

Call for book chapter proposals: Refiguring Speech Codes Theory

We are issuing a call for proposals of chapters to be included in a new volume on speech codes theory. This book, which will be edited by Gerry Philipsen, the originator of speech codes theory, and Tabitha Hart, a scholar of speech codes theory, will update, expand, and improve upon the theory. The book is intended to showcase a dozen or so original chapters, written by each of the accepted contributors. Based on these, the book editors will compose a synthesis chapter presenting a unified (re)statement of speech codes theory.

Speech codes theory: A participatory endeavor

A speech code is “a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct.” (Philipsen, 1997, 126) As it now stands, speech codes theory has the following six propositions (the dates in parentheses are the year that the proposition first appeared in print):

1. Wherever there is a distinctive culture, there is to be found a distinctive speech code (1992)
2. In any given speech community, multiple speech codes are deployed. (2005)
3. A speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric (1992)
4. The significance of speaking is contingent upon the speech codes used by interlocutors to constitute the meanings of communicative acts (1992)
5. The terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself. (1992)
6. The artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communicative conduct. (1997)

Speech codes theory has always been a participatory theory—open to modification, including expansion of scope and claims, through the contributions of speech codes scholars. Over the 28 years of its existence (since Philipsen 1992), it was modified in significant ways:

- An increase from four to six empirically warranted propositions (Philipsen, 1992; Philipsen, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias, 2005).
- A more explicit treatment of meanings and codes as essentially open to change, negotiation, contestation, and revision (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias, 2005; Philipsen and Hart, 2016).
- The foregrounding of the needs and concerns of the individual actor who seeks to discover, use, and contend with the presence of codes in their lifeworld (Philipsen and Hart, 2016).

- Explicit stipulation that the word “speech” calls up all of the means of communication in a particular lifeworld (Philipsen and Hart, 2016).
- An explicit foregrounding of a central role for studies of codes embedded in, and about, new technologies of communication (Philipsen and Hart, 2016; Hart, 2017).
- Responding to charges that the theory does not provide for attention to power in social life, with clarification and demonstration of how SCT provides for attention to power differences and dynamics (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias, 2005; see also Philipsen (1986, 2000).

Our recent communication with fellow scholars indicates that there is compelling work in progress that, if brought together in one volume, will effect a striking refiguring of speech codes theory, giving it renewed meaning and utility.

A new refiguring of speech codes theory

With the above in mind, we are working on a new, substantial and dramatic refiguring of speech codes theory. This refiguring is inspired by our appraisal of the present moment in the study of communication; the published research of speech codes scholars throughout the world; critiques of speech codes theory; and our recent survey of twenty established speech codes theory scholars on the promising work that they are doing.

We propose refiguring speech codes theory by making advances primarily on two fronts, which we describe as (1) the ecology of speech codes—where they are located and how to find them, and (2) the meanings, use, force, and dynamics of speech codes.

Other potential directions, themes and/or topics for refiguring speech codes theory could include any the following (this list is suggestive of possibilities, not exhaustive):

- Sites and structures of connection beyond speech community and speech network
- Interfaces, platforms, devices, materialities
- Affordances
- Context and context collapse
- Multiple codes in the same lifeworld
- Relations of codes to each other: opposition, dominance interdependence
- Fluidity
- Sojourner codes
- Speech codes as sources of personal meanings—identities and interactions
- Speech codes as sources of meanings—interpretations of communicative acts
- Pragmatics as a resource for the interpretation of communicative acts
- Temporality—time and timing, episodes, *kairos* (the opportune moment)
- How interlocutors use speech codes
- Speech codes as a resource for action, and action research

- Cooperative speech
- Contending speech
- Critique and defense of speech codes
- Negotiation of codes, code boundaries, meanings
- How users re-shape codes
- The discursive force of codes
- Performance
- How speech codes theory can help explain the force of codes in social life
- Codes of honor and dignity, visibility and invisibility

We are particularly interested in work that increases the number of empirical propositions in the theory and/or that refines and develops its underlying conceptual framework.

We are open to a variety of types of contributions, including, for example, new empirical propositions, modifications of extant propositions, and/or conceptual refinements, or other types of studies that can advance speech codes theory.

If anyone is interested in authoring an overview and/or a meta-analysis of published work on speech codes theory, this could also be proposed for inclusion in this book, whether as a chapter in its own right or an appendix.

Instructions for Submission

All chapter proposals should be 500 words or less.

If you plan to make a case for a new proposition to be integrated into SCT, please provide a tentative wording of the proposition.

Please also include a working title for your proposed chapter, as well as a very short (100 words or less) author bio.

Submit your materials via email to gphil@uw.edu and tabitha.hart@sjsu.edu by end of day on June 1, 2019.

If you have questions about possible ways to participate in this project or would like to sound out your ideas, please contact us as soon as possible.

Finally, if you would like electronic copies of published versions of speech codes theory and a working SCT bibliography, please contact us and we will share these with you. We are also happy to share feedback on style or approach for your proposed chapter.

References

Tabitha Hart, "Speech Codes Theory," in Young Yun Kim, Editor, The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017).

Gerry Philipsen, Speaking Culturally: Explorations in Social Communication (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). [4 principles, corresponding to 1, 3, 4, and 5 above]

Gerry Philipsen, "A Theory of Speech Codes," in Gerry Philipsen and Terrance Albrecht, Editors, Developing Communication Theories (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). [5 propositions corresponding to 1,3,4,5, and 6 above].

Gerry Philipsen, "Speech Codes Theory: Traces of Culture in Interpersonal Communication" (revised). 2nd edition of Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication, Editors, Dawn O. Braithwaite and Paul Schrodt, (Sage, Los Angeles, 2015, 293-304).

Gerry Philipsen, "Speech codes theory and traces of culture in interpersonal communication." In Leslie Baxter and Dawn Braithwaite, Editors, Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication, (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008, 269-280).

Gerry Philipsen, Lisa M. Coutu, and Patricia Covarrubias, "Speech Codes Theory: Restatement, Revisions, and Response to Criticisms," in William B. Gudykunst, Editor, Theorizing about Intercultural Communication (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2005). [6 propositions, as stated above]

Gerry Philipsen and Tabitha Hart, "Speech Codes Theory." Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction. Wiley-Blackwell and the International Communication Association. 2015