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Family language and education: The sociolinguistic model of restricted and elaborated codes

Kurum, ma, magana ce (A Hausa proverb).*

Mais si le langage exprime autant par ce qui est entre les mots que par les mots? Par ce qu'il ne "dit" pas que par ce qu'il "dit" (Merleau-Ponty)?**

...language is not (as is commonly thought) a system for transferring thoughts or meaning from one brain to another, but a system for organizing information and for releasing thoughts and responses in other organisms. The materials for whatever insights there are in this world exist in incipient form, frequently unformulated but nevertheless already there in man. One may help to release them in a variety of ways, but it is impossible to plant them in the minds of others. Experience does that for us instead. (Edward T. Hall)

All the President's words: what the literate ear hears

In the public reaction to the Nixon tapes, two major themes of criticism were sounded. One was directed at what Nixon and his

 * Silence, it, too, is speech.
** But what if language speaks as much by what is between words as by the words themselves? As much by what it does not "say" as by what it "says"?

associates said, the other at how they said it. In general, the means of expression as well as the content was viewed as somehow defective: not only did these men think evil thoughts and plot evil deeds, but they expressed themselves so poorly that they could hardly be understood. Many considered this poverty of expression nearly as reprehensible as the thinking and plotting itself. Some commentators pointed to political danger: those entrusted with the high affairs of state should not use language so carelessly. Others pointed to personal hypocrisy: those who express themselves so poorly in private talk should not be so pretentious in prepared addresses to the public.

As McLuhan observed at the height of this public reaction in an article on the editorial page of the *New York Times*, "the Nixon tapes afford a maximal confrontation between oral and written media" (May 10, 1974, p. 27). For, in his view, people's reaction to the tapes reflected a pervasive misunderstanding of the ways in which they actually talk to each other in everyday life, a misunderstanding engendered, to a large extent, by the ways in which they experience written media. As McLuhan has observed on many occasions, members of a literate culture tend to construct internally their own experience of speech so that it reflects the norms of writing. They construct, as it were, a continuous text from their experience of discontinuous speech, removing certain bits and pieces of information that do not readily form text and adding others that are either transmitted by non-verbal and para-verbal means or are merely assumed, on the basis of a common body of experience, to be available to all the participants in the speech situation.

We recognize that all persons, whether literate or not, use constructive processes in comprehending speech. Yet we would claim that these processes vary considerably and that literate experience is a critical factor in such variation. In making this claim, however, we would like to make two qualifications. First, by literate experience we do not simply refer to reading and writing activity but rather to a certain reflective and self-critical way of experiencing language that may involve speaking and listening as well (see Goody, 1977, and Olson, 1978, for discussion of the powerful ways in which oral and literate registers may operate independently of the modalities of speech and writing, even though these registers have evolved from these modalities). Secondly, there is significant variation in the degree to which literate experience interacts with

constructive processes in speech comprehension. Certainly the more thoroughgoing the experience, the more likely it is to affect the ways in which speech is comprehended.

Context of situation: the indeterminacy of speech

The modern idiom which McLuhan uses, fashionable though it may be, does not really tell us much that we have not known for some time. A number of well-established traditions of inquiry have alerted us to the indeterminacy of everyday speech, at least as it is viewed apart from the original situation in which it is embedded. Philosophers of language, accustomed to drawing on the single-valued symbolism of mathematics in representing the logical structure of formal writing, have been driven to use the multivalent symbolism of pragmatics in representing the everyday functions of speech; and anthropological linguists, who have more directly confronted in field settings the difficulty of translating what Malinowski once called "untranslatable terms", have come to view verbal acts in everyday life as necessarily grounded in what they have called the "context of situation" (Malinowski, 1923, 1965; Firth, 1950; Hymes, 1971, 1972, 1974a, 1974b).

Using the framework provided by information theory, we can view the context of situation as an intricate network of information sources, including those that are provided by the verbal context itself.[1] These sources of information can, indeed, be viewed as various channels, all of which are necessarily involved in producing and interpreting communicative acts. In effect, the verbal context provides only a single channel of information, albeit a fundamental one, in a multi-channelled system of communication. Hence, any particular act of communication might be more appropriately pictured as a concerto — one in which, say, a wind instrument is dominant — than as a solo performance. We do not have adequate space to characterize these information sources in any detail (see Hymes, 1972, for a detailed characterization from the "ethnography of speaking" point of view), but let us briefly delineate the two major kinds of information that accompany the purely verbal in most oral communication.

First of all, there is the information transmitted by expressive behaviour that may be characterized as para-verbal (vocal pitch, timbre, volume, intonation, etc.) or non-verbal (gesture, posture,

eye movement, body rhythm, use of space, etc.). The information provided by these sources may be congruent with that provided by purely verbal sources, but, quite often, it expands, refines, or even contradicts. Indeed, as Labov and Fanshel have suggested in their recent work on language and psychotherapy, the information provided by intonational contours is necessarily indeterminate in relation to the verbal propositions they accompany:

> In our view, the lack of clarity or discreteness in the intonational signals is not an unfortunate limitation of this channel, but an essential and important aspect of it. Speakers need a form of communication which is *deniable*. It is advantageous for them to express hostility, challenge the competence of others or express friendliness and affection in a way that can be denied if they are explicitly held to account for it. If there were not such a deniable channel of communication, and intonational contours became so well recognized and explicit that people were accountable for their intonations, then some other mode of deniable communication would undoubtedly develop. (Labov and Fanshel, 1977, p. 46)[2]

In addition to the para-verbal and non-verbal sources of information, there are all those sources of information located in the participants' shared experience. These sources may be embedded in immediate experience — the sensorially mediated words (verbal context) and worlds (physical context) that accumulate with such density in any verbal interaction — or in some history of experience that the participants share (or, more accurately, that they assume they share) — the interlocking worlds of memory that involve a wide range of personal, social, and cultural experience. And these worlds, continuously drawn upon by the participants in any speech situation, determine not only what is said, but, perhaps even more importantly, what is left unsaid. For members of a social group who have accumulated a significant body of shared experience are necessarily involved in elliptical forms of verbal communication. They communicate in this way so that their own history as a group may be confirmed and circulated, indeed, recreated. All human communication reflects, in some measure, a Proustian instinct for the recreation of the past — social as well as individual — within the present.

To return to our initial metaphor, the participants necessarily construct their own internal texts as a consequence of the indeterminacy of speech; and as already observed, the processes involved in this construction vary considerably with the degree of literate experience. But this construction of speech as text is not manifested only in the immediate act of comprehension itself, but also in the

manifold acts of reflection in which earlier speech is retrieved. Indeed, at these subsequent moments of retrieval, the texts constructed from speech often cease to be internal, for they are inserted into different communicative contexts; and in these acts of re-externalization, speech that may have originated as uncontrolled improvisation often comes to acquire, by virtue of subsequent editing, a density reminiscent of written text.[3]

The more the participants possess literate sensibilities, the more elaborate the texts they recreate from speech. Since such elaboration, whether externally or internally manifested, tends to take place at a level below consciousness, the persons involved cannot fully appreciate the extent to which it exists inside their own heads rather than in the words they actually utter to each other. As a consequence, when highly literate persons read transcribed speech, they tend to draw inadvertently upon criteria that are more appropriate for evaluating their own construction of speech than for evaluating actual speech itself.[4]

Sociolinguistic measures of speech: the model of elaborated and restricted codes

It is not, however, only the ordinary reaction to everyday speech that reflects a set of expectancies associated with writing. A significant proportion of professional reaction reflects, in a more covert way, the same expectancies. A great deal of sociolinguistic research measures speech according to whether the verbal context, as opposed to the larger context of situation, carries the information necessary for understanding the message. Such measurement is particularly evident in the influential research that Basil Bernstein and his associates have been conducting at the Institute of Education of the University of London since the early 1960s. We will focus on his work not only because of its influence but because of the importance of the social issues that he examines. What follows, however, is not a full review of his position. This has been done many times in recent years (see in particular Chauveau, 1978; Cherkaoui, 1977; Grimshaw, 1969, 1973, 1974, 1976). Our intent here is only to examine ways in which an important field of research has been influenced by a certain orientation, namely, the use of written norms in the evaluation of written speech. The sociolinguistic model used by Bernstein has changed considerably, but it has reflected, at all

times, a distinction between two kinds of communicative codes. These codes — initially referred to as "formal" and "public", but now widely known as "elaborated" and "restricted" — can be distinguished most effectively, according to Bernstein, by the degree to which the information needed for understanding the continuously emerging message is verbally encoded. According to his sociolinguistic model, this information is encoded to a much greater degree in an elaborated code than in a restricted one. Or in the words that Paul Kay has used to characterize this fundamental distinction in Bernstein's model:

> The elaborated code packs all the information into the strictly linguistic channel and places minimal reliance on the ability of the hearer to supply items of content necessary either to flesh out the body of the message or to place it in the correct interpretive context. (Kay, 1977, p. 22)

In order to illustrate the ways in which these two communicative codes are realized verbally, let us consider two versions of a story which Hawkins (1969) compiled from research (Bernstein has frequently used these two versions as a means of illustrating certain fundamental differences between the two codes). Hawkins claims that these two versions represent the contrasting ways in which upper- and middle-class as opposed to working- and lower-class children in a London school verbalized certain visually mediated information. The children, who were five years old, were presented with four pictures which showed, in turn, three boys playing with a football next to a house; the football going through a window; a man gesturing wildly; and the children running away while a woman looks out the window. The following two versions, according to Hawkins, are representative of the contrasting ways in which the two groups of children told the story:

> 1. Three boys are playing football and one kicks the ball — and it goes through the window — the ball breaks the window — and the boys are looking at it — and a man comes out and shouts at them — because they've broken the window — so they ran away — and then that lady looks out of her window — and she tells the boys off.

