

ETIC AND EMIC STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Telling, re-telling and listening are the common features of storytelling. In each case, there are cultural and linguistic scripts that manifest both the insider's emic perspective and the outsider's etic one. Both perspectives are inherent in the process of telling or hearing a story, and both are necessary. In this article I investigate and apply the two perspectives to Bible storytelling approaches in a general manner and suggest how the concepts are helpful. Some comments on Kewa stories illustrate the points and conclude the article.

Introduction

Wikipedia, the free on-line, sometimes unreliable and always malleable encyclopedia, comments that **emic** and **etic** are terms used by some social scientists to refer to two contrastive and different kinds of information about human behavior. An "emic" account is meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor and is commonly called the insider view. An "etic" account, on the other hand, is in terms familiar to the observer and is the outsider view. The local construction of meaning and local rules for behavior will be emic accounts while raw data for comparative research will rely on etic accounts.¹

Marvin Harris (1976:332) gives some history on the use of the terms etic and emic. He notes that Pike's intention "was to apply a single comprehensive research strategy to language and behavior based on analogies with the concepts and principles of structural linguistics...." Harris considered that in practice an actual or potential interactive context was necessary to meet and carry out a discussion about a particular domain whereas in etics the actor-observer interaction was unnecessary (331). Lett (1996) summarized the disagreement between Pike and Harris as one concerning the goal of the etic approach: "For Pike, etics were a way of getting at emics, for Harris, etics are an end in themselves." (382) Lett also points out that how one gets the knowledge has nothing to do with the source of that knowledge.

Pike used the terms etic and emic extensively within his theory (tagmemics), developed in the 1950s. The subtitle "the emic road toward conscious knowledge" of his later book, *Talk, Thought, and Thing* (1993) indicates that his main interest was always in the emics of behavior. For Pike the "person, as observer, is tied emically to things and concepts via differences, sameness, and appropriateness."²

A stereoscopic view

Etic and emic are two ways to view the same thing, resulting in two ways to describe it, providing, as Pike (1957) says, "A stereoscopic window on the world." The detached observer has one view, the native participant has another, but both are necessary. The outside observer is attempting to understand the inside viewpoint and as he does, so he moves back and forth from the objective etic categories that he has been trained to utilize to a subjective understanding of what the categories mean—their emic nature. The etic view is alien, cross-cultural, prepared in advance as a typological grid, somewhat absolute, often measurable, created by the analyst, while the emic view is domestic, mono-cultural, structurally derived, relative and contrastive in reference to a system, and discovered by the analyst.³ Another way to think of the differences is that an analyst may use various discovery procedures (e.g., Longacre 1964 on grammar and 1996 on discourse) to outline the etic structure of cultural units, but he would need to write an ethnography or grammar to provide a derived emic understanding of them.

Etics, like sounds, are similar across cultures, while emics, like phonemes, are particular to a language. We impose etic grids on a language or culture as our starting points from which we derive etic

conclusions. We then base our conclusions on the interpretation of the particular theory that underlies the etic grid, which is then subject to the recognition of emic differences that cultural insiders propose or acknowledge.

By applying these criteria to stories, we suggest that we need to view them simultaneously in terms of their etic and emic features.⁴ We can view stories as contrastive units; for example, parables have different forms and features than a poem. Each has a range of variation and are told or read from a particular context. The shared background and context of the teller and listener interpret the meanings, which are understood from that mutual perspective.

A story genre can be etic or emic, depending on how it is viewed. An emic set of stories will share enough features that cultural insiders will understand and interpret them in much the same way. We have to say “much the same” to allow for the range of etic variation that happens—no two speakers will tell or hear the story exactly the same, although for a unit to be emic they will need to negotiate and eventually understand the same meaning. Those kinds of stories that outside research ‘experts’ agree have the same characteristics will constitute a derived etic set of stories, e.g. those that are classified as ‘legends’, ‘fables’ and so on.

