

Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse: Linguistics, educational policy and practice in the UK English/literacy classroom.

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ABSTRACT: In "The English Patient: English Grammar and teaching in the Twentieth Century", Hudson and Walmsley (2005) contend that the decline of grammar in schools was linked to a similar decline in English universities, where no serious research or teaching on English grammar took place. This article argues that such a decline was due not only to a lack of research, but also because it suited educational policies of the time. It applies Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse (1990 & 1996) to the case study of the debate surrounding the introduction of a national curriculum in English in England in the late 1980s and the National Literacy Strategy in the 1990s, to demonstrate the links between academic theory and educational policy.

KEYWORDS: Grammar, English, pedagogic discourse, National Literacy Strategy, educational policy.

INTRODUCTION

In "The English Patient: English Grammar and teaching in the twentieth century", Hudson and Walmsley (2005) trace the history of teaching grammar within the UK English school curriculum from the late Nineteenth Century to the present day, taking account of the influence linguistics as a discipline has had upon that teaching. What Hudson and Walmsley do not take account of, however, are the ways in which educational policy has shaped that teaching, nor the role played by the subject "English", and grammar within it, in maintaining and reproducing notions of national identity, including those of social class (Clark, 2001).

As an institution, the education system plays a key role in transmitting dominant ideologies of society. One of the ways it does this is through the reproduction and maintenance of a standard variety of a language through which, in turn, notions of national and cultural identity are transmitted. Unless physically impaired, children usually learn to speak at home, but the vast majority of children learn to read and to write at school. However, through written text and spoken interaction, what children and students learn at school may or may not be consistent with what they learn at home or in the community. Consequently, home/school language disjunctions and cultural differences can create conflict and are of much interest for educationally focused, sociolinguistics research.

To understand current debates about the role of grammar and knowledge about language in the UK English school curriculum, one has to understand the ways in which language is inextricably linked with notions of social class in ways which are unique. Standard English in England is associated with the middle class, for reasons which are historical and date back to the Eighteenth Century and the processes of standardisation (see, for example, Leith 1997). Language is also, in the modern

world, a key feature of national identity, and it was this feature of language which figured as a central argument in establishing the teaching of English as central to a school curriculum in the Twentieth Century. In 1921, the first government report into the teaching of English (The Newbolt Report) argued for the importance of English as a school subject, especially the teaching of standard English as a written form, including its grammar and literature. One of the grounds given for its importance was as a means of ensuring national unity and the continuance of national identity in a society fragmented after the First World War. At the time, the teaching of Latinate grammar prevailed, and it was this form of grammar and the prescriptivist principles upon which it was based that continued to be taught as part of English well into the Nineteen Sixties. As Hudson and Walmsley (2005) point out, research in linguistics in the early Twentieth Century was relatively neglectful of grammar, and essentially negative, in that notions of prescriptivism became discredited, including the idea of a universal grammar based upon Latin. No other grammatical theory was put forward at the time to replace it, with the result that Latinate pedagogical grammars continued to be written, taught and examined in schools until well into the Nineteen Sixties.

At the same time, in the middle decades of the Twentieth Century, and following the Second World War, emphasis in the teaching of English shifted from the teaching of standard English and canonical literature to an emphasis upon creative expression. This shift was supported by studies which showed that formally teaching grammar had little or no effect upon the quality of pupils' written expression (for example, Baranyai, 1949). This shift was officially endorsed in 1975 with the publication of a second government report into the teaching of English known as the Bullock Report and which led to the eventual abandonment of formal grammar teaching. Consequently, from the Nineteen Fifties and into the Nineteen Seventies, at a time of increasing social mobility epitomised by the phrase "classless society", it suited government policies of education to support curriculum change within English which abandoned the teaching of standard English grammar and canonical English literature. In its place came an emphasis upon creative writing, spoken English and contemporary fiction which reflected students' experiences. Little or no reference was made to notions of "accuracy" and "correctness", and only lip service was paid to the demands of the workplace outside the school in the shape of formal letter writing.

The "about-turn" in educational policy (Jones, 1989) which occurred from the late 1980s onwards and which continues today coincided with an unprecedented period of five, consecutive, Conservative terms of office lasting for nearly twenty years (1979-1996). The early to mid nineteen eighties had been characterised by social unrest and racial tension, particularly in the large, inner-city areas of cities across England, such as London, Birmingham, Bristol and Liverpool, at a time, characterised by rising levels of unemployment. One of the reasons given by the Government for social unrest and tension was the part played by the school curriculum, discussed in more detail in "The Grammar Wars" below, and especially by English. More specifically, teachers and the curriculum were blamed for a failure, as the government saw it, to teach standard English and canonical literature and through it social cohesion based upon a common national identity. What constitutes a curriculum subject, then, has much to do with educational policy and the attitudes and approaches taken by policy-makers to national identity; both of these impact upon pedagogic practices.