> 2. They're playing football — and he kicks it and it goes through there — it breaks the window and they're looking at it — and he comes out and shouts at them — because they've broken it — so they run away — and then she looks out and she tells them off. (Hawkins, 1969, p. 127)

Bernstein characterizes the differences between these two stories in the following way:

> The first story is free of the context which generated it, whereas the second story is much more closely tied to its context. As a result the meanings of the second story are implicit, whereas the meanings of the first story are explicit. (Bernstein, 1974, p. 179)

He goes on to characterize the semantic bases of the two stories as "universalistic" versus 'particularistic":

> We could say that the speech of the first child generated universalistic meaning in the sense that the meanings are freed from the context and so [are] understandable by all. The speech of the second child, on the other hand, generated particularistic meanings, in the sense that the meanings are closely tied to the context and would only be fully understood by others if they had access to the context which originally generated the speech. Thus universalistic meanings are less bound to a given context, whereas particularistic meanings are severely context-bound. (Bernstein, 1974, p. 179)

It may be observed from the above passages that Bernstein uses the word "context" to refer only to non-verbal sources of information in the context of situation. Although this use of the word has led to considerable confusion, we will adopt it while presenting his sociolinguistic model (however, once the model is presented, we will then voice certain criticisms of the ways in which Bernstein uses not only this word but others as well).

Measurement

Bernstein and his associates have developed a number of specific measures in order to determine the degree to which actual speech is context-dependent or context-independent; for example, they have consistently used a measure based on the degree to which deictic forms such as "it" and "they" function *exophorically* (i.e., retrieve information from beyond the verbal context):
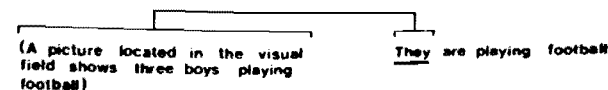
or the degree to which they function *endophorically* (i.e., retrieve information from the verbal context)[5]:

One kicks **the ball** – and **it** goes through the window
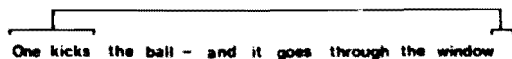
Although Bernstein and his associates still use these discrete measures, they have become increasingly sceptical of using them in isolation. As Adlam points out in a recent publication, "...the incidence of exophorics does not in itself define a text as either context-dependent or context-independent. The way in which such constructions pattern with other linguistic features is the essential consideration" (Adlam, 1977, p. 18). In effect, she claims that it is the textual configuration formed by different kinds of indices that is crucial. But, as she admits, no adequate textual theory has been developed by means of which these configurations can be appropriately evaluated.[6]

Social distribution

The measures for determining the degree of context-dependence or context-independence have been used in a large number of experimental (and quasi-experimental) studies conducted in school settings. For the most part, these studies have attempted to determine the patterns of distribution of elaborated and restricted codes across social classes — defined, in the context of English society, as the upper class, the middle class, the working class, and the lower class.

On the basis of these studies, Bernstein and his associates have concluded that the two codes are distributed across social classes in basically contrasting ways: members of the middle and upper classes make greater use of an elaborated code, members of the lower and working classes greater use of a restricted code. (Bernstein often speaks of the two codes, presumably for the sake of stylistic convenience, as simply "middle class" and "working class". We will adopt that stylistic convenience here (replacing "working" with "lower" in deference to American usage), since our primary aim is to establish greater refinement in conceptualizing the nature of the codes themselves rather than the social classes to which they are linked.)

Within the sociological component of his model, Bernstein has placed emphasis on a number of factors that might conjointly account for this contrasting distribution of the two codes across social classes. We cannot call attention to all these factors here, but

let us briefly note three basic ones that he has consistently emphasized:

(1) familial roles tend to be "personal" in the middle class, "positional" in the lower class; hence, in the former the communicative patterns that result are more consultative, while in the latter they are more authoritarian;

(2) the middle-class tends to be based on "organic" forms of solidarity, the lower class on "mechanical" forms of solidarity;[7] as a consequence, in the former the cultural base is more heterogeneous, and greater elaboration is *required* in communication, while in the latter it is more homogeneous, and greater restriction is *possible* in communication;

(3) middle-class parents tend to transmit to their children a code that they perceive to be appropriate for communication in schools and other educational settings, while lower-class parents are not, generally speaking, in a position to transmit this code to their children.

In recent writings, Bernstein has tended to focus on this third factor, defined more particularly as the "modes of classifying and framing knowledge" which the educational system itself transmits. In his introduction, entitled "To the anonymous educational prisoner", to the revised edition of volume 3 of *Class, codes, and control*, he states that

the realizations of elaborated codes transmitted by the family are *themselves* regulated by the form of their transmission in the school. The class assumptions of elaborated codes are to be found in the classification and framing of educational knowledge, and in the ideology they express. (Bernstein, 1977, p. 26)[8]

Educational consequences

The social class distribution of the two codes has been widely used as a means of providing plausible explanations for the differentiated performance of middle-class and lower-class children in schools. For as Bernstein argues, even in the midst of various innovations in educational technology, language remains the fundamental means by which schools transmit knowledge, ideas, and values. Furthermore, school language represents, par excellence, an elaborated code, since the great majority of teachers are originally members of the middle class or have been acculturated to it by means of their own successful participation in schools. Since children from middle-class homes have been socialized to use an elaborated code, they experience relatively little difficulty in dealing with school language. On the other hand, children from lower-

class homes, having been socialized to use a restricted code, experience much greater difficulty. Indeed, according to Bernstein, a great proportion of these children's difficulties can be directly traced to the fundamental discrepancy between the communicative code they use in a familial seting and the one they are expected to use in an educational setting.

It is important to recognize that Bernstein has insisted that a restricted code, from a strictly functional point of view, does not necessarily provide a *less efficient* mode of instruction.[9] In fact, he has even suggested the contrary in recent writing:

> It is likely that the context-independent mode, more typical of the middle-class children, is a less efficient mode of instruction, despite its greater consistency of lexical sets and explicit sequencing, than the more context-dependent mode of lower-working class children. (Foreword to Adlam, 1977, p. xi)[10]

A critique of the model of elaborated and restricted codes

Bernstein's sociolinguistic model first stimulated educational research and curriculum development in England and has since led to similar activities in other parts of the world. In the United States, for example, his theories have provided a major part of the rationale for massive programmes of educational intervention such as Operation Headstart, Project Followthrough, and DISTAR.[11]

The enthusiasm with which Bernstein's sociolinguistic model has been taken up by the educational community points to the lack of a previously existing paradigm with which to address problems engendered by social variation in language use.[12] Certainly Bernstein has attempted much more than most researchers in sociology or linguistics, the two disciplines he straddles, to develop a comprehensive approach to one of the most fundamental problems of education in a multiclass and/or multicultural society, namely, the ways in which the communicative codes of the two major institutions that educate children, the family and the school, may conflict with one another, thereby creating affective as well as cognitive dissonance for a great number of children.

Since Bernstein's model remains highly influential within the educational community, we would like to point out certain problems in the way in which it has been formulated, particularly with respect to family use of language. Before dealing with these problems, however, we would like to affirm the most general tenets of his position:

> (1) significant differences are reflected in language use across social classes;
> (2) these differences are transmitted, to a great extent, by the family;
> (3) these differences have important consequences in an educational setting, indeed, in any setting where human services are distributed by professionals who do not belong to the same social class (or subculture) as the people they serve, whether patients, students, or clients.

