemed to have warmed up to the idea of collecting native texts. I do not have sufficient information on other parts of the world. Starting with Shagún an amazing number of more or less amateur ethnographers were priests, Father Berard Haile among the Navajo, Father Sebastian Englert on Easter Island, The Dominicans Albisetti and Venturelli (1962) who wrote the Encyclopaedia Broro, and others. All of these had life time exposure to the culture of the natives and were anything but *hit-and-run ethnographers*.

61. Malinowski's diaries (1967) make one believe that while he evaluated "informants" as "excellent" or " poor", he never trusted native capabilities sufficiently to think of the possibility of training native researchers. His diaries seem quite explicit though one can read more into them than is warranted. For example, I do not know how to say "nigger" in Polish (the language of the diaries) and do not think there is an equivalent in Polish to the heavy derogatory connotations of the English term. More telling is his reaction to the native elder who takes issue with his using "rough language" in the company of native women (1967).

62. In Boas' case we should probably count Mrs. Deloria in this category as well.

63.    For example, Salinas & Bernard (1978), Bernard & Salinas
       (1989), Werner & Begishe (1975), Werner et al 1983, Colby and
       Colby (1981), Pinxten et al. (1983), Young and Morgan (1942,
       1987, 1992), Farrer & Second (1991) and a few others. It is
       interesting to note that a majority of these men and women had
       a linguistic bent or are anthropological linguists.

64.    The grant support structure of ethnography in the United States is
       rarely flexible enough to provide funds for training long term
       native collaborators (as contrasted with temporary consultants) or
       longer than one year stays in the field. Longer support periods
       may encourage more natives to seek ethnographic training.

65.    Berman continues," Literature is one of the ways people talk
       about their experience. We may no longer agree that texts without
       significant commentary or annotation, like Boas's, are terribly
       useful. Still, long after Boas and George Hunt and the Kwagul
       they talked to are gone. we have some words that were said by
       someone, instead of a record only of what Boas thought those
       words might have meant" (Berman 1992:157).

66.    Boas mentions casual visitors and should have included ethno-
       graphers who do not collect native texts.

67.    ..."and what no layman, however conversant with the culture, can
       perceive is its basic structure. This structure cannot be seen. It is
       a set of abstractions, each of which, though derived, it is true,
       from the analysis of behavior, is fundamentally an imaginative
       construct of the anthropologist himself." (Evans Prichard 1968;51,
       emphasis Owusu's 1978;316-17). The natives are just too dumb.
       For a more balanced view see Schneider 1968:vi). In my own
       view there is no ethnographic concept that cannot be explained to
       the native if one speaks their languages with sufficient expertise.
       Evans-Prichard also seems to feel that the quality of ethnography
       and the inconvenience of the ethnographer's suffering are
       somehow related (Evans-Prichard 1940). It is worthwhile to quote

this remarkable passage in full : "A man must judge his labours by the obstacle he has overcome and the hardships he has endured and by these standards I am not ashamed of the results" (Evans-Prichard 1940:9).

68. "Levi-Strauss once claimed that it was unnecessary to read mythology in their original language, or even to have good translations, because the underlying structure emerged no matter what. Not to beat a dead horse to death, as a professor once phrased it, but it just ain't so" (Berman 1992:156).

69. According to Gunter Senft (personal communication) Malinowski's knowledge of Kilivila, the language of Kiriwina Island of the Trobriands, was indisputably excellent. His transcriptions of native texts are also excellent — in spite of Jack Berry's (1965) critique of his primitive phonology.

70. It would be interesting to compare the attitudes about the uses of language in fieldwork between ethnographers who control at least one other language well and monolingual ethnographers. I have, for example, no evidence that Margaret Mead ever spoke any language beside English well. Many of these ethnographers simply did not realize what it takes to be a competent bilingual, or to what extent competent bilingualism opens cultural doors that otherwise remain closed.

71. "Language is not just a means to an end. It stands in a definite relation to the life of the people who speak it and their mental habits and attitudes" (Malinowski 1935.2:6) and "Meaning should be defined in term of experience and situation. [Translation] is never the substitution word for word, but invariably the translation of whole contexts." (Malinowski 1935:9-11).

72. see example in footnote 23.

73.     We will see later that sometimes "pidgin ethnographies" are used
        by natives as authorities on traditional life (Owusu 1978).
        Collections of native texts serve future generations of natives
        better by providing them with a more reliable guide to their
        traditions.

