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From time to time the Newsletter has contained reports about the BAAL/LAGB Committee for Linguistics in Education, better known as CLIE. Many BAAL members will also be familiar with the CLIE Working Papers, which Dick Hudson has edited and produced since their inception in 1983. For this special issue of the Newsletter, we are fortunate to be able to reproduce the first five Working Papers, with an editorial introduction by Dick. They bear witness to the important role that Dick has performed in seeking ways in which linguistics can respond to the educational needs of our day.

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Future papers will be obtainable from Dick Hudson, Dept. of Phonetics and Linguistics, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. Please send one first-class stamp for each paper, to cover printing costs, plus a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests from overseas will be serviced gratis.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

CLIE - the Committee for Linguistics in Education - is a joint committee of BAAL and LAGB, so its work should be of some interest to BAAL members. It is particularly concerned with the contribution that linguistics and applied linguistics can make to teaching at the primary and secondary levels, and its task is to improve the flow of information in both directions. One of its main achievements in this area has been the launching of the CLIE working papers, five of which are included in this issue of the BAAL newsletter.

Three of these papers (1, 3 and 5) are state-of-the-art reports based on meetings of the Educational linguistics section of the LAGB (also initiated by CLIE). These section meetings occupy a two-hour slot in the regular LAGB meetings, at which LAGB members take part in a discussion of some issue which concerns them as linguists and which is also important for schools. The sessions have so far always been well attended and packed with interesting ideas, and what comes out at the end is a CLIE paper summarising what linguists are thinking these days about the topic in question. It is quite possible of course that the linguists at LAGB Educational linguistics section meetings are not representative of linguists in general - after all, they select themselves by attending the meeting - but at least the discussions show what a sizeable proportion of serious linguists think. The discussions should be of use to those who want to update their linguistics - the reports show that linguists' ideas have developed over the past decade or so.

The other two CLIE working papers (2 and 4) were commissioned by CLIE to supply a particular perceived need. John Walsley agreed to produce one on the (rather poor) arguments against the teaching of formal grammar; and I drafted a statement on what society might expect from language teaching in schools. Both of these papers seem particularly relevant to the present debate about the HMI report "English from 5 to 16".

As other CLIE working papers become available they will be announced through the usual channels (including the BAAL newsletter) and can be obtained very cheaply from me. Further information about CLIE may be obtained from the secretary or the chairman, who at present are respectively Bill Littlewood (Dept of Education, University College of Swansea, Henderfofian, Swansea, SA2 7NB) and Mike Stubbs (Dept of Linguistics, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD).

Linguistic equality

by Dick Hudson

For some decades now, linguists have been telling each other, and the rest of the world, that "all languages are (linguistically) equal", and also that "all native speakers of a language are (linguistically) equal", in order to counterbalance the wide-spread belief that the contrary is true in each case. At the same time, of course, we have recognised that these propositions would be blatantly false if we replaced the bracketed "linguistically" by "socially", and we have claimed that all the inequalities among languages and among speakers are purely social. If people think language X or speaker A is better than some alternative, we say this is just because the social status of the language or speaker concerned is higher than that of the alternative, and has nothing to do with the properties of the language itself. This belief was probably inspired most importantly by the work of the American anthropological linguists in the early years of this century, but it is still included among the basic principles of virtually every linguist in Britain, and is probably one of the most important sources of contention between linguists and non-linguists.

Since the belief was first introduced into linguistics, a great deal of work has been done on a wide variety of languages and of language situations, so it is worth asking to what extent the belief is still tenable, in the light of the accumulated evidence. After all, since it is such an important issue in the debate between linguists and non-linguists, it is important to make sure that we linguists are sure of our ground, because otherwise we may be misleading the public. It is easy to find beliefs that are widely held by linguists but may well turn out to be wrong - e.g. the belief that language-systems are structured in a unique way - so there is no a priori reason why the same should not be true of the belief in linguistic equality. This is especially so because linguistic equality is an issue which linguists tend not to debate among themselves, so it seemed worthwhile to arrange a public forum in which we could air whatever doubts and differences we had.

The forum was a two-hour debate in the newly-formed 'Educational linguistics' section of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain, during its autumn meeting at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (22nd September, 1983). An encouraging number of people attended this debate - about 50, which was about half the total number of people at the conference - and the debate was lively. It was clear that we could have benefited from having a lot more time to sort out certain points of terminology and basic assumptions, and it may be that we shall have a chance to continue some parts of the debate in future meetings of the Educational linguistics section, in connection with other issues. However there was a wide measure of agreement on a number of important issues, in spite of the fact that the participants held divergent views on many other questions in linguistics. What follows is an attempt by me, as chairman and convener of the debate, to summarise the discussion in a way which will make it accessible to those who did not attend. To increase its usefulness, I have completely reorganised the order in which points were made, and I have given less prominence to the three prepared presentations (by Dick Leith, Margaret Deuchar and Jim Milroy). I have ascribed views as best I could to the people who expressed them in the debate, and a list of the people concerned will be found on the final page.

A. The hypothesis of linguistic equality

We started with a proposition and two questions:

The proposition: "that all varieties of language are linguistically equal"
The questions: Q.1 "What does the proposition mean?"

Q.2 "How good is the evidence for it?"

It should be borne in mind that the word "variety" is used by linguists to cover the notions "language", "dialect", "register" and "idiolect" (i.e. the language of a single speaker), so the proposition as it stands covers both parts of the linguistic equality claim, as it applies to the language of individuals as well as of communities. The answer to the first question required us to make some distinctions, which follow in the present section, and the answer to the second was of course somewhat diffuse. First of all, we recognised that the proposition is a hypothesis, which may or may not be true, but that it would be impossible to prove that it was true (even if it was) (J. MILROY); the best we can hope to do is to show that there is no evidence against it. One view was that we could not even hope to achieve this much, because the whole question was so vague as to be beyond debate (HARLOW), but the debate certainly happened, and led to reasonably clear conclusions.

We need to distinguish three different notions of equality (LEITH), apart from the idea of 'social equality' which is obviously false:

a. structural equality - this would be the case if all varieties had (virtually) the same ranges of constructions and vocabulary. (We never discussed whether phonological and morphological structures might be relevant here, although it is known that languages may differ grossly in these areas in terms of quantities - how much inflectional morphology, or how many phonemes? However, the main question of interest in the debate on structural equality is where linguistic structures most obviously relate to the other types of equality, so this gap in the debate did not matter.)

b. communicative equality - this would involve the equal abilities of all varieties to provide the linguistic resources for coping with a similar range of communicative demands.

c. cognitive equality. Varieties would be cognitively equal if they had the same influence on the (non-linguistic) cognitive make-up of their speakers; this influence might be zero in all cases, but if language does affect thought, then cognitive equality would mean that different varieties had similar types of effects, and these effects were quantitatively similar.