Moreover, we would strongly affirm the basic sociolinguistic principle with which Bernstein works: namely, that the language used by the participants in a particular setting cannot be properly analyzed merely within the context of that setting. Rather it needs to be analyzed in relation to the language they use in all the other settings in which they habitually communicate. Hence, Bernstein has, quite accurately, continuously emphasized the fundamental importance of looking outside the school in order to understand what happens within it.

Having affirmed these general tenets, let us now turn our attention to the problems which we perceive as most fundamental. We will first deal with those that arise from the research methods which have been used and then deal with those that arise from the particular ways in which Bernstein, on the basis of the ongoing research, has formulated a theoretical position. Before dealing with these problems, we would like to note that they were, to a great extent, unavoidable, since Bernstein was attempting to break new ground. Although many had called for theoretically oriented research on the problems engendered by school and family transmission of communicative codes, he was the first to attempt such research on a large scale.

Research methods

Let us now turn to the problems that result from the particular research methods that Bernstein and his associates have used. We will begin with the most central problem, which may be formulated in a straightforward way: the studies on which Bernstein has based his theories have been conducted outside the home, the very place where the family is busily transmitting its codes. More specifically, they have been conducted in school settings where, for the most part, highly constrained verbal responses to specific tasks (as illustrated by the earlier example of story-telling based on a series of pictures) were analyzed rather than any natural flow of language in an actual classroom routine. However, Bernstein and associates

did, in general, attempt to embed these tasks within classroom routines; in effect, they worked, as much as possible, within a quasi-experimental paradigm rather than a purely experimental one.[13]

There have been, as one might expect, manifold criticisms of the use of these research methods. We cannot deal with all these criticisms, but we would like to address the major ones, as well as the responses that Bernstein and his associates have made. The major criticisms have been made most forcefully by William Labov, primarily with reference to the methods used by researchers such as Bereiter and Englemann who claimed to be working within the sociolinguistic paradigm established by Bernstein but also secondarily with reference to the methods used by Bernstein and his associates themselves. As Labov (1970) has pointed out with reference to his own studies of language use among school children in metropolitan New York, the lower-class child (usually a member of an ethnic minority as well) who is classified as "non-verbal" on the basis of an interview or a response to an experimental task may in fact be highly verbal when interacting with peers or members of his family in a more natural setting. According to Labov, lower-class children perceive — and with good reason — the dominant ethos of the school as threatening. As a consequence, they come to believe that whatever they say might be held against them, and so it becomes an essential part of their communicative competence to say as little as possible, and preferably nothing at all (silence is, of course, the ultimate in a restricted code), even though, in the familiar context of family or friends, they may exercise a complex repertoire of verbal skills. Hence, from Labov's point of view, a researcher cannot, as a matter of fundamental principle, extrapolate certain differences in family use of language simply on the basis of social class differences that he may observe in a school setting.

Bernstein and his associates have responded to the kind of criticism voiced by Labov in a number of ways. In the first place, they have recognized the desirability of conducting studies of verbal communication in familial settings across social classes. As Adlam writes in the introduction to her extensive study of the effects of communicative context on the realization of communicative codes in school settings, "What this study lacks is an explicit linking of the child's speech to the form of transmission in his home" (1977, p. 34). However, as Bernstein and his associates well

recognize, the problems of establishing such linkage are enormous. The communicative contexts, which may be, to some extent, controlled in experimental tasks, are not subject to such manipulation in natural forms of communication, whether at home or at school. Rather these contexts are continuously created out of the ongoing verbal interaction itself. Moreover, these contexts are continuously shifting, meshing the regulative, the instructional, the interpersonal, and the imaginative (to borrow the terms Adlam uses to identify the various contexts she attempted to control in her own study). Secondly, as Bernstein points out in recent writing, the social class differences that one might expect to be manifested in familial language lie less in the actual forms of language used than in the various ways in which the participants infer a certain communicative context from these forms:

> Neither middle-class nor working-class parents are constantly talking to their children in specialised ways, nor requiring that their children talk to them in equally specialised ways....However, it may well be that certain contexts embedded in the flow of parent-child communication are especially marked by the social relationships, their content and their realisations. And in these contexts, questions and answers, explanations and descriptions, expansions and qualifications take a very context-specific form. (Foreword to Hawkins, 1977, p. ix)

To illustrate this point, Bernstein goes on to mention how a middle-class parent may, in fact, use an open question (i.e., one which does not require a highly specific answer), but signal, in some way, a communicative context that calls for specificity in the answer. In this way he may test

> whether the child can produce "spontaneously" the appropriate reply [i.e., a highly specific one]. The child learns to distinguish between open questions according to their context, the child learns which open questions are in fact *testing* rather than eliciting questions, the child learns the nature of the response expected, the child learns how to select and structure his/her meanings, the child learns the appropriate form of their realisation, the child learns the confidence to manage a social relationship where the presuppositions of everyday relationships are temporarily suspended. (Foreword to Hawkins, 1977, p. xii)

We are in essential agreement with Bernstein that any comparative study of familial modes of communication, if it is to have substantial value, needs to focus on the different ways in which context is structured from verbal signals rather than simply on the signals

themselves. This need returns us to the initial themes of this article, for the ways in which language is used to create context cannot be understood unless the ways in which language is embedded in context are understood: the relations between context and an individual verbal signal are reciprocal, each one continuously selecting the significant aspects of information within the other.

In the case of family communication, the major proportion of the larger context is necessarily the history of discourse that an individual family sustains. The relevant verbal context cannot simply be the immediate words that surround a particular utterance. It is rather the vast multitude of words and the internal texts constructed from them that have been accumulating with such density in the memory of each family member over the years. Indeed, family communication is best viewed not so much as a series of disparate conversations as an ongoing conversation, one sustained through time. For each family builds its own history of talk, slowly evolving complex patterns of dependency, expectation, and conflict; and the history is potentially available to individual members at all moments, providing information with which they continuously create the context for a new utterance.

To illustrate this point with an everyday example, a husband, upon arriving home from work, may ask his wife: "Did the cheque arrive today?" Although he has uttered no previous words on this particular occasion, the word *the* may nevertheless be considered as functioning endophorically. For somewhere in the larger history of discourse, the husband and wife have, no doubt, established that a certain cheque is due to arrive on this particular day. The identity of that cheque may have been established as recently as that morning, when they discussed whether a certain cheque would arrive (say, an insurance cheque covering a hospital bill). Or it may have been identified at a more distant point, when they discussed the particular date on which the husband's monthly salary cheque arrives. Since particular bits of verbal communication within the family are deeply embedded in ongoing discourse, it does not seem feasible to use a measure such as exophoric versus endophoric reference with respect only to the immediate context in which speech functions. Hence, Bernstein is quite correct to question the feasibility of examining naturalistic language in familial settings apart from the larger history of discourse in which it is embedded.

But it is not only the presence of the larger history of discourse for a particular family that must be reconstituted in some way:

there is also, to return once more to our initial themes, the non-verbal and para-verbal information transmitted by expressive behaviour at the moment of communication itself. Bernstein has not, however, dealt with this non-verbal and para-verbal information in any explicit way, apart from the attention to hesitation phenomena we briefly mentioned earlier.

Given the need of researchers to account for the sources of information that comprise the context of situation, it is evident that the methodology they use must be complex if they are to carry out an adequate study of family language across social classes. On the one hand, it would necessarily involve a longitudinal dimension in order to provide some understanding of the larger history of family discourse (this longitudinal dimension would complement the cross-sectional component, which would necessarily be present in order to deal with social class differences). And on the other hand, it would involve the use of audio-recording so that some understanding of the information transmitted para-verbally might be achieved (see the aforementioned work of Labov and Fanshel, 1977, for a comprehensive approach to para-verbal information). Ideally, video-recording would be involved as well in order to provide some understanding of the information transmitted non-verbally, but at the present stage of research methodology, the use of video-recording in intimate settings raises a number of problems.

Although such a research methodology is complex, it is already operative in other fields of inquiry. Consider, for example, the field of language acquisition. A longitudinal approach has been consistently used by a number of researchers (Allen, 1973; Bloom, 1970; Brown, 1973; Bowerman, 1973; Halliday, 1975; Greenfield and Smith, 1976). Moreover, these researchers have attempted to understand the context of situation by using audio-recording and, in some instances, video-recording as well (see Bloom, 1973; Corrigan, 1976; Dore, 1975; Stern, 1971, for recent uses of video-recording in acquisition research). Furthermore, this kind of methodology has been extended to the study of language acquisition across social classes (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1973; Ervin-Tripp, 1973; Higgins, 1976; Miller, 1977; van der Geest et al., 1973).