Bible stories: their emic and etic nature

When Jesus tells a story it is emic, told by a cultural insider who provides illustrations and analogies based on his cultural experience and imagination. He expected his disciples and other insiders to have an emic understanding sufficient that he did not need to give details about the Palestinian culture. Nevertheless, he was often misunderstood. For example, when he said that the Kingdom of God was like a man scattering seed on the ground, with analogies to a path, stones, thorns, birds, and good soil, the meaning of the story was not immediately apparent, even to his disciples. Although he told the Kingdom stories using inside emic cultural examples, Jesus had to explain the main point of them to his disciples. The re-told stories, as well as their later written variations, were derivations from these original emic stories. Of course, Jesus would not have told each story exactly the same each time, using the same words and gestures, and these differences could have been either emic (deliberate) or etic (incidental or idiosyncratic) variations.

One obvious etic starting point is to determine the main point of a story, although we may find that summarizing it is difficult unless we understand and analyze the story’s particular parts. For example, some arguments in the story of Job seem difficult to comprehend, although, from a literary point of view, we can outline the story and classify its episodes in a general etic manner. We can use common literary terms, such as prologue, main body and epilogue. We can suggest that the main point of the Job story is the relationship between good people and suffering and that, ultimately, there is divine justice. The introduction to the story (the first five verses) forms a prologue in which the author sets the stage for the short dialogue between God and Satan and the tests that follow for Job. The advice Job receives from his friends form a large part of the story and their comments represent their personal viewpoints, which Job disputes (demonstrating that one can question the emic, i.e., cultural perspective of one’s peers). It is only later in the story that God gives an emic, although metaphorical and poetic, commentary on the meaning of the story. In the epilogue God puts everything right again, but he doesn’t directly answer the questions that have confronted Job. It is the first and last parts of the story that provide the background that is necessary to arrive at any emic perspective or interpretation about suffering.

The style of the story about Job is very cryptic and Hebrew scholars have analyzed it according to etic literary classifications that include examples of poetic parallelism, laments, hymns, proverbs and oracles. However, from the cultural insider’s point of view, it was an emic (original) story with dialogue, recounting the words and feelings of Job, his friends, God, and the author.

The contribution of emics and etics to stories

We believe that etic and emic are useful concepts in discussing and classifying stories, whether oral or written. In classifying books, for example, librarians, archivists and other scholars use an etic perspective

to categorize them. They base their literary genres on agreed-upon etic criteria (determined by scholars and their peers). For example, the Library of Congress classifies book collections as: A. General Works; B. Philosophy, Psychology, Religion; C. Auxiliary Sciences of History; D. History: World (Except the Americans); E. History: Pre-Columbian Americas, (United States); F. History: U.S. regional, the Americas, and so on to Z. This etic classification contrasts with others, such as the Dewey Decimal System. The practitioners of each competing etic system have their particular variations. Each classification system is meaningful to its practitioners because the competing catalog systems are variations of an “emic road of conscious knowledge” (in Pike’s terminology). There must be some conviction that a meaningful emic system underlies any classification, but the two classification systems are etic grid(s) used to help define categories and the system.

The background of the person using the etic classification as well as the audience also comes into play: Is the classification done for public reference, marketing, personal library or some other purpose? Intention and purpose are always emic (to this case, to help readers find books and know what is in them) but the classifications are emic only to inside practitioners. Of course those with a literary background believe that their system of knowledge (based on peer recognized disciplines) is an emic system of classification.

What does a story contrast with etically? Dictionary definitions are not particularly helpful because they rely on literary accounts. For example, many dictionaries define story as an essay, “a short, literary composition, of an analytical, interpretive or reflective kind, dealing with its subject in a non-technical, limited and often unsystematic way and, usually expressive of the author’s outlook and personality.”⁵ The same dictionary defines story as “a fictitious literary composition in *prose* or *poetry*, shorter than a *novel*....” [Italics mine.] We can see that dictionary meanings are not strictly emic, especially when we note their circularity. Further synonyms for story include *narrative* (formal), *tale* (simple, leisurely or legendary) and *anecdote* (short, entertaining). Each synonym reveals essential features and kinds of story, but the definitions are not without problems because, for example, a story can be short and an essay can be in prose, or poetry can be longer than a story. The so-called “length” of the story is an etic feature. With over-lapping definitions of this sort for story (in dictionaries or in folk definitions), the problem can be resolved to some extent by taking into account the etic or emic perspective of the observers.⁶

When it comes to stories (or essays) there are many etic variations. As mentioned, writers often use “*story*” and “*novel*” interchangeably to represent different types: mystery, comedy, western, detective, science fiction, and so on.⁷ Novels are generally fictional and, as a high-level category, contrast with non-fiction. Again, the classification is etic because some novels are “historical,” based on facts, but supplemented with the author’s interpretation of the data, and some stories are non-fictional. Novels not only have their own varieties, but they are generally narrative in style (prose genres) and contrast with other literary styles (poetic genres).