These notions of equality are clearly very different, although they may be closely related; but linguists have tended in the past to gloss over the differences. Moreover, the difference between 'actual equality' and 'potential equality' has been ignored (DEUCHAR). Linguists have tended to say that all varieties are potentially equal in that any differences between them can easily be wiped out by adaptation of the part of the 'weaker' variety; but "in practice differences between actual and potential equality are glossed over, and it is common for linguists to assert, without qualification, that all languages are equal. Hymes has suggested that such assertions are consonant with a general climate of liberal humanism, but that they are based on 'ideological confidence rather than empirical knowledge' (Hymes, in G. Harman, ed. *On Noam Chomsky*, page 318)." (DEUCHAR). At least as far as the non-linguist is concerned, there is obviously a vast difference between actual and potential equality, since the claim that some variety is deficient and needs to be changed is quite consistent with belief in potential equality, but hard to reconcile with actual equality.

The debate took account of the above distinctions, and led to a somewhat more sophisticated version of the linguistic equality hypothesis than the one with which we started. The following account will show that there has been a shift of opinion among linguists which has led at least some (and probably a

majority) to recognise that language is more problematic than the earlier optimistic belief suggested it should be. In particular, I think the majority view was that a speaker's linguistic resources are not necessarily up to the communicative demands which are placed upon them, and that the same could be said of a community's linguistic resources. This shift will no doubt be welcomed by those in the teaching profession whose job is to try to remedy mismatches between resources and demands in this area, and they will be pleased to find that linguists accept that such mismatches arise.

However, I should like to emphasise that a number of other widely held beliefs received no support at all from the debate. In particular, I think linguists stand firm on the following claims:

a. There are no "primitive languages", if by this we mean languages which contain a few hundred words and virtually no grammar, and which are used as the normal means of communication within a community. (We need to qualify the claim in this way, because we know that there are various restricted varieties such as pidgins which are used for communication between communities and are therefore used only to supplement their speakers' native language.)

b. There are no "verbally deprived children", if we mean by this children who are of an age at which we expect a rich grammar and thousands of words, but who know only a handful of words and little grammar, without any physiological or other medical explanation being available.

c. Where a standard expression and a non-standard expression both fulfil the same function (e.g. are synonyms), it is not necessary to assume that the standard one is any better, as a means of fulfilling that function, than the non-standard one. (E.g. He gave it me is no better or worse than He gave me it, and we was there is no worse than we were there - MILROY) The relation between form and function is not always arbitrary (DEUCHAR), and some expressions may be arguably more efficient than others, but the advantage is not always, or necessarily, in favour of standard expressions.

B. Points of agreement

The following views were discussed (though not necessarily in exactly the way they are formulated here), and seemed to be generally accepted by those present.

a. The effectiveness of a person's reaction to a communicative demand depends on two factors: the total linguistic repertoire of that person (which may well embrace more than one "language" or "dialect") and his or her skill in exploiting the available linguistic resources. It is important to take account of both these elements, rather than to assume, as linguists have tended to, that the connection between language and communicative demands is to be made between the demands and a single "language". A widely held view, quoted by LEITH, is that all languages are equally well adapted to the communicative needs of their speakers; but it is well known that many communities divide communicative needs among a number of different languages (e.g. some aborigine tribes in Australia use English for counting, and Italian immigrants in Brazil often use their Italian dialect for intimacies - L. MILROY), though even this formulation is open to debate, as we shall see.

It is also important to recognise the part played by individual skill (HARLOW), and to recognise that some uses are better than others: "To hold that all uses of language are equally good, equally effective, etc. is obviously nonsense, a kind of null hypothesis that is disproved almost every time it is tested." (J. MILROY). There was no discussion of the reasons for these differences in verbal skill, but it is clear that they account for at least some of the individual differences in verbal performance, so we cannot assume that inferior performance in speaking (or writing) is due to inferior knowledge of

language (in the sense of grammar and vocabulary). Consequently, its remedy may lie in instruction or training in the best strategies for exploiting existing knowledge, rather than in adding supposedly unknown vocabulary and grammar to this existing stock of knowledge.

b. No community or individual uses precisely the same variety from one year to the next, and some of these changes arise out of the need for linguistic resources which are not available before the change. These needs in turn are due to the communicative demands which are regularly placed on the speaker (or speakers), so at least some of the changes in an individual's linguistic repertoire take place because of his or her communicative needs. As these needs change, so must the linguistic repertoire, otherwise "communication gaps" will arise. This is clearly true of individuals as they become mature members of their society, but it also seems to be true of the varieties used by mature members that they may get out of step with the communicative needs of their users. This is obviously what happens when there are technical and social changes which produce objects and ideas for which a community has no vocabulary, but other types of change may also point up "communicative gaps" which need to be filled.

A particular case was discussed in some detail (DEUCHAR), namely where a variety which has hitherto been used only in face-to-face interaction starts to be used in less interactive situations (e.g. over the radio). This leads to changes in the communicative demands, such as the need to identify referents without the help of a shared immediate context, and without the help of immediate feed-back from the addressee. One linguistic consequence of this change may be the development of a "relative clause" construction with clear markers of the relative clause, whereas such constructions were less necessary in the earlier, more interactive, situations where the variety was used. Such constructions seem to have developed recently in Tok Pisin (Neo-melanesian Pidgin, an English-based pidgin spoken in New Guinea) and in American Sign Language (used by the deaf); and possibly Old English needed to develop a relative-clause structure, not having inherited one. However, the discussion revealed some disagreement about the details of these cases: - the claim that Old English had no inherited relative clauses is controversial (REIBEL); and, even if relative clauses marked by special words were not inherited, we should have to be certain that the earlier language did not use intonation to signal relative clauses; if this were the case, then the need for "relative clauses" was already satisfied (WELLS); - a certain community in Panama uses a language (Buglere, a member of the Chibchan family) in which no relative clause markers are used even in the relatively non-interactive genre of narrative (LEVINSOHN); however, the semantic status of the marker-less construction is shown by the tense, and the lack of markers to show specifically that the clauses are relative does not seem to matter. (We lack information about the language use in other genres among this community, so it could be that overtly marked relative constructions exist there - RUSSELL.)

In spite of this uncertainty about the particular examples, there seemed to be general agreement that linguistic changes can be motivated by the existence of communicative gaps, and that these changes may affect grammar as well as vocabulary.