BASIL BERNSTEIN AND PEDAGOGIC DISCOURSE

Basil Bernstein is perhaps best known for his four-volume series of books entitled *Class, Codes and Control*, spanning 1971 to 1990, in which he investigated the relationship between language and education. He was particularly interested in the ways in which this relationship not only reflects but also structures inequality. He insisted that the relationship between language and social class was fundamental, in England, to accessing educational opportunity. In the Nineteen Sixties, Bernstein argued that the distribution of educational access was very clearly tied to class, particularly through the language used in its distribution, and that educational failure was often, in a very general sense, language failure.

Although much has been written and debated about Bernstein's earlier work and particularly his notion of codes, not as much attention has been paid to his later work, especially that on pedagogic discourse. In his theory of pedagogic discourse, Bernstein turned his attention to the ways in which discourse functions in society and the part it plays in maintaining social order, especially discourse concerned with education (1990, 1996). Cultural theorists such as Michel Foucault had already discussed the ways in which pedagogic discourse functions as a medium for other social voices or discourses such as class, gender and race. That is, that pedagogic discourse is the means by which notions of class, race and gender are structured and reproduced within society. Bernstein criticises such theorists for failing to distinguish between the message and the carrier of the message and to make enough of a distinction between that which is relayed, the verbal message, and the relay, the structures through which the verbal message is realised:

The discourses of education are analysed for their power to reproduce dominant/dominated relations external to the discourse but which penetrate the social relations, media of transmission, and evaluation of pedagogic discourse. It is often considered that the voice of the working class is the absent voice of pedagogic discourse, but we shall argue here that what is absent from pedagogic discourse is its own voice (Bernstein, 1990, p. 65).

The analogy for language – the substance of discourse – that Bernstein gives is that of a carrier wave, distinguishing between the carrier and what is carried. In a hi-fi system, the activated tuner carries the signal that is heard, so that the system carrying the signal simultaneously regulates it. When it comes to considering pedagogic discourse, Bernstein argues that we know what is relayed – the discourse or, as he sometimes calls it, the “text” – but are not so clear when it comes to the relay itself, that is, the structures that allow it to be conveyed. In other words, pedagogic discourse emphasises verbal behaviour – what is written and said – at the expense of a regulatory pattern of language – the structures that allow the speech. He adds: “It is as if when we study pedagogic communication we study only the surface features, only its message, not the structure that makes the message possible” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 168). Bernstein defines pedagogic discourse as: “a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition” (Bernstein, 1990, p.

181). Bernstein points out that pedagogic discourse is distinct in that it is totally dependent upon others drawn from outside itself in forming its own. It does not have a discourse of its own, but rather delocates or draws from others and relocates them within itself. What he is concerned with are the conditions and the structures which make pedagogic discourse possible and affect its change.

He identifies three principles or rules governing pedagogic discourse, in hierarchical relation to one another: those of a) distribution, b) relocation or recontextualisation and c) evaluation. In brief, rules of distribution govern the institutional practices and the upper echelons of government; those of recontextualisation govern the transformation of school subjects; and those of evaluation govern pedagogic practice. To generate these rules or principles, Bernstein distinguishes between the underlying invisible structures through which a pedagogic subject is realised, and what he calls "the text", that is the actual utterances, written texts, and so on, which are privileged through and by these structures, using the term "text" in its widest semiotic sense. Bernstein argues that if a theory is weak on "relations within", then it is not possible to realise rules for the description of the agencies or processes with which it is concerned. In other words, for a theory of cultural reproduction to be complete, it has to explain *how* a text came to be constituted as it is and accorded a privileged status (which may change) as well as *what* is transmitted.