We can see that the classification of stories is fluid and for researchers like Harris such schemes are not etic because they are “unscientific” in the sense that they vary according to the observer’s perspective and purpose. However, because emics (as well as etics) provides the road to conscious knowledge (in Pike’s terms), our interest here is to investigate how particular stories are understood from both points of view and not simply how they are classified.

Etic stories and the Bible

The stories we hear or tell are often variations derived from some original story. The insiders’ cultural adaptations to such stories will reveal what they consider emic or meaningful. An example would be when an Appalachian teller of the so-called “Jack Tales” (Pavesic 2005) introduces aspects of their own culture to become a part of the “original” folktales. The re-told stories are emic derivations in their interpreted variations, but in their original form they were simply etic folktales to the Appalachian storyteller. Without cultural adaptations and without cultural inside interpretation they would remain etic stories. An Appalachian version of the story could be re-told in such a way that it would underscore an outsider’s stereotype of the insider. In theology an etic story can protect certain cultural or theological viewpoints and interpretations.⁸ Consider the Genesis account of the Biblical flood, which took place over 40 days and nights. This is a literal account that most Christians consider emic. However, without a

number for 40 in a culture the length of time cannot be immediately emic to insiders. In such cases the translator may try to derive an emic understanding by borrowing the number from another language. The assumption is that it corresponds to the same literal 40-day that is provided in an exegesis of the source text of the Biblical story. However, in such cases, some instruction and teaching of numbers from the outside culture would be necessary.

In many instances the Bible storyteller (or translator) must base his or her interpretation of a story on etic forms that are in the present-day culture. Lexical problems from PNG occur in translating fig tree and sheep, temple and synagogue, priest and scribe, where no such forms or functions existed in the languages or cultures. Such an initial outside etic account requires an interpretive framework or grid for teaching because insiders cannot readily understand a story told using these literal forms. In addition, an outsider interpreting the etic account interposes a personal interpretive viewpoint into the story, forming new dimensions for the hearers. Similarly, outsiders often choose particular Biblical narratives because they believe that they are more relevant and necessary than others. This is also an etic (and often theological) decision.

Westerners have a linear account of history, so their stories include themes that are dated using a Western dating orientation. However, when the story is re-told in another culture, those who retell it may not imitate the linear perspective of the original teller. To overcome this “problem” Western missionaries discuss the meanings of the story from a particular view, which in turn is taught to cultural insiders, eventually illustrating the maxim that you teach (or interpret) like you were taught. Nevertheless, in some places in PNG cargo cult interpretations suggest an amalgamation of the insider’s cultural events and heroes that are mixed in with external Biblical chronological accounts—a blending of the stories, and a view to which we return later.

Outsiders begin with Bible stories in order to teach insiders the “facts”, which they must often interpret in terms of cultural analogies. This of course can only go so far: in Bible stories--it is not acceptable to have Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a water buffalo or picking walnuts from a fig tree. At the same time cultural insiders must retell the stories in a culture where there are no donkeys or figs. The outsider as storyteller is telling an etic story but needs to do it in such a way that there can be cultural emic derivations and meanings.

Missionaries who initially told Bible stories in most of the world’s cultures gave, what was to the insiders, etic accounts.⁹ The stories were brought in by outsiders and represented many categories and linguistic forms that were alien to the inside culture. For example, flood stories from around the world are an etic collection, told in areas where there are deserts as well in areas where there are flood plains. Initially such stories are etic to the insiders. Classifying Bible stories as etic may not be obvious because we expect hearers in another culture to eventually understand them and accept them as emic (and true). But the hearers weren’t there when the story took place, nor was (in all likelihood) the writer of many stories, such as the flood story in Genesis 6-8. The retold story is an etic account, except for Noah and his family, as well as those who drowned in the flood. In the same way, although there are various flood stories in many parts of the world, accounts of them would, in each instance, be part of an etic collection, gathered by outside observers or told by insiders who were never there. However, once insiders understand the Genesis flood account in terms of the forms and images assigned to it from within their culture, with their own interpretation and perspective, it becomes a derived emic story. Of course to the unbeliever it remains one of a set of etic flood stories.