Three general points arose out of the discussion, which need to be emphasised: -

- When these adaptive changes take place, it is because the speakers adapt their language, and not because the language adapts itself; the difference may sound academic, but the alternative is to see language as a "living" organism with its own "abilities" to do things such as adapting; such views of language were long since discredited by linguists.
- Communicative gaps are specific, not general, even if there are a large number of them; so a variety which is relatively poor in one area of meaning, or in one genre of communication, may be relatively rich in another (HONEY).
- Different communities may solve the same communicative problem in different

linguistic ways; for example, (LEVINSOHN), linguistic varieties used in oral narrative by pre-literate societies differ widely in their use or avoidance of syntactically-signalled subordination, with Buglere (mentioned above) at one extreme, and Ica (another Chibchan language spoken in Colombia) at the other extreme. There is no question of one type being linguistically better than the other.

c. The question of "cognitive equality" came up for discussion only in relation to the difference between spoken and written language; more specifically, we considered whether there are consistent cognitive differences between literate and illiterate societies (LEITH). Unfortunately linguists have contributed very little either to this debate, or to a more general probing of the relations between spoken and written language; too many of us have claimed to be representing the spoken language while actually taking our data from written language. However, others have taken an interest in the question of cognitive effects, and the "orality/literacy" hypothesis is now popular, according to which literacy confers far-reaching cognitive benefits. A recently published book (by Ong) promotes this hypothesis, and we examined some of the conclusions and evidence presented there (LEITH). Under scrutiny the arguments turned out to be unimpressive (e.g. the effects of literacy were confused with those of schooling), and the discussion produced no supporting voices for the hypothesis (though it has to be admitted that linguists often do seem to accept it as plausible). To some extent this may have been because participants recognised that we linguists need to be careful in pronouncing on questions of cognition (LOCAL), but it was also because we know enough about the very different roles of writing systems, of literate people, and of literacy in (say) China, Japan and Korea, compared with Western Europe, to be sceptical about general conclusions based on a small range of Western societies (LE PAGE).

C. Bones of contention

Three general issues seem to remain as points of dispute, to judge by the discussion in our meeting, though in each case there appeared to be a fairly clear majority view, which I shall indicate.

a. Is it true, as linguists have tended to claim, that every variety is perfectly adapted to the communicative needs of its users? We saw in the discussion of (a) in the previous section that such claims are best rephrased in terms of total repertoires rather than individual languages (or other varieties), because a multilingual community may have all the linguistic resources it needs even though no one language is adequate to all the linguistic needs of the community. So is it true that every communicative repertoire is perfectly adapted to the needs of its users? There was some support for this view (HARLOW), but rather more for the view that the fact of adaptation to changing needs (discussed above) showed that at least some repertoires, for some of the time, are not adequate for the needs of their users (DEUCHAR, CULLEN). A question which we did not discuss is whether a communicative gap necessarily leads to a compensatory change in the linguistic repertoire; a *prima facie* case exists for the view that a gap may be actually created by a change (e.g. the loss of sibling in English), and that gaps may be tolerated permanently. However, it is important to bear in mind in thinking about these questions that communicative gaps are specific, so this part of the debate gives no support to the view that some varieties (or repertoires) are better overall than others.

b. Is adaptation of a language ever prevented by linguistic factors (to the exclusion of social and other factors)? It was suggested that some Australian aborigine languages with only 7,000 words had been unable to adapt to new circumstances, and had been "swamped" by English (HONEY), but I think the majority view was the one already mentioned above, that it is wrong to think of language as adapting; it is people who adapt, so if they are unable (or unwilling) to adapt their linguistic repertoire, this is probably for social reasons (e.g. the dominance of English-speaking society in Australia). The wide-spread belief

among linguists in "potential equality" which was mentioned above is relevant here, because it is a belief in the potential of every variety for adaptation; although it is an odd notion of "equality", it is highly relevant in this more restricted context. Moreover, it is massively grounded in the historical study of languages, where linguists have failed to find any specifically structural constraints on adaptation.

c. Could the social status of a variety be predicted on the basis of a linguist's description of its structure alone? And more specifically, would it be possible to tell which of two related varieties was the standard one on this basis alone? We considered this question at some length (J. MILROY), in connection with the way in which standardisation leads to a reduction in the number of alternative forms for expressing the same content: "The aim of standardisation is to ensure reliability and efficiency in using the linguistic resources in communication. It is exactly analogous to standardisation of coinage, or weights and measures, as language (like money) is a medium of exchange. Linguistic uniformity can be seen, therefore, as desirable in the interests of efficiency and reliability ... variant realisations are suppressed and uniformity is encouraged." (J. MILROY) The available evidence from communities such as Montreal and Belfast seems to suggest that the least standardised varieties allow more variation than more standardised ones, which would suggest a general typological difference between standardised and non-standardised varieties. If this is the case, then it would of course be possible to predict at least this part of the social status of a variety on the basis of a linguistic description. The view was expressed (based on Romance data), that a full description of the syntax of a variety could give some indication of its social status, particularly if the description included information about which syntactic structures were frequently used (HARRIS), but it was objected that the basis of these predictions about social status was not purely internal to the structures of the varieties concerned. Moreover, the Belfast data may be typical not so much of a non-standard variety, but rather of a newly formed dialect mixture (TRUDGILL). Moreover, the relative statuses of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia are reversed between Malaysia and Indonesia - one dominates in Malaysia, the other in Indonesia - so social status must be arbitrary in relation to linguistic structure (LE PAGE). By the end of the discussion, participants seemed to be generally in favour of the traditional view that structural differences between standard and non-standard varieties were probably arbitrary, and that the social status of a variety could not be predicted from a description of its grammar alone.

D. Conclusions

In relation to our original questions, we seem to have arrived at the following conclusions:

a. The hypothesis of linguistic equality can be taken in relation to varieties of language (language/dialect/register/idiolect) or linguistic repertoires (of an individual or of a community); in relation to structural, communicative or cognitive equality; and in relation to actual or potential equality. The most "liberal" interpretation would be that all linguistic repertoires are potentially equal from a communicative point of view: given the right social circumstances, all speakers (and communities) have an equal ability to develop a linguistic repertoire to suit their communicative needs. This version of the hypothesis is probably true.

b. But it is certainly not true that all varieties are equally good as resources for satisfying every communicative need, or that all varieties contain the same range of structural patterns. However, the differences between varieties are specific, so each variety will have areas of strength as well as of weakness. Moreover, the crucial question is to what extent these differences provide problems for people, and in this connection the notion of a linguistic repertoire is much more relevant than that of a variety.