He argues for what he calls the "pedagogic device" to achieve this explanation. He proposes a theory of pedagogic discourse within which there is an intrinsic grammar, the "pedagogic device", which controls the three principles of distribution, recontextualization and evaluation. The example Bernstein gives of the formation of a pedagogic subject is that of physics in the secondary school, which is the result of the recontextualizing principle that has selected and delocated what counts as physics from its primary location in the universities and relocated and refocused it in the secondary school. According to him, physics undergoes a complex transformation from an original to a virtual and imaginary discourse:

The rules of relation, selection, sequencing, and pacing (the rate of expected acquisition of the sequencing rules) cannot themselves be derived from some logic internal to physics or from the practices of those who produce physics. The rules of the reproduction of physics are social, not logical facts. The recontextualising rules regulate not only selection, sequence, pace, and relations with other subjects, but also the theory of instruction from which the transmission rules are derived (Bernstein (1990, p. 185).

To give another example, and the one exemplified here, a pedagogic discourse such as the school subject English removes or delocates a discourse from the universities and relocates it within the school context, reordering and refocusing it according to the principle of distribution controlled by the pedagogic device.

The relationship between Bernstein's three principles is hierarchical, in that the principle of distribution regulates the principle of recontextualisation which in turn regulates that of evaluation. The principle of distribution regulates "the fundamental relationship between power, social groups, forms of consciousness and practice, and their reproductions and productions" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 180). The principle of recontextualization in turn regulates the constitution of specific pedagogic discourse. The principle of evaluation is constituted in pedagogic practice.

Between power and knowledge, and between knowledge and forms of consciousness, lies the pedagogic device which is itself controlled mainly by the upper reaches of the education system. In order to explain this device, Bernstein distinguishes between two basic classes of knowledge – the esoteric and the mundane – where the line between these two classes is relative to any given period, as are the principles generating either one. For example, in small, non-literate societies, the division between the “thinkable” and the “unthinkable” is effected and regulated by the religious system, whereas in large, literate societies such as our own the division is controlled, to a large extent but not totally, by the upper reaches of the educational system, particularly that part of it concerned with the production of discourse. Bernstein maintains that in both types of societies, the “simple” and the “complex”, the distribution of forms of consciousness and systems of meaning is structurally similar, but that they are specialised differently through different agencies and pedagogic discourses. There is always a space or a gap which is the site of the “unthinkable” which has the potential to become the “thinkable”, and any distribution of power is an attempt to regulate the realisation of that potential in the interests of the social ordering it creates, maintains and legitimates, just as any re-distribution of power seeks to regulate its realisation in a different way.

Bernstein proposes that the pedagogic device makes the transformation of power into differently specialised subjects possible through the distribution and regulation of “knowledges” and the discourses such knowledges presuppose. Change occurs as a consequence of the inner potential of the device and the regulation of knowledge coming into conflict with the social base from which its power is derived. Rather than act as an agent of change, the education system, therefore – including the curriculum taught within – becomes a site of cultural reproduction that aims to reproduce the society within which it is located.

In other words, what becomes the content of a school subject is not something unique or logical, but is defined by what those who regulate and control the curriculum believe to be the most useful and desirable to benefit society. They are social, not logical facts. In the case of linguistics, like physics, its primary location is in universities, from which it is relocated and refocused into the secondary school curriculum through a complex combination of the rules of relation, selection, sequencing and pacing, which are not derived from some logic internal to linguistics, or from the practices of those who produce linguistics. Rather, these rules are derived from social and political considerations, where aspects of linguistic endeavour are selected from their primary location and recontextualised into a pedagogic context, a process which involves selecting aspects believed to be the most useful and desirable to benefit society. Bernstein's theory also proposes that the recontextualising rules, in addition to selection, sequence, pace and relations with other subjects, regulate the theory of instruction from which the transmission rules are derived. Consequently, the way in which the subject is taught is not one that is intrinsically linked to it, but dictated by those who regulate and control its content.

Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse is a highly elaborate and complicated one, not least because he assumes the language of cultural theorists in employing terms such as “discourse” and “text” but uses them in different and often contradictory ways. Neither is he a linguist, and does not always use these terms in a linguistically

recognisable way. However, his theory of pedagogic discourse has the merit of providing an empirical description of how cultural reproduction works and the ways in which it positions different sections of society. As has already been argued, the school curriculum plays a central and pivotal role in maintaining and reproducing notions of national identity, centring upon the teaching of standard English, particularly its written form. An excellent example of Bernstein's theory at work are government attempts in England during the late 1980s and early 1990s to make the content of the school curriculum a matter of state legislation, including the teaching of standard English (Clark, 2001) as a means of re-establishing social order and bringing issues of national identity to the fore once again.