74.     At least some of the blame must be laid at the feet of publishers
        who often consider printing native texts frivolous. How much to
        blame them is another interesting historical investigation.
        Ethnographers seemed to have come to believe, that first, because
        translation is difficult and misleading when it is done poorly, it is
        not worth doing systematically at all. It is easier to invent the
        other culture. Second, that no matter what an ethnographer does,
        "textualization" of the other culture does irreparable damage to it :
        you may just as well invent your own version. This overlooks the
        fact that by speaking their own language natives "textualize" their
        own culture all the time.

76.     Perhaps *because* his best field language was probably Chinook
        Jargon. He was aware of its limitations for full ethnographic
        elicitation.

77.     Hymes goes even further "...if Malinowski persuaded British
        anthropologists to think functionally and contextually about
        language, he did not lead them to learn linguistics" (Hymes
        1970:253). This critique of Malinowski is serious especially
        noting Jack Berry's introduction to a new edition of *Coral
        Gardens*. Malinowski's phonology is minimal, according to Berry
        [1935] 1965:xx) "...the vowels are pronounced as in Italian and
        the consonants as in English." And that is it. The only thing that
        can be said in defense of Malinowski is that Melanesian phonolo-
        gies tend to be "simple." Usually five vowel systems (as in
        Italian) with a relatively small number of consonants. However,
        so called Papuan languages tend to be phonologically more
        complex. While Malinowski refers to "Papuans" (e.g., 1967) he

dealt primarily with Melanesian languages and their derivative Pidgins.

The fundamental question is, of course, how much linguistics does an ethnographer need ? Today s/he rarely needs to construct his or her own orthography. Nevertheless some phonological training is helpful because articulatory phonetics is useful for language learning, especially pronunciation, and for learning and teaching transcription of field languages. Such training may also help in transcribing dialects of the ethnographer's language when working close to home. Trained native speakers can eventually transcribe with far greater efficiency that any foreign ethnographer.

Working with "exotic languages" an ethnographer needs to be able to read and interpret grammars. A course in how to learn a foreign language could also be useful (Nida 1957, Gudschinski 1967, Larson & Smalley 1972, Burling 1984, Davidian 1988, and others). I know of no graduate program in anthropology in the US that includes such a curriculum.

78. It is worthwhile reading Bateson's honest statement verbatim. (see below).

79. The basis for the tabulation follows Nida's (1957) five point scale for evaluating language proficiency. This is not an ideal scale because capturing all varieties of language competence is difficult. First, language competence is a multi-dimensional, more-or-less skill on each dimension. Nida's is a linear scale. It cannot capture, for example, that one can have an enviable pronunciation, but a limited vocabulary, and marginal grammatical competence — or any other combination of these skills. At the same time, Nida's scale is accessible and adequate for an estimate of the language facility of these ethnographers. Any problems with the scale are contained in my commentaries.

80. Franklin's (1992) evaluation of ethnographers' work in Oceania could also be included here. The only reason for excluding these is that most of them are little known outside of Oceanian

specialists. The renowned students of Oceania appear on my list. Franklin does not rate these ethnographers and he is unaware of the Mead/Lowie controversy from the late 1930s to early 1940s. Hence he seems to overrate Mead's language competence. I am grateful to Gunter Senft for bringing Franklin's article to my attention.

81. Franklin (1992) recommends the use of the language competence scale designed by the Foreign Service Institute of the United States, State Department. Using that scale would not significantly alter the tabulations of Figure 4.

82. I would rate my own proficiency in Navajo in this category. I know several thousand Navajo words but have difficulty putting them in acceptable sentences. I have often constructed Navajo sentences to the merriment of my Navajo friends whose response is usually, "Ossy, you could say it like that, but we don't." Today the better command of English by Navajo collaborators actually impedes language learning by the ethnographer. This makes the use of well informed interpreter/translators the more imperative.

83. see Lowie's language testament 1945 — a unique document for any ethnographer.

84. There is an immediate problem with Bateson's (1943) phonology. How should we pronounce "Itamul," or "Itamül" in some instances. Since no orthographic or phonemic inventory is given it could be [itamul]/[itamül] (with [i] a high, front, unrounded vowel, and [ü] a high, front, rounded vowel] or the way it is usually pronounced in anthropology, following a popular English orthographic convention, as [yatamul]/[yatamül]; even though the pronunciation based on English "it" [it], or [italian] — except for those who say [aytalyan] — that is, [itamul/itamül] seems more reasonable. It is, of course, not clear what the natives, or those who gave them this name, use.