Summary

This paper reports a debate on "linguistic equality" which took place at the autumn meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain in 1983. The purpose of the debate was to review the state of opinion among professional linguists in the light of developments since the doctrine of linguistic equality was first formulated, near the beginning of the century. We agreed that we could not accept a simple version of the doctrine, according to which all languages and all speakers were said to be linguistically (though not socially) equal. Instead, we found it essential to distinguish different kinds of equality (structural/communicative/cognitive, actual/potential), and to ask the question not in relation to languages, but rather in relation to linguistic repertoires of individuals and communities. Having made these distinctions, we concluded that in one sense the doctrine was probably right - no language has a structure, or lack of structure, which prevents its speakers from adapting it to meet any new communicative demands. But in another sense, it is certainly wrong, if it is taken to mean that all speakers are already equally well equipped with linguistic means for coping with all communicative demands.

List of speakers

Connie Cullen, U. of Hull
Steve Harlow, U. of York
Prof. John Honey, Leicester Poly.
*Dick Leith, Birmingham Poly.
*Prof. Jim Milroy, U. of Sheffield
Stephen Levinsohn, S.I.L.
Joan Russell, U. of York
Bill Wells, U. of York

*Margaret Deuchar, U. of Sussex
Prof. Martin Harris, U. of Salford
Prof. Bob Le Page, U. of York
John Local, U. of York
Lesley Milroy, U. of Newcastle
Prof. David Reibel, U. of Tübingen
Prof. Peter Trudgill, U. of Reading
* = presenter of prepared paper

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank all those who spoke in the discussion (listed above), and the rest who attended but didn't speak. But above all I should like to thank those who sent me comments on an earlier version of this report: Margaret Deuchar, Martin Harris, John Honey, Bob Le Page, Dick Leith, Stephen Levinsohn, Joan Russell, and Bill Wells. Now that I have revised the report to take account of their comments, I think it probably reflects their views fairly accurately, and I hope it is also true to the views of the people who spoke but didn't send me any complaints.

The uselessness of 'formal grammar'

John Walmsley

'Formal grammar', meaning the teaching of the terms of a linguistic metalanguage, is obviously one area which is of central concern to linguists. Until the last few years, the teaching of English grammar in schools had suffered a decline extending over more than fifty years. Although the teaching of some grammatical terms is doubtless done in the context of the foreign-language lesson, any English teacher who tries to introduce or re-introduce this aspect of linguistics into his or her work should not be surprised to meet with opposition - overt or covert. Though many reasons have been advanced for keeping formal grammar out of schools, the one we look at below is the most pervasive - it is the argument of which most has been made in the literature, and the one we think interested teachers are most likely to be confronted with.

The argument

It is natural that in approaching what amounts nowadays to a new discipline, teachers should be interested in its usefulness. As Brookes says, "... the limits of the usefulness of such (i.e. linguistic - JW) insights in relation to other considerations in teaching need to be very carefully considered" (Brookes and Hudson 1982: 65). In fact, the strongest attacks mounted against the teaching of formal grammar in the past have been based on its failure to produce improvements in pupils' linguistic ability. The point has been put most succinctly in a book which was said at the time (by its editor) to represent "the best current thought and practice in Britain" (Thompson 1969: 1). It reads, "most children cannot learn grammar and ... even to those who can it is of little value" (Thompson 1969: 7). Coming when it did, this two-pronged criticism echoed scores of similar remarks which had gone before. For example: "Intelligent pupils can repeat definitions of parts of speech, recognise them in sentences, and fill up gaps with the correct words, but the fact that so many pupils can do this and yet write ungrammatically shows that there is no real connexion at this stage between correct writing and that superficial knowledge of grammar which they have acquired" (Evans 1953: 8); or this: "And now a word about grammar. It will be a dogmatic one. The formal teaching of grammar makes negligible difference to the child's ability to write well. I admit ignorance of what the pundits have to say on this issue; forty years in the classroom convince me that fresh, spirited and correct expression is not achieved by lessons devoted to the minutiae of formal grammar" (Mason 1964: 33).

One might suppose that grammar could be admissible for those who have no difficulty with it. But this is not the case: "I admit that some pupils take readily to instruction in grammar, but I have never found that proficiency therein necessarily ensures corresponding efficiency in other and more important aspects of their work in English" (Mason 1964: 34) - the implication being that unless it does, there can be no place for it in teaching; and, "The study of English grammar remains an essentially investigatory activity; it is the proper province of linguists and it is not the province of school-children, for the reason that they have on hand a task in which it can give them almost no assistance - the task of learning to write"

(Walsh 1965: 181). In other words, for these authors the overriding aim of English teaching is to teach children to write, to express themselves freshly, spiritedly and correctly, and, they say, knowledge about language can make no significant contribution towards achieving this aim. Under the circumstances, that anyone should show any interest at all in teaching grammar would appear perverse: "... one can only conclude that a great number of both examiners and teachers are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the scholarship which has demonstrated its inherent deficiencies, and practical experience, which has shown it to have no, or only minimal, influence in developing the skills of writing and reading" (Wilson 1969: 155).

It is not only practical experience which has shown grammar teaching to have only minimal influence in developing linguistic skills, - research into this area has, according to Wilkinson, been "massive" (Wilkinson 1971: 35). From the wealth of studies available we shall deal with just three. These studies, however, have not been selected at random: they are interconnected, and they have been chosen because their results have been wielded with considerable effect by opponents of the systematic teaching of formal grammar. They are associated with the names Harris, Cawley and Macauley.

Aims of the research

Harris's aim was to test the effectiveness of English grammar-teaching in improving mastery and control in children's writing. He was working on the assumption that the teaching of grammatical terminology is directed to these ends: "Many teachers would concede that they do use much of this terminology. Most would no doubt hope and feel that they succeed in linking the terms to the practical business of composition. This would seem to be a crucial justification for retaining formal grammar in English instruction" (Harris 1962: 21). In his review of earlier work, Harris found that "... Cawley, as Macauley previously, suggests that for all except the bright children no level of attainment likely to be valuable can be reached in formal grammar" (Harris 1962: 56). His criticism of Macauley's work - and the starting-point for his own approach - was that Macauley "does not show why it (i.e. grammar - JW) should be taught ... at all; and he does not show that even if learnt it has no effect on correctness" (Harris 1962: 58).

Methods

Harris's method was to compare two sets of five forms each in a variety of schools over two academic years. The control group followed a basic course in English, with no grammar. The experimental group followed the same basic course, with a further lesson a week in English grammar. While the experimental group was being given its lesson in English grammar, the control group spent the same amount of time practising writing.

Results

After two years, Harris discovered that the control group produced better written work than the experimental group. 'Better' was defined to mean among other things a higher number of words per common error; greater variety of sentence pattern; and a larger number of complex sentence patterns used correctly. Harris concluded that "... the grammar lesson in these five schools was unreliable as a means of securing a greater mastery of control in children's writing than could

be secured with the entire neglect of grammar in English lessons, and its replacement by some form of direct practice in writing" (Harris 1962: 202).