THE GRAMMAR WARS

Recontextualisations of a curriculum subject such as English (or indeed any other) and redefinitions or recategorisations of a language (for example, standard English) of the kind which took place during the 1980s and 1990s, have to be understood within the wider external educational, political, cultural, social and historical contexts within which they are located, in addition to their internal ones. Bernstein identifies two "sites" through which recontextualisations occur: the pedagogic and official fields. The pedagogic field has control over the regulation of its own discourses and practices in so far as this is sanctioned and allowed by the official one. Although the relationship between these two fields is hierarchical, it is also discursive, interdependent and to some degree circular. The discourses realised through these fields also contain within them the potential for change at any given moment in time – change which occurs in response to that which happens at the level of distribution. Conflict between the two occurs when the official field seeks to curtail the autonomy of the pedagogic one, as happened in England during the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, recognition of the inevitability of change is built into the Education Reform Act of 1988 for England and Wales, which requires that the curriculum and its associated assessment is kept under periodic review, thereby incorporating into it the mechanisms for altering the balance between the official and pedagogic fields, should this be so desired in the future.

Throughout the Twentieth Century, the school curriculum in England had become increasingly decentralised, relocated from the government to the teaching profession, with both content and assessment becoming increasingly deregularised. Following the return of a majority Conservative government to a second term in office in 1984, a series of educational reforms began to pull control over education back towards the centre even more. The curriculum envisaged by this reversal amounted to a restoration of a grammar school curriculum, with the privileged text in English returning to the teaching of standard English, its grammar and its literature. Furthermore, the decision to write a subject-based curriculum ignored the very different curricular and pedagogic traditions of many primary schools that taught subjects in an integrated way.

Jones has described the changes that have taken place in education since 1979 as a "passive revolution", a term borrowed from the *Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci (1971). These changes have been characterised by efforts from the Right to respond to historic problems of development through increased planning and state

intervention. Jones (1992) states that: "Passive revolution is a means of ensuring that these relations are perpetuated, not by achieving stasis, but by renewing hegemony – by changing the *means* by which a class organises leadership so that they appropriate to new conditions." Jones further quotes Lampedusa: "Things must change...so that they can remain the same" (1992, p. 6).

A renewal of cultural hegemony was clearly signalled by Conservative education policies and publications published throughout the Nineteen Eighties and early Nineties. For example, following the return of the Conservative Party to a second term in office in 1984, the Conservative Political Centre, the Centre for Policy Studies, published a pamphlet ironically called *No Turning Back* (1985). This pamphlet set out a political agenda for education, employment, health and housing. In its section on education, changes to the funding and administrative structures of schools were proposed. These structures would effectively make them self-governing and independent of local authority control, regulated by the application of the principles of consumerism to education.

Also during this term, the Government laid out its agenda for the public sector, including education, which it was able to consolidate during its third and fourth terms. As part of its implementation, regulation of the principle of distribution was taken away from regional, autonomous local education authorities (LEAs) and given back to the central state. This changed the role of government from a mediational and supervisory one to one of administration. As a result, it shifted the location of power and distribution of knowledge from LEAs, subject organisations and regional examination boards to central agencies. Pupil numbers would in future determine the level of funding for each school and parents would be free to choose to send their children to any school with places available. Equality of educational opportunity, therefore, which had been the main guiding principle of distribution that had regulated education policy throughout the Twentieth Century, became responsible instead for its failure and replaced by the principle of "quality". The 1985 pamphlet further states that:

There is a widespread and pernicious myth in the education profession that it is somehow important to make children more equal. This is not what parents want and it is not what children need. It is the kind of idea which seeks to ration bright children between schools, as if they were some scarce commodity, in order that their beneficial influence might be spread equally. It is not equality that is needed but quality. We need a system which will not make children equal, but will make them better educated. If our school system can bring out and develop the best in each child, then we have achieved the best result for both individuals and society, regardless of any differences between children (CPS, 1985, p. 13).

Equality of opportunity was thus seen as detrimental to the educational process itself, hindering "better education". Selection by ability was to be re-introduced under the banner of parental choice, although "ability" became more widely defined to include technical and vocational as well as academic. As consumers of education in an open market-place, parents would be free to choose a school for their child unregulated by a common entrance examination such as the one which had divided pupil entry into grammar and secondary modern schools or by the social engineering of LEAs. At the same time, quality of education was to be achieved through a national curriculum to

which all pupils would be entitled or submitted. Thus educational aims were altered from their basis of equality which provided equal distribution of and access to educational provision regardless of class, ethnicity and gender to those based upon “quality” and the reintroduction of selective entry to schools.