85.     However, more than a decade later Bateson becomes more
        sanguine about using Pidgins for ethnographic field work of
        which his "miserable jargon" was but one example.
        Pidginized language constitutes a third culture, neither native nor
        white, "... and with the conversation of this third culture the white
        man and the native can meet happily, though the culture is
        germane to neither of them" (Bateson 1943:139 in Eckert
        1973:25).
        Bateson's third culture conveniently overlooks the limitations of
        Pidgins, especially their restricted domains of discourse. Of
        course, by this time both Boas and Malinowski were dead, and the
        *Zeitgeist* of anthropology has shifted. The decline of the need for
        proficiency in field languages has begun.

86.     It is with some admiration that one reads in Lowie's "language
        testament" (1945) how diligently he maintained his colloquially
        correct German throughout his life. He was painfully aware how
        rapidly an unused language becomes archaic and how rapidly one
        can lose proficiency.

87.     It is significant that of the ten ethnographers whose language
        familiarity is rated by Rohner [1975:252-53], only one, Ashton
        (Sotho) had fluency in the language. Herskovits (Fon) had little
        or no knowledge of the language, and neither had Evans-Prichard
        (Nuer), nor LeVine (Gusii) was rated as having some understand-
        ing of the languages, and Fortes (Talensi) received a zero score
        (Owusu 1978:330 n5)

88.     "My main difficulty at this early stage was inability to converse
        freely with the Nuer. I had no interpreter. None of the Nuer spoke
        Arabic. There was no adequate grammar of the language and,
        apart from three short Nuer-English vocabularies, no dictionary.
        Consequently the whole of my first and a large part of my second
        expedition were taken up trying to master the language sufficient-
        ly to make inquiries through it, and only those who have tried to
        learn a very difficult tongue without the aid of an interpreter and

adequate literary guidance will fully appreciate the magnitude of the task" (Evans-Prichard 1940:15).

89. Considering that "...distinct mother tongues are significant in maintaining group solidarity in [highland Burma's] linguistically jumble area. Jinghpaw and Thai are regarded as 'upper middle class' languages in the sense that they can be used as a badge of social class" (Leach 1954:47 in Eckert 1973:18) it is hard to see that speaking a prestige language would have no effect.

90. The limitations of Pidgins, with limited cultural domains and limited registers of discourse, make poor vehicles for sensitive ethnographic research. Eckert's question : "Can the use of Pidgin languages lead to Pidgin ethnographies ?" (1973:36) is well justified. I will demonstrate below that given contact Pidgins, incompletely learned native languages, and the translation problem confirm Eckert's apprehension.

91. See, for example, Nida's (1957) anecdotes about the "howlers" perpetrated by missionaries with their marginal language skills. Ethnographers are not exempted.

92. That is, native collaborators need "time off" to retool in domains that are unfamiliar to them — do field work on their own in these domains. In the case of esoteric information re-tooling may take time. One can easily imagine how much a marginal speaker-ethnographer can pick up in such domains in which the native collaborator is useless until he learns the technical terms and styles of speech.

93. By *ad hoc* Pidgin I mean a pidginized version of a natural language developed by a foreign, isolated individual in contact with native speakers. My best examples are White traders in trading posts on the Navajo Reservation. Another example may be "Kitchen Swahili" that was recreated by each household that used it between white masters and Swahili speaking servants.

94.     Bronislaw Malinowski's language competence in Kilivila is
        attested by Gunter Senft, who has recently visited the islands and
        is the author of a Kilivila Grammar (Senft 1986). However,
        learning this language did not come to Malinowski easily. As late
        as 1917 (though admittedly early in his second expedition) he
        writes of encounters with natives where he could understand very
        little of what was said (e.g., Malinowski 1967:145,146,147). He
        himself does not claim great efficiency until after the middle of
        his second field trip (Malinowski 1935:xi)

95.     One of the reasons of rating Henry highly is that he is one of the
        very few ethnographers (Malinowski did not, Boas did) who has
        published the phonemic (or at least orthographical inventories) of
        the Kaingang. As far as I know he has not collected many texts.
        The standard of a Boasian dissertation in linguistic anthropology
        required a phonology, grammar and a text with dictionary that
        showed the application of the grammar to he text and to transla-
        tion (C.F. Voegelin, personal communication).