The earlier research by Cawley had arrived at similar conclusions, though by a different route. He had tried to replicate Macauley's Scottish experiment, for English schools. Both Cawley and Macauley were trying to assess the effectiveness of the teaching of formal grammar in its own terms, i.e. they were not trying to assess its effectiveness in a different area (the teaching of writing skills). Both asked their subjects to identify five parts of speech (N., V., Adj., Adv., Pron) in a set of sentences. Macauley found that even after six years of grammar teaching only four out of 397 pupils could manage 50 % correct answers on all five parts of speech. Having set his "pass" criterion at 50 %, Macauley goes on, "at the end of a three-year secondary course we have still not managed to get the median boy over this hurdle. This seems to indicate that even at the end of a three years' senior secondary course, recognition of the simplest parts of speech by their function is still too difficult" (Macauley 1947: 159). Cawley extended Macauley's research to include such questions as - is there an order of difficulty in recognizing the five parts of speech? - are there any noteworthy correlations between grammar scores and intelligence? - are there any significant correlations between grammar scores and marks in school exams? Cawley's results did not conflict in any way with Macauley's, and the main point of his research was confirmed, - namely, that even judged on its own terms, the teaching of formal grammar failed to make the concepts intelligible to the pupils. Cawley concluded: "Ability in grammar (as measured by this test) depends considerably on verbal intelligence. Factor analysis shows that it has little connection with essay writing ... It is doubtful whether grammar should be taught in all secondary modern classes since (a) comparatively few pupils have the necessary intelligence to benefit from the teaching; (b) the ability to write well is not dependent upon a good knowledge of grammar" (Cawley 1958: 176).

So far, it looks like an open-and-shut case. Before we leave this research, however, one or two points must be made about aims, methods and design.

In trying to test the effectiveness of grammar-teaching in transmitting grammatical concepts, both Macauley and Cawley can at least be said to have approached their problem rationally. Harris, however, was trying to do something rather different - he wanted to see whether the transmission of grammatical concepts had any effect on the quality of pupils' writing. Under the name 'transfer-of-training', the assumption that the results of practice in one form of activity are transferred to other activities has been familiar in educational psychology since the last century. "Belief in such transfer was at one time universal. ... Researches carried out in the early years of this century, however, have shown that the view is almost entirely mistaken. Transfer occurs in a sense, but not in the sense in which the old educationists had supposed... It can be quite safely laid down as a principle that the best way to become proficient in any activity ... is to practise that activity, and not some other" (Knight and Knight 1966: 170-71).

The first point to note, then, is that far from being surprised to find no direct connexion between grammar-teaching and success in composition, the results were only to be expected. A large number of empirical studies had in fact appeared by 1929 (Wilkinson 1971: 32) which demonstrated just this point.

Furthermore, by the time Harris was writing, there is evidence that this view had been widespread among teachers for some decades. In the Preface to the 1924 edition of his English Grammar, Ritchie wrote: "The claim of English Grammar to a place in the school curriculum has sometimes been defended on the ground that it enables or assists the learner to speak and write correctly. This argument is easily refuted by facts: it is tolerably obvious that the correct use of language is mainly a matter of environment, and is very little, if at all, dependent on a knowledge of grammar." Harris's assumption that most teachers hope that they succeed in linking grammatical terms to the practical business of composition would therefore appear to need putting in perspective.

The second point concerns methods. Although it might seem obvious that the best way to improve writing is to practise writing, there is nevertheless a real dilemma here for linguists. For although they might not wish to postulate a direct positive influence of grammar teaching on the quality of a pupil's writing, it would seem unintelligent to suggest that the less cognitive understanding of language a pupil has, the better his or her writing is going to be. The problem is, it depends exactly how much grammar we mean: a little, or none at all? And if some, how much, and exactly what? Harris's evaluation criteria for the research included, as we saw, the variety of sentence-patterns used, the number of complex sentence-patterns used correctly, and number of words per common error. How far was the grammar teaching over the two years of the experiment geared to the evaluation criteria? In his thesis, Harris lists a number of grammatical (i.e. metalinguistic) terms: "If these forms or equivalent ones are used in teaching English, then for the purposes of this enquiry formal grammar is taught" (Harris 1962: 21). This being the case, one wonders whether the results would have been the same if, instead, the experimental group had been given specific tuition on such things as variety of sentence-patterns, complex sentences etc. The mere use of grammatical terms would scarcely seem to suffice in itself for a rational test of the effectiveness of grammar teaching. It is perhaps for this reason that some writers have shown themselves unimpressed by the results of Harris's kind of research: "It has actually been 'proved' by means of experiment and statistics that lessons in grammar are largely a waste of time. This conclusion has been reached so often in the last four decades that one is inclined to wonder whether in the field of educational research the scientific path follows the laws of fashion rather than of logic" (Diack 1956: 7). And Carroll wrote in the same vein: "... I am reasonably sure that unless the student gets a feeling for sentence patterning ... his own sentence patterns will show many obvious defects. Research on the effectiveness of teaching English grammar in improving English composition has been mainly negative, but until this research has been repeated with improved methods of teaching English grammar, I will remain unconvinced that grammar is useless in this respect" (Carroll 1958: 324).

What exactly was taught, and the methods of teaching, appear to be areas which Harris signally failed to pay much attention to in the course of his research. In view of the above, his results could equally well be felt to argue for more, rather than less, grammar teaching. For if the effects of teaching some grammatical metalanguage more or less at random for one lesson a week are so negligible, an equally persuasive conclusion would seem to be that pupils' writing might be improved by teaching those aspects of grammar which are later to serve

as evaluation measures for the research, more intensively, at greater length and on a sounder foundation.

Discussion

In order to assess this research properly it will help if we ask ourselves what conclusions we would draw, were we to be faced with the results obtained. For - let us face it - the results make pretty dismal reading. They document the almost complete failure of four to six years' instruction in grammar at both primary and secondary level to teach even the most basic items (five parts of speech) with any degree of success.