We would thus posit that, despite the complexity of the methodology, it is now possible to approach more systematically the study of family communication across social classes. Indeed, it is possible that such study might focus on important issues in the field of language acquisition; for example, one such issue is the

degree to which the child's verbal output is, to use the term provided by Bloom et al. (1976), "contingent" upon the preceding utterance. If differences in such contingency in the acquisition process were to be studied across social class, there would be considerable overlap with a fundamental concern of Bernstein's own research, namely determining the degree, to use his own phrase, of "context-independence" in the verbal communication of members of different social classes.[14]

Contradictory research findings

Before leaving our consideration of the research methods used by Bernstein and his associates, we would like to point out that the empirical results obtained are by no means totally consistent with the major hypotheses concerning the social distribution of elaborated and restricted codes (see in particular the recent publication of empirical results by Adlam, 1977, and Hawkins, 1977).[15] The patterning of these empirical results would seem to support a sociolinguistic model which represents communicative codes as more continuous than discrete. In the light of these data, the critical issue would appear to be not whether a particular individual (or social group) uses an elaborated code or a restricted code but rather the degree to which he elaborates or restricts the verbal representation of a particular message in a particular setting. Indeed, we would like to posit an even more general point: within empirical modes of research, any differentiation of human communication is represented more effectively along multipoint scales than on bipolar ones.[16]

We have outlined below one way in which salient measures used by Bernstein to distinguish the two codes might be converted to a set of multipoint scales. (The first three scales measure dimensions reflected in the social character of the setting, the second three measure dimensions reflected in the nature of the information transmitted.)

1. Degree of formality in the setting — Low ←——→ High
2. Degree of social heterogeneity among the participants — Low ←——→ High
3. Degree to which the participants do not draw upon common experience — Low ←——→ High

4. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects more than the participants' everyday world of experience — Low ←——→ High
5. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects abstract domains of reference — Low ←——→ High
6. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects an explicit formulation of internal dimensions of experience (values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, etc.) — Low ←——→ High

In concluding this section, we would like to suggest that one of the major problems in Bernstein's formulation of a sociolinguistic model is his tendency to set up categorical opposites by the use of contrasting terms. By virtue of these oppositions, he tends to classify as discrete what is, in actuality, continuous in its nature, and hence glosses over, by virtue of his own communicative code, the complex ways in which human communication — with all its intricate intermeshings of a multiplicity of codes — actually takes place in the everyday world where individual persons in particular settings transmit highly specific messages to each other.

Terminological problems

Having ended the previous section with a brief mention of a problem arising from Bernstein's use of bipolar terms, let us turn to problems in his theoretical position that result from the use of certain descriptive terms. This close attention to problems of language use reflects a basic assumption on our part, namely, that discursive thinking is linked indissolubly to the verbal means by which it is expressed. Hence, what an individual thinks and how he expresses it in language are, from our vantage point, quite inseparable. As Vygotsky once put it, "The meaning of a word represents such a close amalgam of thought and language that it is hard to tell whether it is a phenomenon of speech or a phenomenon of thought" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 44).

In considering the linguistic foundations of Bernstein's position, we will first consider how he uses his most basic descriptive term, the word "code"; then how he uses the words "elaborated" and "restricted" to modify "code"; and then how he uses three pairs of

contrasting terms to characterize the two codes: "context-free" versus "context-bound", "universalistic" versus "particularistic", and "explicit" versus "implicit".[17] Before we begin this task, however, let us point out that we will be dealing, throughout this section, with two kinds of problems that result from Bernstein's use of descriptive terms:

> (1) the kind that results from a conflict between Bernstein's own use of particular terms and some other technical use (e.g., the aforementioned use of "context" in the ethnography of speaking approach);
> (2) the kind that results from a conflict between his own use of a particular term and what we might call "ordinary language" use.[18]

Let us begin with an example of the first kind of confusion by borrowing a useful analysis by Kochmann of Bernstein's use of the word "code":

> Bernstein's choice of the term *code* is particularly unfortunate because it *is* used by sociolinguists to refer to system (grammar, dialect) as *opposed* to speech behavior. The term *code*, therefore, reinforces the confusion that equates a system with a *use* of language. (Kochmann, 1972, p. 233)

The confusion engendered by Bernstein's use of the word *code* is heightened when he places the modifiers "elaborated" or "restricted" before this word. As we pointed out earlier, the contrast between these words suggests, at least in ordinary speech, that the restricted code is in some way deficient, even though Bernstein, at least in later writing, has pointedly denied such deficiency. Apart from the seemingly inevitable implication of deficiency that "restricted" carries in ordinary use (at least as it contrasts with "elaborated"), Bernstein's own particular use of these terms to modify "code" presents at least one other problem. Since "elaborated code" and "restricted code", as Kochmann points out, are used to refer to speech performance, they engender a certain amount of confusion by virtue of the fact that they can apply either to the *actual language used* or to the *information transmitted*. Indeed, this confusion has been heightened by Bernstein's increasing insistence that the codes are more concerned with the information transmitted than the language used, although his research measures have tended to focus on the latter rather than the former.

This uncertainty as to whether the terms "elaborated" and

"restricted" refer to the language used or the information transmitted in actual speech performance can become quite problematical, given the particular ways in which these two terms can be used. For we speak quite legitimately of the most elaborated form of language as carrying the most restricted body of information, and conversely, the most restricted form of language as carrying the most elaborated body of information. Indeed, given the complex nature of human communication, such conjoining of elaborated language and restricted information (and restricted language and elaborated information) is, in fact, quite common. Consider, for example, the ways in which language is elaborated in intellectual discourse so that the information it conveys might be sufficiently restricted. Or conversely, consider the ways in which a husband and a wife may use a highly restricted form of language to convey an elaborate body of information (it should be clear by now that, in using the term "information", we are referring to the affective as well as the cognitive).[19]

In order for Bernstein to deal with this confusion, we believe that it would be necessary for him to use two pairs of descriptive terms. For example, a pair such as "reduced" and "expanded" might be used to characterize the actual form of the language used, whereas a pair such as "narrow band" and "wide band" might be used to characterize the information transmitted. Although we observed above that elaborated language (i.e., expanded) often transmits restricted information (i.e., narrow band) and restricted language (i.e., reduced) often transmits elaborated information (i.e., wide band), we do not wish to suggest that these pairings are, by any means, absolute. For the expanded language used in, say, a Henry James novel certainly may, as indeed it does, carry wide-band information; and conversely, the reduced "language-in-action" used in achieving some practical task may carry narrow-band information (say, repairing a sink, where an endless chain of deictic words such as *it, one, this, that, here,* and *there* carry extremely narrow-band information in reference to immediately visible entities and locations). Hence, any model of the relations between the language used and the information transmitted must embody a principle of communicative flexibility, as reflected in the following kind of diagram:

FORM OF LANGUAGE:

Reduced   Expanded

INFORMATION TRANSMITTED: Narrow   Wide   Narrow   Wide
                           band   band   band   band
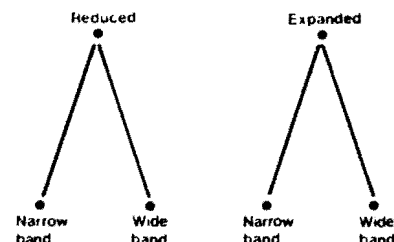
We do not wish our attention to the distinction between the *actual language used* and the *information transmitted* to suggest that the latter can be readily determined. As we have already pointed out, we are committed to the notion that, given the complex nature of communication, there is necessarily a certain indeterminacy in the information transmitted by any verbal act. Nevertheless, we are also committed to the notion that a certain range of possible bits of information can be established for particular verbal acts, and even though we cannot be certain which bits were actually transmitted, we can compare the potential ranges for different verbal acts and state, with a certain reliability, the degree to which they are *wide-band* or *narrow-band* in the information they transmit. Furthermore, the fact that information was *transmitted* does not mean that it was necessarily *received* (see Habermas, 1970, for a provocative discussion of this distinction and other similar ones).
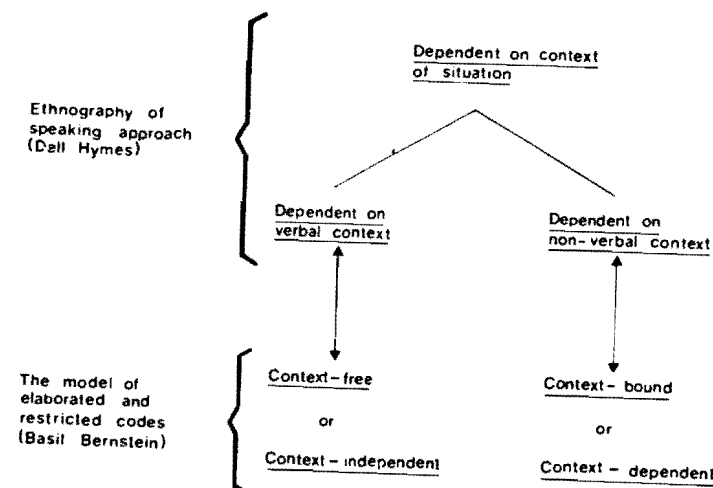
Let us now turn to the three pairs of contrasting terms that Bernstein has used to characterize the fundamental differences between the two codes, beginning with the pair "context-free" versus "context-bound". The confusion engendered by the way in which Bernstein uses the word "context" in these phrases arises not only, as we have already suggested, from a conflict with another technical use of the word (i.e., its use in the ethnography of speaking approach), but from its original use as well. In its most ordinary sense, "con-text" refers to the verbally encoded information that surrounds a particular verbal construct. Halliday and Hasan have made this point in the following way:

> The word *context* means literally "accompanying text", and its use in the collocation *context of situation* seems to us a metaphorical extension. (1976, p. 32)

Hence, Bernstein's use of the word to refer only to the non-verbal

directly contradicts the primary reference to the verbal that the word carries in ordinary use.

With respect to the more technical use of the word in the phrase "context of situation", the conflict is partial rather than total; in the ethnography of speaking approach, context of situation refers to the verbal as well as the non-verbal, contrasting with Bernstein's use of the word to refer only to the non-verbal, as illustrated by the following diagram:

Ethnography of speaking approach (Dell Hymes)

Dependent on context of situation

Dependent on verbal context   Dependent on non-verbal context

The model of elaborated and restricted codes (Basil Bernstein)

Context-free   or   Context-independent

Context-bound   or   Context-dependent

Within an ethnography of speaking approach, a phrase such as "context-free", which Bernstein uses frequently to characterize the elaborated code, would have no significance, for all language use is viewed as necessarily embedded in a context. The significant question is rather the degree to which contextual information is distributed between verbal and non-verbal channels. Indeed, within an ethnography of speaking approach, extreme forms of the elaborated code in which contextual information is packed into the verbal channel might even be considered as a more context-bound mode of communication; for any message transmitted by this code is radically dependent upon the continuously emerging information provided by the verbal medium itself. Unless this information in the verbal channel is continuously monitored, the message being transmitted is, for the most part, not comprehensible. By contrast, the use of a restricted code requires considerably less attention to

the verbal channel, particularly when a significant proportion of the necessary information is already possessed by the listener(s). Hence, it follows that an elaborated coding of experience might be considered, in certain respects, less universalistic than a more restricted coding. In effect, an elaborated mode of communication might be considered a highly particularistic kind of rhetorical framing, one readily accessible only to certain groups.

The use above of "universalistic" and "particularistic", contrasting with Bernstein's own use, may be considered as illustrative of the ordinary way in which the concepts universal and particular function. Using the terms in this way, it is the "restricted code" that may be characterized as *universalistic*, since members of all social classes have access to it (i.e., all persons are necessarily involved in using language in communicative settings where a great deal of information is assumed); and it is the "elaborated code" that may be considered as *particularistic*, since members of only certain social classes have access to it. Indeed, the central issue that Bernstein addresses in the educational domain, namely, the lower-class children's lack of access to the elaborated code, arises precisely because of the particularistic nature of this code.

This use of the concepts universal and particular is not, as we have already suggested, consonant with Bernstein's own use. He views the elaborated code as embodying "universalistic orders or meaning" (i.e., those that can be understood apart from the situation); the restricted code as embodying "particularistic orders of meaning" (i.e., those that cannot be understood apart from the situation). In other words, "universalistic" refers to a semantic orientation *not* limited to the particular situation in which language is used, "particularistic" refers to a semantic orientation that *is* limited to the particular situation. Hence, we may conclude that Bernstein's use of these terms assumes a somewhat unnatural vantage point, one that allows speech to be evaluated apart from the situation in which it is embedded.[20]

We should point out that Bernstein himself does recognize the contradictory ways in which the terms can be applied to the two codes and, in later writings, has attempted to clarify his use of the two terms:

> An "elaborated" code is universalistic with respect to its meaning and *potentially* universalistic with reference to the social structure which controls its inception. The speech model for this code in contemporary societies is particularistic.

> This does not mean that its origin is to be sought in the psychological qualities of the model but that the model is an incumbent of a specialized position which is a function of the general system of social stratification. (Bernstein, 1974, p. 79)

We have deliberately included the last sentence in the above passage, for the difficulty of understanding such a sentence leads us to the final criticism we wish to make of the particular ways in which Bernstein has characterized the difference between elaborated and restricted codes. He has consistently described the messages transmitted by an elaborated code as "explicit", those transmitted by a restricted code as "implicit". Yet the use of language illustrated by Bernstein's final sentence — and such sentences abound in his writing — can hardly be described, from our vantage point, as explicit. For he, like so many of us involved in academic inquiry, writes with an abundance of abstract terms — and the verbal context often does not delineate precise referents for these terms. Hence, the meaning of an abstract term often remains implicit, unless verbal context is used in a rather precise way to activate a particular referent while, at the same time, suppressing the other potential referents that it may convey.

This failure to achieve explicit form cannot, of course, be entirely eliminated. For the act of writing, just like the act of speaking, takes place in a context of situation. In the case of Bernstein's writing, that context involves an assumption that his readers possess extensive knowledge about the ways in which he uses sociological and linguistic terms. Hence, in using an elaborated code, Bernstein is assuming that he possesses a relation with those whom he addresses that closely resembles the one which, according to him, makes possible the use of a restricted code. For, according to him, a restricted code arises wherever "the form of the social relation is based upon closely shared identifications, upon an extensive range of shared expectations, upon a range of common assumptions" (Bernstein, 1974, p. 146).

From our vantage point, these identifications, expectations, and assumptions are evidenced just as much in an elaborated code as in a restricted one. Indeed, we would even argue that our foregoing criticisms of Bernstein's language use are meaningful precisely because there is a set of shared identifications, expectations, and assumptions that govern the use of language by members of a certain social class (or, at least, members within the class who possess a certain kind of education). As we have attempted to point out,

many of the problems that Bernstein has encountered in communicating his message to the educated public have arisen precisely because he has violated a set of expectancies its members share as to the ways in which certain words should be used. The expectancies that govern the use of words such as "context", "universalistic", and "particularistic" provide evidence for the presence of a certain communicative code among members of the middle class.

It is the powerful presence of this highly particularistic code, primarily restricted as it is to the middle-class community, that makes suspect certain of Bernstein's sociological assumptions. For as we have already pointed out, Bernstein has argued that one of the major reasons for the greater use of a restricted code by the lower class is that this class is characterized by a "communally based culture". We would like to argue, however, that the presence of a highly particularistic code in the middle class provides evidence for their own "communally based culture" as well. In fact, it could be argued that the communal base is even greater in the middle class, given the much greater material resources it possesses for circulating messages in its own code.[21]

No matter how we ultimately characterize the social organization of modern societies, it would appear to be necessary to postulate a "community" that is commensurate in strength to the codes — verbal as well as non-verbal — which we discover to be at work among members of a particular group. There are, at present, two major lines of research which suggest that the middle class, like any other social class, possesses highly differentiated codes for transmitting information. On the one hand, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians are providing macroanalyses of the highly particularistic kinds of ideologies that are embedded in the communicative patterns of different social classes, whether upper, middle, or lower (Barthes, 1957; Dumont, 1965, 1970a, 1970b; Foucault, 1966; Schneider, 1968, 1969; Sahlins, 1976, Varenne, 1977). On the other hand, sociolinguists and communication theorists are providing microanalyses of the highly specific ways in which communication — verbal and otherwise — is structured by codes which differ significantly across social classes (Birdwhistell, 1970; Byers & Byers, 1972; Erickson, 1975; Goffman, 1959, 1971; Labov, 1970; McDermott, 1977).