96.     It is well to distinguish between a gifted polyglot, one who learns
        new languages with ease (or one with more perseverance than
        others ?), and linguists who study the structure of languages. Few
        people are both (e.g., Kenneth Hale of MIT and Stephen Wurm,
        Emeritus at the Australian National University). The language
        learning skills of Hale and Wurm are legendary. I know of no
        anthropologists/ethnographers with a similar documented genius
        for language learning.

97.     Compare this to A.I. Richards, "I worked through the native
        language [Bemba] and this was essential in this particular area. I
        therefore had to give up a month entirely to linguistic work on my
        arrival, and spent at least three before I was able to question
        informants with any success (1939:11). Or Nadel's assertion that
        "I used Nupe (his toneless version) exclusively after six month
        study, and spoke it fluently after nine") Nadel 1951:46). Were
        Richards and Nadel so much more talented polyglots than

Malinowski ? (I doubt that African languages are that much easier for an English speaker than Kilivila on the Trobriands).

98. What is the status of early field notes in a situation like Malinowski's ? Are these a reliable guide to the culture of the natives ? Should early notes be thrown out ?

99. It is interesting that Bronislaw Malinowski's first full sentence in Motu (I assume the simplified Police Motu) appears on February 9, 1915 not quite five months after leaving Australia. Interestingly the subject matter of the sentence is sexual intercourse and he may have used the Motu the way, for example, the Franciscan Fathers (1912) use Latin when it comes to matters that are sexual.

100. "I dispensed with the services of an interpreter very early" (Leach 1954:44). I can think of only some strange notion of science and observation, coupled with a superior attitude toward the natives, or an inflated notion of one's language skills, that can explain "dispensing with" interpreters at any time during brief (one year or less) field work.

101. I met Gabor Klaniczay at a conference in Pécs, Hungary (Fall 1992) where he presented a paper on "The Signs of "Otherness" in the Middle Ages." In it he discussed language use at length. Subsequently we had a long discussion on the use of interpreters, especially during the Crusades. Without exception they were not trusted. His assertion is based on his extensive collection of data on the uses of interpreters in the Middle Ages.

102. It is amazing how few ethnographers draw the necessary conclusions from this utter dependence. The only alternative is to include trusted natives in their ethnographic research process. Almost all ethnographies mention significant ethnographic helpers — a long list of these can be extracted from the literature — but they remain most of the time anonymous "well informed informants" rather than identifiable collaborators in a common

undertaking of interpreting the subtleties of the native culture. It appears as if ethnographers could not stand the idea that they did not achieve their herculean effort on their own, without native help. In addition, some ethnographers claim that natives cannot be trusted anyway. Among others, Ethel Albert often expressed this attitude to me in private conversations. But if we cannot trust at least some of them, who can we trust ? Does the ethnographer always know best even when he can barely communicate with the natives ?

One also wonders why the Bohannans have not collected more Tiv texts. There are several disturbing features in their Tiv fieldwork (Bohannan & Bohannan 1969) : For example, in their 287 page source notebook on the concept *tsav* there are Tiv words and phrases, but not a single sentence of Tiv text. The notes are in English.

In Bohannan & Bohannan (1969) the only native language texts appear in one facsimile drawing. All other texts appear in English translation only. Nevertheless, this is a remarkable book. The rich contextualization of native terminology, even though in English, by its volume counteracts possible distortions in the, apparently, *ad hoc* translations.

In Laura Bohannan's (1954) *Return to Laughter,* she records, presumably verbatim, complex conversations very early in her fieldwork. The other item she fails to report is the feeling of tremendous isolation and intellectual frustration (cf Malinowski 1967) that one usually feels being by oneself in a strange place, with a strange culture, speaking a strange language in which one can barely express elementary needs. Perhaps this was due to the fact that she was in the field with her husband but wrote Return to Laughter as if she had been alone. Malinowski's (1967) diaries offer a sharp contrast and ring more true.

103.   There is an interesting anomaly here. Herskovits did speak very little Fon, even though he was Boas' student. On the other hand, Herskovits' student Greenberg became an eminent, though lately controversial, linguist.

104. He also mentions the horror of such ethnographies later becoming pidginized source books for the natives on their own traditional culture. At least native language texts talk to the younger generation in a language that they can trust to be authentic.