The first thing one would surely do would be to cast around for possible candidates for more detailed enquiry: were the methods used in teaching the grammatical terms adequate? - were the materials sound? - were the teachers competent and effective? - was the subject matter suited to the age and ability of the pupils? Strangely, none of these seems to have detained Macauley, Cawley or Harris for long. They all agree that there is a kind of inherent difficulty in grammar which puts it beyond the reach of all but the ablest and most mature learners. Since they do not tell us which methods of teaching the teachers used, we cannot find fault with them. Nor may we fault the teachers' own knowledge. Those who mention the teachers at all assure us that - wherever else the fault may lie - it does not lie with them: "As far as could be judged, all the teachers were ... competent and practised in the present grammar of the language" (Harris 1962: 115). And Macauley: "From our investigation, we can say that there is no necessity to malign the primary teacher who has been struggling for the previous four years with the subject. The factor in the situation which has altered is not the personality or efficiency or method of the teacher but the age or maturity of the scholar" (Macauley 1947: 159). We have, of course, no means of checking the effectiveness of the teachers who participated in the experiment. Since this would be a crucial factor for research of this kind, however, it is odd that not more attention was paid to it. Odder still is the fact that remarks elsewhere in Harris's thesis actually lend support to the suspicion that the results of his research may indeed be due in some measure at least to the teachers involved. Harris mentions a discussion with a group of "sixteen teachers of English, all of more than two years' experience. On December 1st. the sentence 'Thinking it would be late, the man ran to the house' was analysed in a passing comment to the ... teachers, and at the second meeting a week later they were asked to analyse into clauses the sentence, 'Thinking it would be late, the man ran to the house where his friend lived' ... only four of the sixteen teachers managed to provide a correct answer..." (Harris 1962: 57). In view of this, Harris's earlier assurance that as far as he could judge, all the teachers concerned were competent in the grammar of the language seems somewhat disingenuous. There is no reason, in making this point, to fear that we are unjustly maligning the teachers. They were doubtless working more or less in the way they themselves had been taught. The blame, if any, should be laid at the door of those responsible for educating them.

We may sum up this research, then, by saying that although the results show that the random teaching of the terms of some grammatical metalanguage is less effective in improving pupils' written expression than practice in writing, in order to be properly effective it would have had to compare general practice in writing with specific teaching

of the grammatical points in terms of which the writing was going to be evaluated.

We have conducted the debate so far within the framework of the assumption that improving linguistic skills is the overriding aim in the teaching of English, and that all other aims must be seen as subservient to this. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that this view is widely held, with its corollary that unless the study of linguistics (in the form of grammar) can be justified on these grounds it cannot be justified at all.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that many teachers still make use of a metalanguage of some kind. Further, pupils are almost certain to come up against the terms of a metalanguage in their foreign-language lessons, even if not in their English lessons. More surprising still is the fact that some of the most vehement opponents of grammar teaching list in detail the terms of a metalanguage which seems to be indispensable, even to them. It is most surprising of all, however, to find them writing school books of the grammar they so despise - e.g. O'Malley and Thompson, 1955. These programmes specify not only what should be taught, but - implicitly or explicitly - how. Holbrook, for example, insists that the parts of speech, sentential functions (subject, object), and secondary grammatical categories (number, tense) should be "defined by example rather than by ... their function" (Holbrook 1961: 233). It is a question worthy of serious consideration how far the propagators of these totally inadequate methods, such as Mason, Holbrook, O'Malley, Thompson etc., do not themselves bear considerable responsibility for the ineffectiveness of grammar teaching which they so lament.

We shall now consider the question of whether the improvement of linguistic skills really is the only criterion against which grammar teaching can properly be measured. We saw that a number of writers claimed that improving pupils' linguistic ability is not what linguistics is trying to do - that linguistics is not that kind of science (Blamires, Ritchie, Walsh). If we can rid ourselves of the notion that linguistics can only be measured against a purely materialistic yardstick, then we can begin to see it in a somewhat different light. We can surely agree that we live, grow up and work in a particular environment, or a series of environments, and that one of the functions of education is to explain his or her environment to the individual learner. No-one would dispute either that a number of traditional disciplines are very much concerned with the nature of this environment from different points of view - Geography, History; parts of Biology, Chemistry, Maths. Now, in the same way as we inhabit a physical, social etc. environment, we grow up in and inhabit a linguistic environment. Why should our pupils not study their linguistic environment just as they study Biology, History, Geography etc.? Seen from this point of view, insisting on a direct connexion between school subject and practical skill looks a lot less convincing as a criterion for accepting or rejecting the teaching of any particular discipline. We do not measure the success of geography lessons primarily in terms of whether a pupil can find his or her way round the town or not, - and if we did, what place would we find for History? Geography is concerned with a different scale of values. And would we accept Mason's criticism if it were applied to Biology - "... forty years in the classroom convince me that a good digestion is not achieved by lessons devoted to the minutiae of biology ..."? We must divest ourselves of the view that some subjects should be required to provide detailed justification for

a place in the curriculum whereas others are there by a kind of divine right: "... literature needs no justification. Its significance for personal values, for the width and depth of an individual's mind, and for his growth as a thoughtful member of society is self-evident" (The Examining of English Language 1964: 20).

If linguistics, including the study of grammar, is, as Walsh says, "an essentially investigatory activity" (*loc. cit.*) providing a means of approach to what is after all one of the most impressive, pervasive and important aspects of any human being's environment, ought not the boot rather to be on the other foot? Instead of allowing linguistics to be tied to written performance as the only admissible criterion, ought we not to demand that any child should have the right to study his or her own native language in all its aspects? Why should such a study need more special justification than any other subject? The argument that it can not be shown to improve their practical written performance smacks of a depressing philistinism totally irreconcilable with a humane or liberal approach to the curriculum.

Peculiarly odd in this materialistic approach to the curriculum is its propagation by some who profess to support the humane values of literature. Holbrook, for instance, speaks of a "failure of confidence" in English: "It can be felt from the university to the primary school ... It lies behind the retreat to utilitarianism ..." (Holbrook 1979: 9). If English teaching in this respect is indeed retreating to utilitarianism, why should it surprise us? Utilitarianism is the only criterion which has been held up to the teaching of grammar as a yardstick against which it should be measured.

Conclusions

In our necessarily cursory look at the evidence on which the claim that grammar teaching is useless is based, we have found, I think, consensus of a kind in three areas - 1) The random teaching of grammatical terms seems to effect no direct improvement in pupils' expressive ability in writing. As Carroll pointed out, what was being taught under the label of 'grammar' in these experiments would have to be more carefully controlled, if the results were to be entirely convincing. 2) Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that a grasp of the terms of a linguistic metalanguage is an essential tool for communicating about language even in schools. Even those who claim to be against the teaching of grammar accept this, and some go as far as making suggestions as to which terms ought to be taught, and how. The question here is: in view of the uncertainty about grammar, and the poor results which have been achieved, would it not be better to put this teaching on a sound footing rather than teach the bare minimum, and that skimpily "by example"? 3) The conclusions reached by Macauley and Cawley point to a rather different, and more interesting conclusion than the one we have been discussing - that grammar is inherently too difficult for any but the brightest and most mature pupils. This argument deserves more space than can be devoted to it here, and will be taken up again elsewhere.