It follows that etic and emic always occur within a framework of cultural interpretations and their concomitant scripts: what is etic for me as an outsider, one who does not know or participate in the cultural scripts, may be emic to you as an insider. Each component of the script will also have a range of variation. Not all traditional flood stories have the same script throughout the world: there are differences in when the flood took place, where it took place, how long it lasted, and so forth. The similar features of each account may lead to a composite set of derived etic (Berry 1990) features. This allows analysts an etic interpretation of the flood as “universal.” Some interpretations consider the universality of the flood as an etic fact because there are flood stories in various cultures around the world. It is also possible to interpret these accounts as etic variations of one Biblical emic story.

On a different and idiosyncratic level, etic variations also occur because not everyone tells the flood story using the same grammar, figures of speech, and so on. Some storytellers may give it a wider geographical range, others a longer time depth, or there might not be agreement that it happened at all. It may be dramatized, sung, have poetry written about it such that in each case the story will have different linguistic forms and images. These will be etic variations that represent the emic or insider's view.¹⁰ Another example of etic variation is the New Testament stories of the feeding of the 5000, told by four different authors. No author claims that only 4,999 ate the bread and fish or that the food was bagels and mutton. All of them say that it was fish and bread and that there were leftovers. What they change in their stories is certain peripheral and etic details: how many people sat in a group, where the loaves and fish came from, and so on. The story is from the emic viewpoint of the disciples who were there for the occasion, but there are etic variations within the story. This also demonstrates how the perspective of the storyteller is crucial in the interpretation of the event.

Emic stories in general

The emics of a story take place when it undergoes cultural transformations, which may result in a distorted view or interpretation. For example, when John the Baptist stated that he was unworthy to untie the sandals from Jesus' feet, his statement may present a problem of interpretation in another culture. Do people need to know the etics of sandal classification to understand the story? Why would John want to untie them anyway? Of course the idea behind John's statement comes out later when he says that Jesus must become more important and he become less. Untying the sandals was an act of a servant. However, in Papua New Guinea some other figure might be better if hearers are to understand it as an emic concept. Translators have tried a variety of them.¹¹

An emic story uses linguistic styles (verbal and non-verbal) that are cultural. It may therefore legitimately start with the equivalent of "once upon a time" and not be considered false or a fairy tale. Kewa stories¹² often simply start with a statement such as "There was a man named *Yalo*," and there may or may not have been such a man. But from the insider's view, i.e. the emic view, *Yalo* exists for the story. On the other hand, if I, as an outsider, hear a story and the reference is to a mythical gigantic pig named "*Puramenalasu*," I don't know initially whether it is true or not. With more information from insiders, I may consider that it is not true because such a pig appears only in stories and has miraculous attributes. Nevertheless, it turns up in Kewa emic stories, which are developed from within the culture, with certain values attached to them. The notion of emic is not the same as that of truth.

Emic stories therefore represent or assume a cultural viewpoint where the insider must often explain the meaning to outsiders. Emic behavior also takes place outside of stories: for example, new believers may hear stories about the value and magic of baptism. They may then carry certain things into the water when baptized because they think the water and process are magical and will somehow protect them from their enemies. But outsiders won't know this until they hear some application about baptism from an insider—their emic view.

Once the main point of a story is emic, people can re-tell it easily or naturally within their culture. The story takes on a life of its own, and, of course, there will be variations of the emic story. For example, the story of baptism is an emic one for a believer but performed in a variety of ways by different denominations. They, in turn, exegete passages on the subject differently. For the cultural insiders, eventually the prevailing denominational teaching will become the dominant emic view. As Lett (1996:382) reminds us, "The native members of a culture are the sole judges of the validity of an emic description, just as the native speakers of a language are the sole judges of the accuracy of a phonemic identification."

Of course competing and contrastive denominations will argue that the form and meaning of baptism has become "distorted" from the original, except in their case. Nevertheless, each denomination would probably claim that baptism is their emic and "true" Biblical viewpoint and a requirement (in some sense), so in that way it is also represents a derived emic behavior.