Such a solution also confuses education and economic development, where curricular aims are defined largely in economic terms, but the curriculum proposed is that of a resurrected, academic, grammar school, subject-based one, then it is largely divorced from these aims and represents a political compromise between the neo-Liberal and the neo-Conservative wings of the government. The neo-Liberals emphasise the free-market and choice; the neo-Conservatives social authoritarianism and strong government.

The compromise effected was that the economic function of education, which sees education as demand-led and responsive to consumers, was achieved through changes to its administrative structures. At the same time, curriculum content that had been undermined in traditional terms by non-selective comprehensive schools was to become more prescriptive and centralised. The objective was to prepare children for their place in a formal and class-stratified socio-economic order which was not the same for all, aided by the introduction of a national curriculum. A DES memo sums up this objective when it justified the introduction of entry into school by selection on the grounds that: “...we are beginning to create aspirations which increasingly society cannot match...People must be educated once more to know their place” (quoted in Chitty, 1988, p. 88). The underlying ideological assumptions of Conservative educational policy then, were its blatant inequality and therefore undemocratic principles, disguised within a rhetoric of “quality”, “opportunity” and “freedom of choice”.

As Bernstein (1990) argued, pedagogic discourse and the principles which regulate it are dependent upon both macro and micro relations that exist between and within social, economic and political institutions. When these relations alter, educational aims and objectives also change. According to Bernstein's theory, a governing principle of all State education is that it provides education that meets pupils' aspirations in so far as these can be matched within the society which provides it. The defining characteristic of any State education system could be said to be the desire to shape pupils for their destination in the socio-economic order. When conditions in society change and alter that order, as they did from 1979 onwards, political, including educational, policy shifts accordingly. The introduction of a national curriculum in the late Nineteen Eighties clearly illustrates how educational policy shifted in response to changes in the political order of society.

The task which faced the Conservative government during the Nineteen Eighties was how to give pupils knowledge without also giving them the power that goes with it. One way of achieving this was to concentrate attention on standards of literacy. Although the centrality of English in the curriculum as the provider of initial literacy had long been established in infant schools, the methods used to teach it had embraced progressive pedagogy. Its other major role as a unifying agent of social cohesion had considerably lessened. Rather than celebrating Englishness, English had come to celebrate cultural and social diversity to an extent which caused concern amongst Conservative government ministers.

Together with a concern for increasing standards of literacy, therefore, was the need to re-establish a sense of a distinct, homogeneous national cultural identity. All should be educated to know their place in a very different way from the one which had informed previous, post-war educational policy. The national curriculum in English was written with these requirements in mind, in which questions of language became key issues through the teaching of literacy, English literature and standard English. Standards of literacy were said to have declined during the period when English pedagogy had become less concerned with teaching the formal properties of language as a separate component of English.

At the same time, a decline in standards of behaviour was also attributed to the lack of such teaching. Re-introducing the requirement that all pupils should learn to speak standard English and read its literature, would, it was believed, bring about a corresponding rise in standards of both literacy and behaviour. The much quoted words of Norman Tebbit, a Conservative Government minister, spoken in an interview in 1985, illustrate this belief:

...we've allowed so many standards to slip...teachers weren't bothering to teach kids to spell and punctuate properly...if you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy...at school... all those things cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime (see, for example, Carter, 1994 p. 22).

Tebbit's use of the word "standards" alters its meaning every time he uses it. It also illustrates an elision between spoken and written forms of English as if they were one and the same. Firstly, it is taken to mean a concern with achieving a certain degree of literacy. Secondly, it is used as a judgement regarding the kind of English that is used, with standard English presumably being "good" and everything else "bad". Using "bad" English is taken as an indication of a lack of moral standards that leads to its users committing crime. A person's linguistic behaviour, therefore, is linked to their moral behaviour. Bourne and Cameron point to the social significance of beliefs such as those expressed by Tebbit. They write that: "... anxieties about grammar are at some deeper level anxieties about the breakdown of order and tradition, not just in language but in society at large" (1988, pp. 149-50). In the same article, they also refer to a newspaper article written by John Rae, an independent school headmaster, published in the Observer newspaper in 1982. Rae had attributed the demise of grammar to the self-indulgence of the Nineteen Sixties when its rules, like others governing behaviour, were perceived to threaten personal freedom. Ignoring finer points of grammar equated with ignoring finer points of behaviour such as honesty, responsibility, property, gratitude and apology.