Given these emerging bodies of research, we would argue for a greater balancing in the traditional ways in which the academic disciplines of sociology and linguistics have interacted. As we have

already pointed out, there has been a strong tendency, since the time of Malinowski, to develop a sociolinguistic mode of analysis in which verbal communication is placed within the social situation that generates it. As necessary as this mode of analysis has been, there remains an equally strong need for a complementary mode of analysis, one which might be described as "linguo-sociological". Within such a mode, sociological analysis would be more intimately grounded in the verbal codes — and the larger communicative codes — that are used to sustain the identity of various social groups. The realization of such a sociology would, in principle, lead to a substantial re-evaluation not only of our conception of the middle class and its relation to other social classes, but also of the very notion of community, by means of which we establish, albeit unconsciously, the very identity of a social class.[22]

In concluding this section, we would like to point out that the detailed analysis we have made of Bernstein's use of descriptive terms has had a dual purpose: on the one hand, it has served to clarify certain confusions that have arisen from the ways in which he uses these terms; but on the other, these confusions illustrate that the middle class (or at least a certain educated segment of it) operates with a powerful set of expectancies as to the ways in which language is to be used. Any violation of these expectancies, no matter how elaborated it may be, necessarily restricts the scope of the intended message. Hence, Bernstein's own problems in communicating his sociolinguistic theory provide, in one sense, further support for the theory; for the problems themselves signal that a powerful code is at work in the middle class, one which, from our vantage point, is as context-dependent and particularistic as the code used by any other class.

The restricted nature of a middle-class code

Having dealt in some detail with a range of problems that arise from Bernstein's use of specific terms, let us now examine the most basic problem of internal coherency generated by his formulation of a sociolinguistic model. At a very early point, Bernstein became aware of this problem and, in an effort to resolve it, made a fundamental overhaul of the model. From our vantage point, this overhaul does not actually resolve the problem, though it does provide a much more context-oriented mode of analyzing verbal communication. Let us now briefly outline what this problem was, the

way in which the model was overhauled, and the way in which we view this revision.

In the early stages of his thinking, Bernstein tended to view the elaborated and restricted codes as distributed simultaneously along two axes, one reflecting differences in social class and the other differences in communicative setting. Hence, members of any social class were viewed, in principle, as having access to either code, providing that they participated in a sufficiently extended range of communicative settings. Members of the lower class were viewed as ordinarily using a restricted code over a wide range of settings, but, at least potentially, switching to an elaborated code in certain settings. For example, when a member of a lower class is interviewed for a job, he may switch to an elaborated code (or, at least, to his version of one), since he perceives the interviewer as evaluating him, to a great extent, according to his ability to use such a code.[23] By the same token, members of the middle class were viewed as ordinarily using an elaborated code over a relatively wide range of settings, but switching to a restricted code in certain settings where they could, to use Bernstein's phrase, "draw upon a reservoir of shared experience". Bernstein speaks, for example, of the ways in which a married couple necessarily develops a restricted code.

Given Bernstein's claims about social class differences in the transmission of codes, his claims about the effects of shared experience upon verbal communication created a fundamental problem: on the one hand, he was claiming that such a reservoir led to the use of a restricted code. Yet, on the other, he was claiming that a middle-class family, as opposed to a lower-class one, transmits an elaborated code. Since any family, no matter what its social class, would appear to be a human group drawing maximally upon shared experience, why would a family in the middle class transmit an elaborated code rather than a restricted one? What exempts such a family from the powerful effects that a reservoir of shared experience exercises upon verbal communication?

In order to deal with this apparent contradiction, Bernstein was required to develop a communicative model with two levels of description, one which he has analogized to Chomsky's linguistic model of "competence" and "performance". At one level of description, any act of speech can be viewed as manifesting a communicative code which is transmitted by social class (a code provides the "ground rules" that govern communication). At another level of description, however, any act of speech can be viewed as

realizing a "speech variant", the form of which is controlled by a complex number of factors in the communicative setting, one of which would be the degree of shared information (a variant realizes the "performance rules" that govern communication). In this version of the model, the speech variant, like the code it realizes, can be viewed as either elaborated or restricted, as illustrated in the following schema:
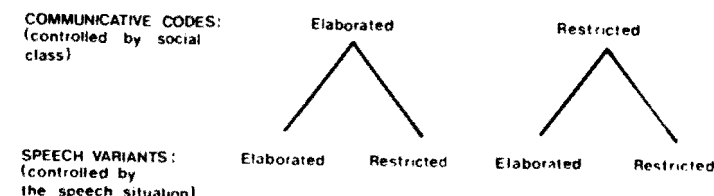
Borrowing from Halliday's work on the interaction of communicative setting and language functions (1969), Bernstein developed four major ways of classifying communicative settings: the "regulative", the "instructional", the "imaginative", and the "interpersonal" (as mentioned earlier, these are the settings that Adlam tried to operationalize in her own research). As a consequence, Bernstein was in a position to describe actual speech in a more flexible way. For he could now describe certain patterns of communication within a middle-class family as using a "restricted variant" of an elaborated code (e.g., communication in an *interpersonal* setting such as casual play). Or he could describe certain patterns of communication within a lower-class family as using an "elaborated variant" of a restricted code (e.g., communication in an *instructional* situation such as helping with homework). Hence, Bernstein could claim that people were not constantly "code-switching", but rather that the communicative settings, and concomitantly the speech variants realizing the codes, were continuously changing. In discussing, for example, the use of a restricted code in a communicative setting where shared information is minimal, he states that the use of

an elaborated variant does not in *itself* indicate that a *code* has been changed... In this sense, an elaborated variant in a restricted code is different from such a variant in an elaborated code. (Bernstein, 1975, p. 26)

Although Bernstein asserts this difference, he does not actually show, as far as we have been able to discern, in what ways speech variants differ according to the codes they manifest. Not only is analysis of these ways lacking, but also the formulation of heuristic principles by which such an analysis might be made.[24] Until such principles are specified and applied in concrete analyses of family communication in different social classes, the analytic distinction between communicative code and speech variant, from our vantage point, is not particularly useful.

At the same time that we question whether the model revision leads to any substantive difference, we would like to allow for the plausibility of Bernstein's essential claim, as it is expressed in a passage that we quoted earlier: "The realizations of elaborated codes transmitted by the family are *themselves* regulated by the form of their transmission in the school" (1977, p. 26). For it would appear that the boundaries between school and family are considerably more permeable in the middle class than the lower, given the fact that the school is, as we have already suggested, largely a middle-class institution.

Before leaving this question, there are two brief points which we wish to add. In the first place, it is not simply the presence of an elaborated code in schools that affects verbal communication in a middle-class family more than in a lower-class one. It is also the presence of this code in many other areas of public life — in business offices, department stores, theatres, libraries, museums, churches, synagogues. Moreover, various forms of such a code are continuously circulated by mass media — radio, television, and the various print media, whether newspapers, magazines, journals, or books — seemingly with much greater penetration of a middle-class family than a lower-class one. It would appear that a middle-class family — partly because of its greater material resources — has considerably more access to the variable manifestations of an elaborated code in modern society.

The second point that we wish to make is the following: not only is an elaborated code transmitted in many areas of public life other than the school, but the school itself does not transmit only an elaborated code. For just as members of a family build a common history, so members of the same classroom build a history as well. And this history — with its complex patterns of expectations, dependencies, and conflicts — is continuously drawn upon in verbal communication. Hence, as many studies of verbal communica-

tion in the classroom suggest (Keddie, 1970; Barnes, 1976; Widdowson, 1976; Gaies, 1977), the actual language used in school classrooms may be radically dependent upon the larger context of situation: this does not, of course, vitiate Bernstein's point that the school does provide multiple contexts highly marked for the use of an elaborated code (e.g., tests, assignments, etc.). It is simply to recognize that members of a classroom — teacher and students alike — draw upon their own reservoir of shared experience, much as members of a family do.

Speech versus writing: psycholinguistic dimensions

We would now like to consider one last problem in Bernstein's formulation of his sociolinguistic position. This problem returns us to the initial theme of this article, namely, McLuhan's claim that the public reaction to the Nixon tapes provided "a maximal confrontation between oral and written media". At that point, we briefly developed a position that the constructive processes involved in comprehending — as well as recalling — speech are substantially influenced by the experience of literacy. We will not restate that position here but simply add that such experience, from our vantage point, affects the production of speech as well. For just as a person edits another's speech, so he edits his own; and the greater the experience of literacy, the more radical this process of editing (in fact, Bernstein's aforementioned research with Goldman-Eisler on "hesitation phenomena" would seem to provide evidence for more radical editing by literate persons).