Tellers can enhance emic stories in culturally appropriate ways. Jesus gave many cultural or inside illustrations of the Kingdom of God using, among others, metaphors of a seed and yeast. In Matthew 13.24, a sower sows the good seed and someone sows weeds in the same field and they grow together

until the harvest when they are separated. In Mark 4.26, the seed is scattered and grows without the farmer knowing how right up to the harvest. In Luke 13.18, Jesus likens the Kingdom to mustard seed or yeast, cultural analogies. He wanted the object to be something that started out small but eventually grew to a large size. In John 3.3, the author uses the seed image to remind his readers that without the new birth (growing like a seed) no one can see the Kingdom of God. Despite their cultural knowledge, knowing about seed, yeast, growth, etc. the disciples-as-insiders still did not often understand the meaning of the stories. The disciples interpreted the new teachings that Jesus gave according to the past teachings they (or religious teachers) had heard—those that were already emic to them.

Blended stories:

We often cannot classify oral stories as “purely” etic or emic because of their variations, although it may be helpful to initially consider them as one or the other. Storytellers and hearers fuse images from various perspectives that are part of the group’s culture (and therefore emic) or influenced by an outside view (and therefore etic).

Even in the Bible, stories may merge time and space. For example, Jesus is “transfigured” before the very eyes of Peter, James and John as they see Elijah and Moses talking with him. These widely separated individuals, in terms of their stories in the history of the Bible, are suddenly and without explanation united in the story of the “transfiguration.” In a similar manner, cargo cults integrate Biblical and legendary cultural heroes (Lawrence 1964). Is the story emic in a chronological sense or is absolute time unimportant in the story? Blended stories permit cultural applications so that in a cargo cult interpretation, the hearers may assign the New Jerusalem to Sydney, Australia, the seat of all material wealth. If Bible stories do not readily reveal an acceptable theological framework or perspective, outsiders (or insiders) may provide one.

People blend the work of the Holy Spirit naturally into the spiritual framework of their culture. For example, in some cultures, people expect the Holy Spirit to “find” them in a particular location, just as in traditional stories the spirits of ancestors “found” shamans and cultural power brokers. In regards to geographical location, there may also be cultural expectations—people may say prayers on a hill or mountaintop because that is where the activities of certain spiritual cults took place.

The book of Revelation does not have a strictly linear view of when the events will take place (or have already taken place), although it is often taught with particular fixed dates. The blending of history and prophecy in the book allows various interpretations. But are the streets in the New Jerusalem made literally of pure gold? Could this be a symbolic blending of John’s imagination and cultural background with a future and imaginary paradise?

One thing is certain: when stories are blended they will confuse the outsiders (in particular) who hear them. We will miss the point (if there is one) because background information is lacking, cultural nuances are lost, and the names of places and characters are not recognized.

A blended story makes it difficult to check for textual accuracy because it is generally an oral story, not an accepted written text. We may claim, “that doesn’t sound like the creation story” and therefore dismiss a particular cultural rendition as inaccurate, but we need to investigate the cultural exegesis that invariably accompanies any story. Otherwise, we miss the emic interpretation.

Blended Bible stories can also give some indication of how new “key terms” (theological short hands) are understood by the insiders. For example, the term “eternity” in Kewa is *pirama lama pope*, (sitting-continue, saying-continue, go-imperative), so analyzing the underlying form and meaning helps the outsider to see how eternity is emically understood.

Summary and conclusion

The important and crucial questions we have raised center on how to determine if the steps taken in storytelling (including Biblical stories) are etic or emic. Both viewpoints are necessary and in the latter there is an attempt to represent the insider-cultural perspective. However, one must begin most often by reflecting the etic view of the outsider.