Cameron (1995) has pointed out that what she has called "the great grammar crusade" illustrates a paradox, which is that false arguments succeed in convincing people that they are based on a true premise. This success rests upon engaging with underlying assumptions of its audience, in this case that grammar of a certain kind, namely "correct" grammar, needs to be taught if people are to use English "correctly". The opposing argument put forward by experts that redefine notions of grammar fails to engage with these underlying assumptions and is therefore rejected as nonsensical. The debate about teaching grammar was nothing new, as previous chapters have

shown. What had altered was the shift of its centre of gravity from a professional domain and its associated publications to more a public one that included the media. As part of this shift, the debate – particularly in the press and news broadcasts – became polarised between “traditionalists” positioned on the right and “progressivists” positioned on the left. “Traditionalists” were portrayed as representing order in the classroom with a defined sense of what was right and wrong, whilst “progressivists” were represented as child-centred, relativist and presiding over chaotic classrooms. Cameron summarised the debate in the following way:

In the sphere of education, the radical Right focused on two related problems: an alleged decline in standards, and a drift away from the values education had traditionally sought to transmit. Influential conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic proposed to address this crisis of standards and values by instituting a “core curriculum” – a set of skills, competencies, ideas and canonical texts, exposure to and mastery of which would form the common inheritance of all educated people. In each case this proposal encountered resistance from opponents who found it over-prescriptive, elitist and ethnocentric. And, in each case, questions of language played a key role in what American commentators dubbed “the curriculum wars” (Cameron, 1995, p. 79).

Consequently, a return to traditional grammar marked a return to the associated social values, with the “national language” being used as a point of unity and social cohesion. Such a position correspondingly finds linguistic diversity threatening, a force to be contained or even eliminated. Controversy of this kind bears out Bernstein's premise that the rules of recontextualisation – in this case, those of the Conservative government and its supporters – regulate not only selection, sequence, pace of a subject and relations with other subjects, but also the theory of instruction from which the transmission rules are derived. Transforming “English” from its preoccupation with the pupil and their own use of language that emphasised linguistic diversity, individuality and creativity, a preoccupation that went hand in hand with a “child-centred” approach in language that was developmental, drawing on the work of social and child psychology, with criteria that would enable the growth of each individual child to be taken into account, was wholly inappropriate to a curriculum centred upon the teaching of standard English and the literary canon.

A major problem, however, faced the Government in its desire to recontextulise English. Teaching formal grammar as part of the curriculum for English had been abandoned and this abandonment endorsed by government policies during its previous recontextualisation in the Nineteen Sixties and Seventies because linguistics had shown that a Latinate grammar was wholly inappropriate as a model for living languages such as English. Therefore, it suited a theory of pupil-centred instruction to abandon “grammar” teaching altogether. In order to resurrect the teaching of standard English, the Government also sought to resurrect the theory of instruction which went along with it – that is, a model based upon transmission which shifted the centre of learning away from the pupil and back onto the teacher. The controversy surrounding the introduction of a national curriculum in English is well documented (see, Cox, 1991; Clark, 1994, 2001). What is worthy of further comment here, is the *way* in which the Government sought to impose the teaching of grammar. The teaching favoured by government ministers was that based upon a prescriptive, Latinate grammar of the kind taught in schools until the 1960s.

Unfortunately, by the Nineteen Eighties that grammar had long been linguistically discredited. However, it was not until 1957, with publications such as Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, and the 1980s, with the publication of M.A.K Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985), that alternatives became available. The approach in these grammars is radically different from any which existed previously, and did not suit government purposes at all. Halliday's grammar, particularly, stressed the social, cultural and creative aspects of language that influenced and altered its use. The social dimension of language incorporated into Halliday's approach (1973) is, he argues, crucial to discussions of language in education. He points out that learning is, above all, a social process. The classroom, the school and the education system form a social institution, each with clearly defined social structures. Consequently, knowledge is transmitted, acquired and learnt in social contexts through relationships that are defined in the value systems and ideology of our culture. However, such an approach to the teaching of grammar, although pedagogically justified, did not suit politicians. As Ronald Carter, Professor of Modern English Language and a leading exponent of the use of Halliday's grammar for pedagogic purposes acknowledges: "...debates about language and education have always been between those who have the power but do not have the knowledge and those who have the knowledge but do not have the power" (1992, p. 20).