In the latter part of our paper we argued that even if the opponents of grammar-teaching do believe that some kind of metalanguage is useful, a narrow, materialistic approach is not one which linguists ought to subscribe to. Language is a significant, important and interesting aspect of our environment in its own right, and there is just as much justification for studying it as there is for studying its physical, social or historical aspects. Anyone who argues that language

is in itself not a legitimate study for children ought to be required to say why. These arguments should then also be applied with equal stringency to other subjects of the curriculum. And for anyone interested in discovering exactly what the best way is, of improving oral and writing skills, the field is still very much virgin territory: "If a small part of the research effort that has been put into demonstrating the uselessness of grammar ... had been distributed over a wider field, more might be known about how skill in the use of English can best be developed" (Thouless 1969: 211).

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Summary

'Formal grammar' has traditionally been used to mean teaching the terms of a linguistic metalanguage, and is thus very much a part of linguistics. Opponents of formal grammar teaching in schools have usually based their opposition to it on its ineffectiveness in improving linguistic skills. Since this is one of the main arguments which anyone wanting to teach linguistic terms must expect to face, this paper looks at some of the research which has been devoted to proving the claim. Despite weaknesses in the design of much of the research reported on, we find no essential reason to disagree with the findings. Rather, the direction of the research as a whole seems to be misconceived. If formal grammar is one way of approaching the study of language, there seems no more justification for excluding it from the curriculum than any other study. To demand that it should justify itself in terms of practical results represents an unacceptably materialistic approach to the curriculum. Even those who attack it most virulently say that some kind of metalinguistic terms are necessary for the sensible discussion of language - whether the pupils' own or anyone else's. We conclude that 1) there is no a priori reason why the linguistic study of language, especially the native language, should not be as legitimate as the study of any other subject; 2) if it is going to be taught fruitfully, then it can not be taught 'on the side' as it were, but must be taught on a proper basis by properly qualified teachers using proper methods; and 3) there is still plenty of room for improved definitions of linguistic skills and empirical research into the best ways of developing them.

The higher-level differences between speech and writing

by Dick Hudson

This paper is about the ways in which spoken language differs from written language at the 'higher levels' of organisation - that is, with those differences which involve matters of syntax, vocabulary, meaning or discourse organisation. The main exclusion is the question of the relation between writing systems and their counterparts in speech (e.g. alphabetic, so-called syllabic and "ideographic" systems); these things need a separate paper all to themselves. What follows is a report of what was said in a meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain (March 29th 1984). The fact that this meeting was attended by no fewer than 80 linguists - over half the total participation in the conference - shows how much interest there is these days in the relations between speech and writing. A decade or so ago, it would probably have been hard to muster more than a handful of linguists for a discussion of this sort; we knew very little about the relations between speech and writing, and cared even less. Consequently it seemed a good moment to organise a discussion, in order to gauge the state of thinking, knowledge and ignorance of linguists about this subject. We in CLUE hope that the report will be of interest to those outside linguistics who have waited patiently for linguists to start taking these things seriously.

The selected bibliography at the end of the paper shows that a good deal of thought and research has been given to our topic, especially in the last decade, but this report will not make detailed reference to this research literature. Instead, it quotes the spoken views of the linguists who participated in the meeting, taking account also of written views submitted by a number of other linguists who could not take part (for geographical reasons). I have ascribed views to particular individuals by name, and a list of names can be found on the final page. Most of these individuals are established linguists, and some of them are known for their contributions to the discussion of the relations between spoken and written language. I should like to mention in particular three linguists who acted as a panel of experts to lead the discussion: Lesley MILROY, Mike STUBBS and Ivan LOWE. Milroy is known for her work on the speech of working class Belfast, and has also written a book, with her husband Jim, on the effects of standardisation in language. Stubbs is known for his work on literacy and discourse analysis, in which he presents the contribution of sociolinguistics. Lowe is a linguist whose work with the Summer Institute of Linguistics has given him a great deal of experience of pre-literate societies and the effects of introducing literacy to them. We hoped that this combination of expertise would at least cover some of the most important parts of this rather vast field. However, we are very much aware of one particular shortcoming of the discussion reported below: we had very little to say about the differences which undoubtedly exist between Britain and other highly literate societies, as far as our questions were concerned. For example, it would have been very helpful if we had been able to make reference to societies such as Japan (where literacy is more widespread than in Britain) or parts of the Islamic world, where literacy is closely tied up with religion. As it is, the generalisations that follow should perhaps be seen as relevant to societies such as ours, but not necessarily to all literate societies.

Question 1. In what sense is speech basic and writing derivative?

Non-linguists often believe, and assert, that writing is the standard against which speech should be measured, so that speech is simply wrong to the extent that it is different from writing. In reaction against this view,

linguists have consistently pointed out that speech has a much better claim to priority than writing has, if one of them is to be taken as 'basic' and the other as 'derivative', since speech came before writing in the history of the human race, and speech comes before writing in the history of each individual. Nothing said in the discussion calls this position into question, and indeed it was reaffirmed by MILROY, LOWE, STUBBS, GRADOL and T. BLOOR. However, the relations between speech and writing are somewhat more complex than linguists have tended to imply in their claim that written language is always derived from speech:

- a. Some constructions used in writing have no spoken counterpart (STUBBS), and likewise for some more general uses of writing such as timetables (M. BLOOR); and more generally, the differences between speech and writing are much greater than most people realise until they study detailed transcripts of spontaneous speech (OWEN);
- b. the social prestige of writing is often higher than that of speech; for example, written formulations often have legal status whereas corresponding spoken formulations may not be binding (STUBBS);
- c. many educated speakers spend more time reading and writing than speaking and listening (LOWE);
- d. some linguistic patterns (vocabulary or constructions) are learned from written rather than from spoken language (MILROY); and the speech of many literate speakers is heavily influenced by written language (LOWE);
- e. children may learn to speak from parents whose speech is influenced by the written language, as in (d) above (STUBBS);
- f. linguistic loans often enter a language first through written language (MILROY), and more generally innovations may start in writing and spread from there to speech;
- g. given the right historical circumstances, a language which is restricted to writing may develop into a spoken language (e.g. Modern Hebrew) (STUBBS).

In assessing the extent of differences between speech and writing, we should pay attention to differences between societies, since these differences are much greater in some societies than others (LE PAGE).

Question 2. Which other social, psychological and functional parameters interact with the channel difference in influencing the structure of the linguistic expressions used?