Here are some ways that storytellers can utilize both approaches when examining Bible stories:

The Etic approach	The Emic approach
Choose and define Biblical principles for the people	Understand the cultural values that are a part of the people's worldviews
Tell the people what Jesus meant	Inquire what the people believe Jesus meant
Tell the stories chronologically (linearly)	Inquire about the cultural view of time (and space) before ordering the stories
Use the stories for church planting and evangelism	Determine their appropriate and traditional function within the culture
Tell the stories initially in the trade language	Have the stories re-told in the vernacular
Stick to the text, replicating it as closely as possible in the story	Allow creativity in songs and dramatic presentations to enhance the text
Discourage folktales and legends that reflect pagan views	Find similarities between traditional stories and Biblical stories
Insist upon doctrinal integrity	Allow doctrinal discussion and questions

An emic understanding in storytelling is clearly necessary and important, but how can the storyteller be certain that this happens? Although emic when first told and then eventually written for the Bible, the story accounts that we possess have hundreds of textual variants (which are therefore either etic or emic derived variations). Scholars have studied and consulted together to provide the best possible judgments on the final English (or other major language) translations and their interpretations, but scholars often disagree.¹³ The earliest Greek and Hebrew texts that scholars have decided upon are a result of a history of deliberation by the early church, with disagreement on the status and inclusion in the canon of the apocryphal and other writings in particular.

The best way to handle this problem in Bible storytelling is to admit that telling the Bible story is not the same as a translation of the source text containing that story. Although we must be sure that we do not isolate the story from the general setting of the text, research and comments on the context itself are not inspired. In the Genesis account of creation, for example, there are variations in the first four chapters. According to Leach (1969), each story contains oppositions represented in the seven-day creation story, the Garden of Eden story, and the Cain and Abel story. Contextual interpretations of this sort are etic analyses of the accounts and cannot represent an emic or insider's view. On the other hand, we do not have anyone living who can tell us what actually happened in Genesis (or elsewhere in Bible stories), so the best (and most consistent perspective) we can hope for is a derived account that forms an emic approximation.

By combining the etic and emic perspectives we can have a model to help tell Bible stories, or have them told better. The etic view assures scholarly interpretations and the emic view manifests cultural perspectives.

Appendix A: Comments from some stories in Kewa

It may be helpful for us to examine some stories briefly in Kewa, in particular the nature of their introductory structures. The Kewa people, who live in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, have had their stories collected and studied by LeRoy (1985), MacDonald (1991), and Franklin (1972).¹⁴ We suggest that the emic traditional beginning sentences in Kewa stories are relevant to the construction of Bible stories.

People prize certain stories in the sense that they like to hear them--and of course (men in particular) tell them often. The following stories in Kewa are from a collection of 14 recorded in the village of Usa in 1968. I give only the beginning sentences from the 14 stories. We follow with examples demonstrating how the stories in Mark that begin each chapter can follow the derived emic patterns that we have found in Kewa.

How the Kewa stories begin:

1. There was a very long house and there were many men living in it.
2. There were two brothers who lived in their house.
3. There were two small men.
4. There were many young women who worked in their gardens and stayed in that area.
5. There were two men named Yope and Kapasi who lived on top of Mt Malue.
6. There were two brothers, Agadarai and Murai.
7. There were several young women who lived together.
8. There was a cricket Dalli and a bug Ayaamu who lived in a garden.
9. There was a man who was making himself an armband down along the Kagua River.
10. There were two men, one was small and other large.
11. There was an especially beautiful woman named Abunu Wapalame.
12. There were two brothers named Agema and Yalu.
13. There was once an old man and a young boy.
14. There were many women who lived in a long house.

Note that each story begins with a stative sentence that provides the setting. We can begin Kewa Bible stories the same way that the traditional stories do. For example, a storyteller can begin the 16 chapters in Mark by using a structure that is more natural in Kewa stories.

Beginning the stories in each chapter of Mark

1. There was a prophet named Isaiah who gave some good news that referred to Jesus.
2. There was a place named Capernaum where Jesus healed a paralyzed man.
3. There was a man in a synagogue that had a paralyzed hand.
4. There was a crowd gathered at a lake called Galilee.
5. There was a place called Gerasa where a man with an evil spirit stayed.
6. There were many people in Jesus' hometown that listened to him.
7. There were some Pharisees and teachers from Jerusalem who came to Jesus.
8. There was a large crowd that had nothing to eat.
9. There was a high mountain where Jesus took Peter, James and John.
10. There was a place across the Jordan River in the province of Judea where Jesus went.
11. There were two towns, Bethphage and Bethany that were near Jerusalem.
12. There was a man who planted a vineyard.
13. There was a Temple made out of wonderful stones and materials.
14. There was a Festival of the Passover and Unleavened Bread.
15. There was an early morning meeting of the chief priests, elders, teachers of the law and others.
16. There were women named Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome.