The situation was not helped by the Government's inability to harness the support of linguists and educationists in its desire to reintroduce the teaching of standard English into schools and to produce either a grammar or support materials of the kind of teaching desired. The materials produced by a multi-million pound national project headed by Ronald Carter, *Language in the National Curriculum* (LINC; Carter, 1996), were scrapped. As Hudson and Walmsley (2005) points out, the materials, whilst recognising the importance of grammar, nevertheless did not include a systematic presentation of it, which is what Government ministers had wanted.

One of the many controversies which surrounded the formalising of a curriculum for English in England, was that recontextualising grammar into a pedagogic context was: firstly, considered by many as being tantamount to prescribing a grammar; and secondly, thought to signal a return to teaching by mechanistic drill. This was viewed as contrary to the spirit of much modern linguistic inquiry, which aims at language description, that is, rules of description based upon how language *is* used, and not prescription, which generates rules that language is then forced to fit and *ought* to use. Modern theories of language favour the former, whereas traditional grammar favoured the latter. Consequently, this posed a problem for politicians who wished to re-emphasise the teaching of grammar based upon traditional models.

This problem compounded by the fact that in England, appeals to the profession and the pedagogic field of recontextualisation that had resulted in the Kingman Report (1988), the original national-curriculum-for-English document in England (1989), and the LINC project which followed it, stressed the socio-linguistic aspect of a curriculum for language, but stopped short of prescribing what the government wanted (that is, a list of grammatical terms and explanations with which to describe language). Subsequently, such an openness of choice, and failure by the pedagogic field to prescribe a pedagogic grammar, left the way open for the official field to decide these terms for itself in other ways. These have been mainly achieved either

through the requirements for assessment in secondary schools as in the Key Stage 3 tests taken at age fourteen or by their inclusion in The National Literacy Strategy (NLS), introduced into primary schools in the mid-Nineteen Nineties.

In 1997, the Conservatives, after eighteen years in power, gave way to the Labour Party. However, such had been the shift to the centre within Labour Party politics that within the sphere of education, a change of government made absolutely no difference to educational policy. In the late Nineteen Nineties, the new Labour government continued with Conservative education policy and introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) into primary schools, centring upon a “literacy hour” and what has eventually become the *NLS Framework for Teaching*, a folder which details the activities that should take place in that “hour”, including grammatical terms to be taught as part of the process of learning to write.

Revised in 1998, the grammatical terms explained in the folder currently draw upon categories and descriptions taken from modern grammar suitable for teaching to young children. For example, rather than “parts of speech” which appeared in earlier versions, the Framework folder uses the term “word class”, and gives the main word classes as: verb, noun, adjective, adverb, pronoun, determiner, preposition and conjunction. Its glossary of terms encompasses not only grammatical terms but also extends to include concepts taken from systemic functional grammar such as “writing frames” and also those associated with literary and figurative language such as “elegy”. The pedagogic grammar currently being taught in English schools, then, is a classic case of Bernstein’s example of selection and delocation of what counts as grammar from its primary location in the universities and relocated and refocused in the primary and secondary school curriculum, undergoing in the process a complex transformation from its original site in universities relocated to a the virtual and imaginary one of pedagogic discourse.

Simply publishing a manual and teaching practices associated with it as good practice, whatever one might think of the practice itself, is not of itself sufficient to ensure that all schools comply with its requirements. In order for this to happen, then, the processes of production and interpretation – that is, the National Literacy Strategy – have to be regulated through the wider, institutional level of educational practice as a whole. Although not legislated for, in practice the National Literacy Strategy, centring upon the NLS folder and the literacy hour, has become mandatory in schools, reinforced and regulated locally by the literacy co-ordinator, regionally through local education authorities and nationally through a process of school inspection which is itself tied to funding and league tables of schools.

In terms of Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse, the “text” is the pedagogic grammar to be taught, which in this case is the folder *NLS Framework for Teaching*. “The processes of production and reception” are those of the classroom and pedagogic practice within it, namely those associated with the literacy hour, how teachers interpret its requirements, enact them in the classroom and how they are received and interpreted by pupils. The social conditions of production and interpretation are the political, institutional processes of the education establishment as a whole which regulate and control the social conditions of production and

interpretation and the corresponding processes of production and interpretation. Part of this is also evaluating the institution of education against social processes as a whole. Whilst the NLS may be government's attempt at initiating social democracy and wider equality of access through the teaching of standard English as the language of power, this practice does not of itself result in social equality, and cannot be divorced either from its other policies related to education, health, social welfare and housing or from the social and cultural backgrounds of the pupils themselves.