Yet Bernstein has consistently discounted the experience of literacy as a fundamental factor in the transmission of an elaborated code. His argument has generally run along historical lines. He has observed, for example, that members of the lower class have been literate since the nineteenth century (he speaks of the ways in which they waited eagerly in the street for each new installment of Dickens), and yet this literacy seems not to have had much effect on their speech. Although we detect a certain oversimplification in this particular characterization of history, we are more concerned with a certain neglect of the degrees of literacy in human experience. It is quite evident that a considerable immersion in literate experience (not simply the apprehension of literate form in reading, but also the deliberate shaping of it in writing)[25] is necessary to obtain the more radical effects on speech that we have

posited. Indeed, we believe that the neglect by Bernstein of this powerful factor in the internal editing of speech seriously limits the explanatory power of his model. In one sense, it impedes his developing a larger theory, embracing the psycholinguistic as well as the sociolinguistic — which he himself rightly calls for.[26]

Conclusion

As a means of concluding this overview of Bernstein's socio-linguistic position, we will return to our initial perspective rather than summarize the major criticisms that we have made. For we believe that any analysis of verbal communication, whether of Richard Nixon talking to associates or of members of a family — middle-class or lower-class — recounting the day's events at the dinner table, must begin with the social situation in which the communication is embedded. This situation necessarily provides a complex body of information, which the participants continuously draw on in verbal interaction. From this perspective, the role of verbalization in everyday life is not to provide a total rendering of any field of information but simply to provide focus on small bits within some field to which the participants have access. As we have suggested earlier, speech, particularly in its most expanded form, may be viewed as restricting the total field of awareness, providing common focus on some limited portion of a field of information. We would, indeed, posit that it is perhaps paradoxically "silence" — as suggested by the Hausa proverb which opens this article — rather than "elaboration" that provides the more appropriate vantage point from which to observe human communication in an ongoing situation. An active silence, of course — the silence of two workers performing a common labour — the labour, say, of two lumberjacks felling a tree in the silence of perfect coordination that is eventually broken by the cry of "Timber!" The function of this cry, apart from its ritualistic value in signalling the achievement of the task, is to alert anyone in the immediate vicinity to the falling tree. Indeed, any attempt to elaborate the meaning of this cry would require an extremely long utterance, one that would be obviously dysfunctional within the immediate setting. In fact, a more explicit statement such as "A tree is falling" would convey less information; for, unlike the cry "Timber!" it would not signal that the tree has been intentionally felled.

As we have already observed with reference to Bernstein's use of "elaborated code" and "restricted code", it is the distinction between actual language used and information transmitted that is crucial to any adequate analysis of verbal communication; and, furthermore, any adequate understanding of the information transmitted can be achieved only by examining the language used within the larger context of situation, as constituted by the participants' para-verbal and non-verbal behaviour, their shared history, and the physical and cultural worlds in which they communicate.

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Notes

1. In its earliest use, "context of situation" referred only to the non-verbal context which was necessary for interpreting verbal context. (Malinowski tended to lay equal stress on the cultural and the physical worlds as fundamental components in the context of situation.) But gradually context of situation, first in the work of Firth and then more fully in the work of Hymes, has come to refer to the verbal as well as the non-verbal context. In effect, the verbal and non-verbal contexts are viewed as emerging at once, providing two streams of information that are continuously interacting. It should be noted, however, that certain neo-Firthians have begun to use the term "co-text" to identify verbal context.

2. Certain sociolinguists, particularly those working within the tradition of Firth and Malinowski, seem to suggest that speech is to be described as indeterminate, on-

ly as it is viewed apart from the larger context of situation in which it is embedded (i.e., they assume a certain determinacy in the larger structure of communication). We prefer, however, the position that Labov and Fanshel establish, namely, that communication necessarily involves a certain level of indeterminacy, given what human needs are. At the same time, we do detect a certain tendency on their part to view the para-verbal as locked in unending combat with the verbal, when, in reality, the two often function harmoniously (their position is, no doubt, influenced, as they readily admit, by the psychotherapeutic context in which they investigate language use). Furthermore, we do not agree with their position, following DeGroot (1949), that whenever para-verbal and verbal cues are in conflict, the para-verbal cues provide the essential message. We would prefer to say that the essential message derives from the interaction of the conflicting cues.

3. We can witness the influence of written expression in the conventional modes that dramatists and novelists use for representing conversation. If they were to represent speech in an unreconstructed form, we would not accept it, for our actual experience of speech (at least, in the phenomenological sense of experience) would be violated.

4. In addition, there is a more behaviouristically oriented argument that runs something like this: the act of reading necessarily stimulates expectations that the message conveyed will reflect certain norms of written expression. Hence, the mere act of transcribing speech may lead to false expectations on the part of those who read the transcription.

5. It should be noted that other kinds of measures were used as well. For example, a measure based on markers of a first-person singular mode of discourse was used to show that more differentiated states of individual feeling and thought are reflected in an elaborated code. In addition, a measure based on hesitation phenomena, developed in collaboration with Goldman-Eisler, was used to show that more "verbal planning", and hence more hesitation, is reflected in an elaborated code. The use of this second measure has uncovered a certain conjunction between "verbal fluency" and "para-verbal lack of fluency", a conjunction somewhat contrary to certain normative notions of what fluent speaking is.

6. Most researchers working with Bernstein's model draw on the discourse model of Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (1976). At its present stage of development, however, this work is more descriptive than theoretical.

7. Bernstein uses the terms "organic" and "mechanical" as they were originally used by Durkheim (cf., *On the division of labor in society*, 1933). For Durkheim, "organic" connoted "multiplicity, plurality" (reflecting, as it were, the abundance of biological life itself), whereas "mechanical" connoted "simplicity, singularity" (reflecting the oneness of a machine). Needless to say, these connotative values have somewhat metathesized over the years, no doubt reflecting in some significant way the human experience of a machine-oriented technology in this century. Hence, in contemporary usage, we would tend to speak of the middle class as based on "mechanical" forms of solidarity, the lower class as based on "organic" forms of solidarity.

8. Within the limited scope of this article, we cannot deal with the concept of "class ideology" that Bernstein identifies as the underlying factor in the class-based transmission of communicative codes. Within his Marxist orientation, he views it as primary and factors such as the above ones as secondary. As he puts

it, the very structure of these codes "embodies class ideology...crucial to the cultural reproduction of class relations" (1977, p. 19).

9. In his earlier writing, Bernstein did often use phrases which seemed to characterize a restricted code as deficient. In "A sociolinguistic approach to social learning" (1965), for example, he attributes the following characteristics to a restricted code: "meaning often discontinuous and local"; "a severely limited number of syntactic alternatives"; "the lexicon drawn from a narrow range"; "a low level of vocabulary and syntactic selections"; "a limited and often rigid use of qualifiers (adjectives, adverbs, etc.)".

10. He does not offer any particular reason for this speculation, though we suspect, from conversations with him, that one reason might well be his flagging energy in constantly responding to people who assume that he views a restricted code as a less efficient means of transmitting information. One rhetorical means of countering the assumption that it is less efficient is to assert that it is, in fact, more efficient.

We would agree with him that, from one pedagogical point of view, certain aspects of a restricted code do appear to be more functional. In some situations, explicit verbalizing may merely deprive the learner of the opportunity to arrive inductively at underlying principles. It may well be that members of the middle class, by virtue of their commitment to formal schooling, have developed an excessive reliance on verbal mediation, when, in fact, such mediation may be quite cumbersome. At least for certain kinds of everyday learning, it would seem that actions are more important than words.

11. Within the scope of this article we cannot trace the complex ways in which his theories became entangled in the controversy between proponents of the "language deficit" theory and the "language difference" theory within the United States. Let us simply note, in passing, that proponents of the strong version of "language deficit" such as Bereiter and Englemann, much to Bernstein's chagrin, appropriated his theoretical framework for their own research (cf. Bernstein, 1971, for an attempt at disentangling his own position from the "language deficit" one).

12. We do not wish to suggest that research on language variation across social classes had not been carried out prior to Bernstein. For example, in this country alone, a substantial tradition of such research can be traced back to the early 1920s (cf., Descoeudres, 1921; McCarthy, 1930; Day, 1932; Davis, 1937; Bossard, 1943; Eells et al., 1951). In one sense, this tradition of research culminated in the longitudinal research conducted by William Loban and his associates during the 1950s and 1960s. The massive body of research they accumulated merits much closer attention than it has received. Its failure to attract appropriate attention can probably be best explained by the fact that its approach was primarily descriptive rather than explanatory.

