5. Brunvand, p. 4.


11. Note: A verbatim text from the tape would read like this: "Ah, ah, my grandmother, ah, told us--er me the story about, etc. All the slips and false starts, etc. would be included. This has been cleaned up for the sake of clarity.

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ON SUGG'S REVIEW OF BIRDWHISTELL'S KINESICS AND CONTEXT

Richard P. Sugg (Vol. VI, p. 55-56) does Folklore Forum readers a service by outlining the major, and certainly obvious, faults of Kinesics and Context as a book of Birdwhistell as a writer. Mr. Sugg also correctly surmises that the book does not provide a blueprint for the novice who would study body motion. He even demonstrates this point by inaccurately, and irrelevantly, criticizing Birdwhistell's "Sample Conversation with Description." Birdwhistell could describe a message such as 'this is pretending' in an exhaustive analysis. But the example cited by Mr. Sugg was written in 1952 prior to the kinesic frame-by-frame analysis of film, before the discovery of parakinesic markers, and was not intended to be complete. In kinesics, as in structural linguistics, one carefully specifies and maintains a level of analysis; appropriately, Birdwhistell did not consider every level in his illustration. Mr. Sugg's conclusions thus show his unfamiliarity with kinesics assumptions about metatyping and the hierarchical structure of messages. He completely overlooks the kinesics approach to the question "why." But surely the essentials of discriminational meaning, free variation, and exhaustive analysis may sound like meaningless jargon to a reader fresh from Fas't's Body Language. Others would do well to read Kinesics and Context chapters 26, 27, and 2--in that order--while remembering the lesson urged by Dorson in 1961: "Because the word 'folklore' is used so widely, all kinds of people pass judgment on folklore, when they would not dream of commenting on more recondite fields of learning." The same holds true for "body motion" and kinesics.

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