CONCLUSION

As one of the subjects most closely associated with the reproduction of culture and cultural values as these are generated through language, and with concepts of language themselves as constructed around the central notion of standard English, battles over language are always and inevitably to do with battles over culture and identity. Ultimately, they are also struggles for control of the pedagogic device itself. Education is thus never neutral, but a site of cultural reproduction as much as any other. Nevertheless, systems of education also contain within them the seeds of their own transformation. Just as reproduction is historically configured at any given moment in time, so today's acquirers become, in turn, tomorrow's reproducers and producers of knowledge. Schools, then, and the curriculum which they teach, are at one and the same time sites of cultural reproduction and of potential future transformations.

For contemporary recontextualisations of grammar to have any cognitive purchase, they have to do so in ways that link it with the remainder of the curriculum for English and traditions of English teaching. One way of doing this is by anchoring such a recontextualisation into a textual context, which allows for and acknowledges, rather than denies or treats as different or inferior, the language practices which pupils bring with them to classrooms. Since such a recontextualisation takes place within an established tradition of English teaching that has included the teaching of grammar in previous formations, it can provide a means whereby linguistic terms of modern grammars can be incorporated into or grafted onto those associated with traditional grammar. These describe patternings in words and sentences with which the world is familiar. In addition, since modern grammars extend the unit of analysis beyond the sentence to the text, this allows for the absorption of terms associated with literary or figurative language to also be incorporated, alongside newer linguistic terms that describe patternings in texts, such as those of coherence and cohesion and concepts of genre.

Critics of genre theory may take issue with such a concept on the basis that it is creatively restricting, but it at least provides pupils with a starting point for their own writing which is based on something more than intuition or their pre-school and out-of-school experience of literacy. However, one of the consequences of such a recontextualised grammar is that it also provides an opportunity for the linguistic structures through which all the subjects (not just those specific to English) realise their content to be explicitly taught, either as a concept of genre or as writing frames of some kind. For example, research into the linguistic features of academic language used in English secondary schools undertaken by Mason and Mason (1997a, b) led to the production of extensive teaching materials published as the Wigan Language

Project. These materials aimed to teach pupils the formal, linguistic features of academic language including, for example, nominalisation, metaphor, and the passive and the grammar of complex sentences. They were also taught the commonest discourse structures (problem/solution; general/particular; compare/contrast; question/answer). The Masons' research showed that pupils' success in learning these structures helped them to understand how the most striking formal feature of abstract language – nominalisation – has the specific function of making possible the concepts of variables and systems. The materials were trialled between 1984 and 1990 at a secondary school in Wigan, which resulted in a virtual doubling of G.C.S.E results when compared against the national average. The project resulted in the publication of a series of three books, *Breakthrough to Learning* (1997), which aimed to make transparent the linguistic features of academic language used in all academic subjects, and thus form a suitable example of the ways in which linguistics can inform a whole school language policy. For the purposes of the subject English, though, their usefulness is less apparent, since the texts with which much of its study are concerned is not academic, but fictional and imaginary. Even so, when it comes to the writing of formal essays, which the subject demands, then such explicit instruction has a place.

Similarly, research undertaken in Australia by Williams (1998, 2000) has shown that pupils are capable of learning formal, linguistic features of language in a literary context from an early age, and that such knowledge enhances their understanding of the part played by language in structuring the messages the texts being studied convey. Williams' research shows that, if taught as part of textual study, then children possess the ability not only to reason abstractly but also to do so enthusiastically. Williams notes, "The teaching of grammar is often associated with authoritarian practices and negative outcomes. The crucial point is that this is not a necessary relation between all grammars and outcomes for children's learning" (2000, p. 128). A functional grammar, and a pedagogy which orients learners to thinking about the effects of grammatical patterning in texts so that their meanings can be uncovered, is not vastly dissimilar from any other kind of literary analysis.

Recontextualising a pedagogic grammar within English, then, restores it to a more integrated place in the curriculum. Such a restoration would need to take account of modern theories of language, which link into the framework of the curriculum for English as a whole. However, such recontextualisations cannot derive totally from a modern grammar, be it transformational generative, systemic functional or any other. Instead, they are selected and drawn upon in so far as they add, extend and reconfigure existing traditions and practices, which take account of and build upon teachers' knowledge base. Such a grammar would go some way towards allowing pupils to understand the ways in which English and language actually structure, convey and position their experiences. How such a selection is effected in practice, of course, brings to the fore issues of power not only within the official field of recontextualisation, but also the pedagogic.

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