**What is the most important contribution of Birdwhistell’s work *Kinesics and context*?**

It is his new approach to the study of human communication, his statements on kinesics and he says that communication should be viewed as system with a structure, that is used by people during interactions.

It compiles all of the more important writings of the author and most of them were hard to find. Birdwhistell is different/new in that he’s more concerned with the function and use of body language and expressions and that he sees communication as a complex system (not separately verbal or non-verbal).

The most important contribution is perhaps his idea how face itself and its behavior occurse in communication and how it can influence the interaction. = “the interactional use of the face”

In my opinion, the most important contribution is the author's approach itself. It is interesting he tries to view the nonverbal communication this way. However I'm not quite sure how much functional it is.

**What is his best innovation (comparing to Darwin or Ekman)? Is there anything similar to Darwin or Ekman?**

His best Innovation is his definition of communication system – he sees it as a system with structure which is independent and can be decribed independently of the behavior of particular participants. He also changes a methodology fot the study of communicative behavior

One of the first to have „structural“ approach to communication behaviour (speech, movement, relations of the communicators to the physical environment). More of a linguistic approach to all aspects of communication, more complex – he looks at what role the, e. g. facial movements, have in interaction, in context.

I think it was Ekman who said that you can’t not communicate – and Birdwhistell says that anything anyone does in the presence of other person can be a part of communication system. Also maybe Ekman’s classification of boy movements and facial expressions (illustrators etc.) – different types of functions.

He sees the definition of communication in a different way. He bases it more on the interaction between two people and how they “relate their behavior to one another when they are in each other’s presence“. There are no facial expression that have the same social meaning all over the world X Darwin.

He sees the communication as a system of orders/patterns. Birdwhistell says, that this system with his structure is independent and can be described independetly of the behavior of particular participants.

**Do you see any limits in Birdwhistell’s description of communication?**

He claims, that communication is anything that anyone does in the prosence of another human being – that everything is part of the systém. I dont know – I think, that if I just put on my cap in front of stranger, I dont think it has to be part of the system (it can maybe tell the other person that Im cold, but I dont want him to do anything and he does not have to even understand it as a part of communication).

There is more to communication than just the interaction between two “interactees“. In a way, I see for example a letter or written text as a sort of communication (which of course does not deal with facial gestures, but presents an information all the same). Yet, it is able to exist even without any facial interaction.

I am not sure, whether the non existence of distinction between nonverbal and verbal communication is Kenton's reaction on Birdswhistell's system or it's Birdswhistell's idea, so I'm not really sure, how to react. Either way, I can't really agree on this systematization, that is described in the review.

I feel that it goes against the language and verbal/nonverbal as I understand it. Also he kind of generalizes the system of nonverbal movement of people during the communication. I'd need more information to make a proper opinion, but this is quite hard for me to fully understand.

**What is the main difference between Birdwhistell’s approach to study of facial expressions and two mentioned experimental approaches?**

1) subjects have been placed in situations in which they have been presented with various stimli presumed to arouse different emotions, behavior of their faces has been recorded.

2) whether people can reliably distinguish facial expressions in terms of different emotions the faces are presumed to be expressing.

Birdwhistell does not include the emotions in the facial displays. His only concern is with the face itself.

The two experimental approaches are focused only on the expression of an emotion, of the inner state. Birdwhistell is more interested in the whole face and finding out what things the face does and what do they mean / what function do they have in the interaction, what is their role in the system of communication.

He claims that when people communicate, there are patterns of human behavior that are manifested. He mainly focuses on body motion in communication and its function.

He describes the patterns of human behavior that people manifest, when they communicate. According to him, the communication is mediated by a complex system of behavior, including speech, movement, and the relations of the communicators to the physical environment. His main concern is on the way that body motion functions in communication.

**What do you say on his linguistics analogy in research of nonverbal communication (facial expressions, gestures)? Is that kind of approach useful? And is it consistent from the linguistic viewpoint?**

I dont really agree with the author and his definition here. I think it cannot be consistent from the linguistic viewpoint, I think he should focus more on the difference between nonverbal communication and language system.

For me it's too much of a border crossing from the author. I think he's mixing the nonverbal behavior with the language system. It is implementation of the language's system on nonverbal communication and I can't understand how it would non-forcedly work.