13. Recent attempts at naturalizing experiments in classroom settings (in which one of us has been involved) leave us a bit sceptical about their effects. It appears that there are inevitably certain markers that remain, signalling to the students that they are, in fact, being experimented upon, though in a more covert way. Even when teachers are asked to administer the tasks, the contrast between the experimental tasks and those normally given seems to break through. Having said all this, we would like to agree with a certain point that Bernstein consistent-

ly makes: an experimental setting functions as a normative context within a school and the different ways in which students respond verbally to this setting may be used as a means of understanding certain aspects of the communicative codes they possess.

14. We have begun such research on a modest scale under the sponsorship of the Elbenwood Center for the Study of the Family as Educator, Teachers College, Columbia University. Indeed, many of our criticisms of Bernstein's approach have grown out of efforts to deal with family communication.

15. We should also note that the use of these methods by other researchers has often led to results contrary to Bernstein's hypotheses. For example, in a study of the speech of primary school children in northern England, Edwards found no significant diferences between middle-class and lower-class children, except with respect to "measures directly derived from the 'planning principles' said by Bernstein to underlie restricted and elaborated codes. Even on these, however, there was considerable task variation" (Bernstein, 1977, p. 247). And in this country Davis (1977) has reported results contrary to Bernstein's hypotheses. It should be noted, however, that the measures she used are not those used by Bernstein himself (her measures were derived from Fairbanks, 1944; Hunt, 1965; and Maling and Rechter, 1971), though they were designed to measure essentially the same set of linguistic features.

16. At a more fundamental level, this same complexity leads us to question the validity of empirical research based on the measure of isolated features. As we have already noted, this same scepticism is increasingly evidenced in Bernstein's more recent writings, for he argues that it is larger configurations formed by particular linguistic features that are crucial, not the presence or absence of these features themselves. Yet in the absence of any coherent theory of discourse, these larger configurations cannot be reliably established.

17. There is a further pair of contrasting terms, "abstract" versus "concrete", that Bernstein uses which we will not discuss. We would like, however, to call attention to an article by Eleanor Leacock, "Abstract versus concrete speech: A false dichotomy", in which she warns, without actually mentioning Bernstein, against the kind of bipolar opposition between these terms that he sets up. Her essential point is a Piagetian one: that all verbal abstractions are ultimately grounded in concrete experience. Hence effective rhetorical frames depend upon a constant shuttling back and forth between the abstract and the concrete. Her article reminds us of Ernst Cassirer's claim that language with all its strange powers of abstraction, is, in essence, merely "a tissue of dead metaphors".

18. We choose the phrase "ordinary language" quite deliberately so that this particular kind of analysis might be identified with the critical method of ethnomethodology, namely, close scrutiny of the meanings that words carry in ordinary use. When this method is applied to theoretical formulations, it is not so innocent as it might seem; for it is in certain skewings of ordinary language that fundamental distortions in a theoretical position are often uncovered. Close attention to such skewings is a particularly effective means of uncovering assumptions that may be hidden from those formulating theory as well as from those attempting to understand it.

19. If we consider the relations among the quotations that preface this article, we can illustrate much the same point. The Hausa proverb, by far the most restricted in its language surface, provides, from a certain vantage point, the least restricted

message; for, given its level of generality, it can function in many different contexts (as, indeed, it does, given the multiple functions of proverbs in Hausa society). On the other hand, the statement by Edward Hall, considerably more elaborated in its linguistic surface, is much more restricted in the information it conveys.

20. From the point of view of semantic theory, Bernstein's distinction between universalistic and particularistic uses of language is untenable. For within any theory of meaning that distinguishes "sense" and "reference", the sense of a linguistic construct may be stable from one communicative situation to another, but the referent of that construct cannot be the same. Considered referentially, *three boys* is no more universalistic than *they*, for each establishes a particular referent only in the immediate situation in which it is used.

21. Bernstein's treatment of middle class as less communally based may be directly related to his functionalist explanations for the appearance of elaborated codes. Contrasting with his functionalist approach is the more structural approach of Bourdieu and Passeron (1970). Following de Saussure, they insist on the "arbitrariness" of the communicative codes used by different social classes. Without necessarily accepting their over-literal interpretation of de Saussure, we do find it helpful to deal with the distribution of codes across social classes from a structural point of view as well as a functional one.

22. The identity of an entire society, or some subsociety such as a class, may be usefully viewed as constituted by a certain organization of communicative resources. These resources may be viewed as signifying the social world, which we might otherwise be tempted to view as some form of objective reality itself. Indeed, Hymes (1974b) has warned ethnographers that their intuitions are in large measure the product of their own verbal codes. Dumont (1965, 1970b) and Sahlins (1976) have asserted that, as Westerners, our very perception of ourselves as separate individuals is, in fact, the product of a certain ideology transmitted by our communicative codes. Hence, they tend to stand in opposition to Bernstein who views the elaborated and restricted codes as determined by a certain social organization of production which divides human beings into groups.

23. In certain of these early writings, however, Bernstein claimed that members of the lower class, in actuality, had access to only the restricted code:

> A restricted code can arise *at any point* in society where its conditions may be fulfilled but a special case of this code will be that in which the speaker is *limited* to this code. This is the situation of members of the lower working-class, including rural groups...a middle-class individual has access to the two codes, a lower working-class individual access to one (1974, p. 109).

At other times, he suggested that this lack of access was more partial that total: "Although he [the working-class child] may understand both [codes], he will not differentiate effectively between the two" (1962, p. 141).

24. In our own analyses of naturalistic conversation in a family setting, we have found it extremely difficult to apply Bernstein's model. As we observed earlier, any general characterization of communicative setting such as interpersonal or instructional is not easy to use; for within family communication it is as though multiple settings are sustained at once, for there is continuous shifting between — indeed, merging of — disparate settings such as the interpersonal and the instructional.

25. As Jerome Bruner once observed with respect to writing, "I would bet my

bottom dollar that most of the writing people do is of the 'Don't leave milk today' kind of messages to the milkman. Either simple commands of this kind or sequence instructions like 'Turn left to get to George Street and then turn right'" (cf. A. Davis, ed., 1975, p. 138).

26. This failure to deal with a certain discontinuity between speech and writing, at least from the psycholinguistic point of view, is evidenced among other linguists, sociologists, and educators in England. For example, at a Seminar on Language and Learning sponsored by the Social Science Research Council (attended by Bernstein himself), Alan Davies wrote in the introduction to the volume which reported the proceedings of the Seminar: "There was, however, a strong expression of feeling in the Seminar that there is no discontinuity between speech and writing. If this is so then it is no less 'natural' to read than to speak, and therefore what is required is for 'reading needs' to be discovered and stimulated" (1975, p. 6).

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COCTA — Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis

At the ISSC General Asembly in 1977, COCTA was given the status of Standing Committee of the ISSC. It was established at the International Political Science Association (IPSA) Congress in Munich in 1970 and later also became a Research Committee of the International Sociological Association.

COCTA News

The Committee has recently launched its own newsletter *COCTA News* which will appear as a rubrique in *International Classification* (a journal appearing 3 times a year and published as from 1981 by Indeks Verlag, Frankfurt, FRG). The newsletter will also be distributed separately, in the form of an off-print, to COCTA members. The first issue will be found in *International Classification*, 7(2) 1980. The newsletter contains a description of the *purposes* and *history* of COCTA, a *report* on the Unesco Meeting on an Integrated Social Science Thesaurus (June 1980), a section on *Related Events*, which contains news of activities of other organizations within the same area of concern, as well as information on the series *COCTA Working Papers*.

Furthermore, it brings an announcement on a *Conference on Conceptual and Technological Analysis* to be held in Bielefeld (FRG) from May 25-27, 1981. The Conference is co-sponsored by COCTA and the German Unesco Commission, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Dokumentation e.V., the Gesellschaft für Klassifikation e.V., the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften, as well as by the Committee for Classification Research and the Social Science Committee of FID (International Federation of Documentation).

The objectives of the Conference are:

a) to establish a dialogue between social and information scientists on their shared conceptual and terminological concerns;

b) to bring into this dialogue concerned scholars of the third world;

c) to utilize for this purpose the relevant findings of several Unesco-sponsored programmes, notably the "Interconcept" pilot project; and

d) to pave the way for launching terminology banks and glossaries in the social sciences.

The Conference organization includes the presentation of six theme papers during morning plenary sessions on a) the theory of concept analysis, b) the evaluation of descriptor languages and c) the establishment of glossaries and the use of term banks. Working groups, during afternoon sessions, will discuss theme papers and consider additional documentation supplied by participants. The third day is reserved for the evaluation of working group findings and for special interest meetings.

A pre-conference seminar will take place on May 24 in order to supply participants from third world countries with information about relevant activities and