This simple sample illustrates how the teller can replicate the emic nature of Kewa introductory sentences in telling (or translating) Bible stories.

Notes

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¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etic>, accessed most recently on August 5, 2008. According to Kenneth L. Pike (1993:16), emic comes from the linguistic term phonemic and applies "to contrastive items of nonphonological material rather than just to phonological data." Google (accessed August 5, 2008) provides 85,800 links to "etic AND emic" but of course many of them are redundant or spurious. Note that units resulting from an insider's categorization are emic units. Pike referred to "emes" in his 1967 book and discusses emic contrasts in contextual frames in his 1982 book. A debate on etics and emics is in Headland, Pike and Harris (eds.), 1990. In February 1991 I had two lengthy interviews with Pike on etics and emics and published some of the results on-line at: <http://www.sil.org/klp/karlintv.htm>. I deposited the taped interviews in the Pike archives at SIL International in Dallas, Texas.

² This quote is also the title of chapter two in the book. Within a culture emic units always contrast to the native observer, but they have ranges of variation. In Pike's view we can categorize things around us because they are isolatable or recurrent, but they never occur outside of some physical or mental context (1993:17).

³ See Pike 1967:37-40 for discussion and amplification of these points. They are also paraphrased in Berry (1990:85-86).

⁴ Pilch (2002:111) notes that a Western researcher has to impose an etic interpretation on his information, but actually goes back and forth between imposed etic and emic perspectives until an understanding is reached.

⁵ Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition (2001). Here, both the oral and written aspects come into play and contrast: story as oral or written, but essay as written.

⁶ An example of overlapping definitions from another cultural domain would be how the body parts "hand" and "foot" are referred to in a number of Papuan New Guinea languages (and probably elsewhere). "Hand" can include what in English is "arm" and "foot" can include what is "leg" in English. In Kewa (PNG) therefore arm and hand do not contrast emically any more than essay and story do in English. It doesn't matter whether there is one lexical etic form or many, the difference would have to show up as an emic contrast.

⁷ Of course, as the Wikipedia encyclopedia reminds us, "the criteria used to divide up works into genres are not consistent, leading to works that belong to more than one genre." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_genre (accessed August 5, 2008). For example, the site notes that romance and mystery are divided according to plot, but Western according to setting, so a novel can be either a Western romance or a Western mystery.

⁸ An example would be the difference between what Catholics and most Protestants include in the canon of the Scriptures. The canonizing of the books of the Bible took centuries and the rulings of an ecumenical Synod.

⁹ This is because outsiders take a long time to become familiar with a culture and they don't know what is the most relevant for a particular culture. Note Bailey (1976), who uses oriental exegesis (not Western) to recover and interpret the Middle Eastern life style of the peasants. Bailey imposes certain constraints before he considers their comments to be emic (in my view): 1) The person must have spent 20 years of his life in a peasant community; 2) The materials gathered from the person must be oral and in Arabic; 3) The person must have been a friend for at least 5 years; 4) The person must have Bible background knowledge.

¹⁰ An example from the Kewa culture would be the traditional counting systems. There are numerous etic variations to the body tally system. There are also emic variations to how counting is done. (See Franklin 2003:247-262).

¹¹ An interesting reasoning that I heard was that if John wanted to show his servanthood, why wouldn't he want to untie and carry the sandals of Jesus? As a servant he would certainly be "worthy" (deserving) to do this.

¹² The Kewa people number over 100,000 (in three main dialects) and live in the Southern Highland Province of Papua New Guinea. Over a period of 15 years the author and his wife lived in two separate villages and learned to speak two dialects of Kewa. Kewa stories are recorded and analyzed by LeRoy (1985a, 1985b), MacDonald (1991) and the author (Franklin 1972).

¹³ See, for example, the obituary on the great Biblical scholar Bruce Metzger at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/februaryweb-only/107-42.0.html> (accessed September 2008), where it is reported that "Some evangelicals criticized him for saying that many biblical books, like the book of Genesis, were "composites of several sources" rather than the work of individual authors. Metzger's contention that certain extra-biblical books were inspired but not canonical was also critiqued by some evangelicals, who said such beliefs undermined Scripture's inerrancy."

¹⁴ See also Slone (2001) and McElhanon (1974, 1982) for collections of Papua New Guinea folktales.

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