I think it can be useful in that he analyses the function and also that there are several elements that make up the complex meaning – and changing on element can change the meaning (so, for example, one gesture doesn’t have the same meaning in every context).

I am of the opinion that the approach that he presents is definitely somewhat relevant and something that I had not personally yet had the chance to explore thoroughly. However I am not sure of its linguistic relevance. Obviously, different facial displays can influence the language of the interaction in which they occur, but I feel like there would be very small number of examples and occasions that could be observed.

**Is there an obvious parallel to the description of sign languages in Birdwhistell’s approach? What about the basic distinction to kinemes, kinemorphs and kinemorphic constructions?**

The term “areas of articulation” (on the face) – it is also used in sign language linguistics (area of articulation is one of the main components of signs).

I see the parallel in the way of description - description through the video. Birdwhistell's use of terminology is again mixing of two different things. The extent of what is it, what it represents and what it means in sign languages is incomparable with that what he describes in nonverbal behavior. One is part of language system and one is part of Birdwhistell's system. I really can't agree.

The fact that “different parts of the body have their own repertoire of elements which can be combined (simultaneously) to produce complex meaning” – it is similar in sign language that different parts of the body (limited set of parts) have their own repertoire that can be combined and produced simultaneously.

Kinemes, kinemorphs and kinemorphic constructions – yes, it is a parallel but also we can say it’s a parallel to language in general (phonemes, morphemes/lexemes, sentences). The actual parallel, in my opinion, is the modality – visual and motoric.

Kinemes = phonemes (fist); kinemorphs = facial display; kinemorphic construction = fist + facial display.

Some signs in sign language must also be accompanied by different elements (e.g. facial gestures) therefore, they are part of some bigger construction..?

I think that Birdwhistells terminology cannot be fully applied on sign languages – sign languages are systematic and natural languages and his system of units in nonverbal communication are different, also their definition is different. There is a parallel in description through the video.

**What do you think about the concept of “stance“?**

Here I think the author describes some "natural necessity" that the communication participants do in order to communicate. I think that the flexibility of what Birdwhistell calls "the stance" depends on the modality of the language. In the spoken language it is needed, but only to some extent (in the sociological / socio-linguistic way). In sign languages it is obligatory and has given boundaries, or even rules.

From what I understand of this concept, it seems quite interesting to me – that the stance (the relative position towards the communications partner and posture of the body) is sort of like a frame. To me, it seems it could be also seen as a foundation of sorts – something that is kind of in the background but very important for interpretation of other elements. But I’m not really sure how would we differentiate between what belongs to “stance” and what is other element - e.g., changing the posture during the communication (could it be seen as changing the stance and thus changing the “frame”?).

I think that it differs based on the modality of language – in the spoken languages it is needed but it doest have exact rules, on the contrary in the sign languages it is obligatory and has exact rules, boundaries.

I see the “stance“ as relevant explanation for why certain kinemorphic constructions appear in the same frames.

**What do you think about the Birdwhistell’s book as a whole?**

From what is said in the review, it seems that there are some interesting concepts but that it is very difficult to read and understand.

It is a systematic study of communication behavior (although the writer tells us Birdwhistell was not a systematic writer). It is without any doubt very imporant – he was one of the first researches, who took this field seriously. I think that if the reviewer says it is not really easy to read, I think I would be completely lost while reading it.

I found Birdwhistell’s thoughts as kind of hard to understand, maybe because of his anthropological and sociological point of view. On one hand, his idea of isolating the communication only on the interaction and facial display seems to have some relevance, on the other, I also feel (like him) that “no aspect of behavior can be seen as more communicative than another.“ Therefore, I don’t feel that his thought is the only relevant and valid approach.

This is really just my humble opinion, and I already said it, but I think that author somehow crosses the line between something, which is part of the system and part of the communication (his point of view) with the norms and culture influence. Though he mentions similarities across the different societies, I think he just ignores the fact, that just SOME of these expressions could be viewed as universally shared - not the whole communication system. Also I think he tries so much to put linguistic system somewhere, where there's none. I think that the system is here, but different than what Birdwhistell describes. I might be too bold, but at some points this is just too "punk" for me. I bare in my mind, that I probably don't understand author's ideas and longer and thoroughful studying of this topic might change my mind.