105. "We can monitor the interplay between fact and theory where American kinship is concerned in ways that are simply impossible in the ordinary course of anthropological work." and ... we are able to achieve a degree of control over a large body of data which many anthropological fieldworkers hardly approach, even after one or two years in the field. Hence the quality of the data we control is considerably greater, and the grounds for evaluating the fit between fact and theory is correspondingly greater" (Schneider 1968:vi in Owusu 1978:320)

106. "It is true that [the ethnographer] can never feel himself completely at one with the people he is studying, however gifted he may be, linguistically or psychologically. He may make some real friends among his hosts; but he can never adopt their cultural values. If he did, he would lose that detachment without which anything he wrote would be of no scientific value. (Fortes 1945:vii)

107. Owusu answers Eckert's (1973:36) question in the affirmative : "Research conducted in Pidgins or *ad hoc* Pidgins leads to pidgin ethnographies ?"

108. [Ethnographers] may need to re-examine the arguments that they can give us substantially true pictures about a culture by following time-honored methods. It is one thing to publish ethnographies about Trobrianders and Kwakiutls half a century ago; it is another to study people who read what you write and are more than willing to talk back (Paredes 1977:2).
The evidence seems to indicate the Trobriand ethnographic fragments and Kwakiutl ethnographic sketches are among the best, because we know something about the language competences of

their authors and we have native texts to back up their claims. The picture is considerably darker for successive generations of ethnographers.

Clifford (1983) takes Malinowski to task for never writing a "definitive ethnography" of the Trobriands. Malinowski must have known the complexity of Kiriwinian culture that seems to escape Clifford. There cannot exist anything resembling a "full" ethnography. The best we can hope for are encyclopaedic descriptions with yearly supplements (see also footnote 58).

109. Paredes' examples are instructive and should be studied by every budding ethnographer. Just one example will suffice. [American] social scientists have remarked on the Mexican's alleged sensitivity to any reference about his womenfolk. A simple remark concerning a man's mother or sister may be taken as an insult, a tendency that has often been seen as a pathological condition of the Mexican. After all, why should a youth take it amiss if a friend asks in the politest of voices, "How is your sister this morning ?" For quite good reason, we would agree, if we know that in the verbal art of both young men the phrase is a stereotyped euphemism for, What is your sister's condition this morning after the rough riding I gave her last night ?" What is remarkable here is not the Mexican's degree of sensitivity to insult but his virtuosity in its practice.

Mexicans and Chicanos alike are familiar with the story about the two *compadres* from Alvarado, Veracruz, who say to each other on parting :

> *No se olvide, compadrito.*" (Don't forget, my dear *compadre.*)
> *Ni usted tampoco, compadrito*" (You neither, my dear *compadre.*)

A touching example of the respect and affection that goes with compadrazgo, but what the two ritual brothers are saying to each other is "Don't forget to fuck your mother, compadre," "Don't you forget to do the same." (Paredes 1977:10).

110. It is difficult to see why an ethnographer would eschew the use of trusted interpreters, who may have a stake in the quality of the work and therefore help the ethnographer to prevent major disasters of interpretation. Some more recent ethnographers have collected even fewer texts than their forefathers. True, granting agencies do not encourage the collection of texts, as if one could access a human mind and human culture somehow by a science fiction's Vulcan melding of minds.

111. Hill & Mannheim conclude a recent review article on World View :
"... the relevant units for analyzing [meanings] can only be worked out through their [the natives'] language. The entire intricate calibration is undertaken by the ethnographer in the field, often in an intuitive way. The process finally yields a report (usually) in the ethnographer's native language" (Hill & Mannheim 1992:382).
But if meaning can be worked out only in the native language and if this is often done in an "intuitive" way, what are the implications for ethnographic translation ?
Of course, it is not my intention to deprecate the role in any creative enterprise, including the ethnographic process and the writing of ethnographies. But if we use intuition without constraints there is no point in fieldwork. We are better off writing fiction. That many critics of ethnography (e.g., Clifford 1983) want to consider all ethnography as fiction hardly contributes to the solution of the problem.

112. Malinowski maintained his diary in Polish (Malinowski 1967), the first phrase in Motu appears almost five months into his New Guinea field work.

113. We emphasize throughout our *Systematic Fieldwork* (Werner et al 1987) that native language texts, the products of the native consultants' minds and "field notes," the product of the ethno-

grapher's mind have different epistemological statuses and should not be mixed, as they tend to be in traditional field note taking.

114. Lowie (1940) advocates the sophisticated control of field languages, while Mead (1939) claimed an ethnographer can *use* a language while speaking it minimally. She decried language competence as "unnecessary virtuosity."

115. Very few ethnographers can boast having spent more than a year in the field. Most restrictions on funding do not allow longer stays.

116. See Malinowski's quote above. He did not become proficient in Kilivila until the middle of his second field trip, or in about 18 months. Malinowski has a reliable track record as a talented polyglot. By all accounts polyglots seem to learn new languages with greater ease than monolinguals. There is no evidence that, for example, Margaret Mead spoke any language well besides English.
I estimate, retrospectively, that it took me (perhaps a slow learner) about seven years of living in the United States in order to understand more than 50 per cent of the *New Yorker* magazine's cartoons. Most of these deal with subtleties of issues of the day. I acquired the languages I speak in the following order : Hungarian, Slovak, German, Russian, English, Navajo, and Spanish. My proficiency in them is as follows (from best to worst) : English, Hungarian, German, Slovak, Spanish, Navajo. Instead of Russian I may use today a kind of generalized Slavic," or a Slavic Pidgin. My Navajo is firmly in column 1 of Figure 4. even though I know several thousand Navajo words.

117. Of course, the ethnographer's account should be defensible before native critics. Minimally, they should be able to accept this account as a plausible description of their cultural world or some part of it.

118. Lurking has been declared an acceptable ethnographic technique by Moore (1922).

119. Suffice to say that in my view the recorded, transcribed utterances of the native have a privileged position vis-à-vis the Journal. The best use of the Journal, a product of the ethnographer's mind and biases, is to lead to the asking of new and interesting questions (see Werner, Schoepfle, et al 1987).

120. "Anthropologists will increasingly have to share their texts, and sometimes their title pages, with those indigenous collaborators for whom the term *informant* is no longer adequate, if it ever was" (Clifford 1983:51). Apparently, Clifford is unaware that many of us have been doing this for years.
    Clifford only grudgingly admits what his "positivist" ethnographer friends have been doing for years : publishing with their consultant's name on their publications.
    Because natives are rarely asked to fully collaborate they are even more infrequently asked to explain the meaning of native terms. Such (elicited) folk definitions can be subsequently, first transcribed and second, carefully translated *via* multi stage translation.

121. My example of the definition of *tsav* is a constructed definition. A constructed definition in the native language and then translated would be preferable. An encyclopaedic definition (following Longacker (1958)) is easier to translate well than isolated words or even sentences.

122. An analogy might help : We can paint a cubist picture of a woman, or take a photograph of her. The photograph (i.e., the ethnography) bears resemblance to her and we may be able to recognize her on the street. The cubist portrait may be great art, but recognition is impossible. In my view ethnography's task is to be more like a photograph than a cubist painting.

123.  Discrepancies in the ethnographic record are invariably opportuni-
      ties to learn more. We (Werner, Schoepfle, et al 1987.1.60ff)
      have, after struggling with what "thick description" (Geertz
      1973:3-30) means in terms of practical steps that an ethnographer
      can take, come to the conclusion that being attuned to discrepan-
      cies and differences of opinion in all ethnographic texts that an
      ethnographer collects (Journal, Transcription, documents, etc.)
      represents the best way to learn from discrepancy and anomaly
      and thus "thicken" the description. We have called this utilization
      of discrepancy and anomaly "epistemological windows" (Ward &
      Werner 1985).

124.  Today an ethnographer can do anything he or she wants to
      including ignoring the language of the natives — we have no
      standards of performance or worse, we deny the possibility of
      such standards. Unfortunately, many ethnographers do just that as
      documented by Chambers and Bolton (1979). While field notes
      are mentioned by the respondents to their survey, these vary from
      200 to 20,000 pages for a year to 18 months long field tenure.
      The phrase "transcription or "native texts" is not mentioned by
      any of the 50 odd respondents to Chambers and Bolton's ques-
      tionnaire. The responders are all ethnographers who had recently
      returned from extensive fieldwork abroad.

125.  The bottom line of this argument is that we have to teach
      anthropology graduate students that there are better, more
      systematic ways of learning a culture than the casual learning by
      *ad hoc* field methods. The situation is similar to learning a
      language casually. It is easy to remain completely fluent in a
      pidginized version of the language. The result of unsystematic
      learning of a culture can only result in a pidgin ethnography.