One of the difficulties in studying the differences between speech and writing (the 'channel' difference) is that it is hard to find comparable texts that differ only in this respect (STUBBS), though some research, notably that by Ochs, has managed to solve this problem (DECHER). Most spoken and written texts differ on other parameters than the channel difference, and these other parameters influence the choice of linguistic expressions used (i.e. the syntax, the vocabulary, and so on). The parameters concerned include the following, supplied by LOWE, STUBBS, and MILROY:

- a. formality;
- b. standardness of language;
- c. interactional purpose (transactional or phatic);
- d. specificity of addressee;
- e. length of time available;
- f. amount of interaction between producer and receiver;

- g. degree of speaker involvement;
- h. degree to which context of beliefs etc. is defined in advance;
- i. visibility of receiver;
- j. relation between time of production and time of reception;
- k. degree to which the communication is public or private;
- l. amount of pre-planning or spontaneity.

These parameters, and others, are independent of one another and of the channel difference. For example, writing is often associated with transactional purpose (MILROY), but there are types of written text which are mainly phatic, e.g. Christmas cards (CORDINER). Indeed, when one preliterate society (the Nambiquara, in the Amazon basin) first learned to write their language, they wrote letters to each other which for the first five years contained nothing but phatic messages (LOWE). More generally, speech tends to express interpersonal relations more than writing (NONAGIAN), but under the influence of writing some societies accept what might be called 'spoken prose' (MOLL). In view of such complicated interactions between different parameters, we must consider specific genres of speech or writing, rather than 'speech' or 'writing' as such (TOTTE), in order to avoid the danger of oversimplifying the issues (FANCETT).

Question 3. Are there typical configurations of these other parameters in combination with speech and with writing?

In view of the complexity introduced by other parameters which interact with the channel difference, we need to know how acute the problem is. In particular, could we rescue the simple contrast between 'speech' and 'writing' by assuming that writing is typically formal, standard, and so on for all the other parameters, and that speech typically has the opposite set of values? Our education system tends to encourage such a view, since it tends to value only one kind of writing (GRADOL), and there is some evidence from psychologists to support it: namely, children's development of writing skills seems to recapitulate their development of speech, and some aphasic patients recover writing skills before speech (CHAN). However, the general view seemed to be that such a simple view badly misrepresented the actual relations between speech and writing. Many speakers supported the view that some combinations of values on the different parameters were more typical than others (LOWE); for example, we can assume that the most typical speech is the kind which is spoken by people who read least, and which is least formal (MILROY) - what Labov calls the 'vernacular' (STUBBS). Nevertheless, we should not expect to find a simple two-way split between 'typical writing' and 'typical speech', but rather a complex continuum between speech which is hardest to match with writing (e.g. speech closely integrated with non-verbal behaviour) and writing which is hardest to match with speech (e.g. graphs and tables (PERERA) and certain kinds of notation; though many notations, such as mathematical ones, can in fact be verbalised by the initiated (PIMM)) (STUBBS). Furthermore, the possibility of certain configurations changes with technology, and recent technological changes have led to the possibility of new configurations, such as the radio phone-in and the letter-cassette (BARTON). Some speakers suggested that the various parameters were so independent of one another that it might be best to consider them individually in studying their effects on language, rather than to look for typical configurations (LOWE, REIBEL). But the general conclusion remained undisputed, namely that the contrast between speech and writing interacts in complex ways with the other parameters; so it is unlikely that we should have

very much to say about the difference between speech and writing as such without taking account of the effects of the other parameters.

Question 4. What structural differences do the social, psychological and functional differences between speech and writing NECESSARILY lead to?

Assuming that the structures found in various genres of speech are different from those found in genres of writing, the present question asks to what extent these differences can be explained as the result of functional pressures (MILROY). In considering a variety of examples from English, speakers appeared to agree that functional explanations for the differences were reasonable (though hard to prove). For instance, we can say that a speaker works under pressure of time (e.g. to hold the audience and to avoid losing the floor), whereas a writer is more under pressure of space; so speaking favours constructions which give speed and fluency, where writing favours those which allow a message to be conveyed concisely (LOWE). (Of course, we realised that these generalisations applied only to certain genres of speech and of writing; but the explanations would be no less valid for this, provided they serve to relate the structures found in those genres to the pressures under which their producers operated.) The need for speed and continuity in speech encourages the use of fillers and clichés, repetitions and other kinds of redundancy, and constructions like left and right dislocation which make planning easier (LOWE, MILROY). In contrast, the need for compactness in writing favours nominalisations, passives, complex nominal subjects and hypotaxis (LOWE, MILROY). Premodified constructions tend to be shorter than postmodified paraphrases (compare TUC leader with leader of the TUC), and consequently they tend to be favoured by newspapers, in comparison with radio (CORDINER). Another hypothesis is that speakers can produce variety through intonation, so it is less important for them than for writers to vary the vocabulary and syntax (MILROY). If explanations such as these are valid, then they would lead us to expect the differences between speech and writing to be quantitative rather than absolute, and consequently we need to apply quantitative research methods, in the comparison of texts (STUBBS). A good deal of work of this kind has already been done, but a lot more is needed before we can be clear about the validity of the above generalisations.

Another way of approaching this question is to consider languages other than English, to see whether the structural differences between speech and writing are the same as in English. If we find that the structural differences vary from language to language, we should probably assume that they are arbitrary, but if we find similar differences across a wide range of languages, the differences may be inherent to the difference between speech and writing (in the genres concerned). We had no systematic collection of comparative data to draw on here, but we had some observations on a particularly interesting range of situations, where a language has only recently started to be used regularly in written form. These cases all seemed to show a tendency to develop differences similar to those found in English between speech and writing. Basque has recently started to be used for writing, and the written form has rapidly diverged from the spoken form, though this could perhaps be explained as due to the influence of Spanish and French (TRASK). When Nambiquara (Amazon basin) was first written, the written form represented a highly edited version of the spoken, omitting such things as ideophones (e.g. *pow!*) and "sentence fragments", and this development was spontaneous (LOWE). Written Tok Pisin (New Guinea pidgin

English) has developed a number of constructions not found in ordinary speech, such as relative clauses, but this may be due to a different parameter: whether or not the receiver can interact with the producer (DEUCHAR). This is a particularly important parameter as far as deictic elements are concerned, and it is in relation to deixis that some of the main differences between speech and writing are found (SPARKS). The importance of the interacting listener in speech is illustrated by the difficulty that many of us find in leaving a message by phone on a recording machine, and by the finding that hesitations in speech are often linked to the gestures of the listener (MONAGHAN).

The need for research in this area, and the difficulty of carrying it out, was illustrated by a brief discussion of differences between spoken and written versions of the news. Is the spoken version more redundant and repetitious (MILROY), or are they much the same (MONAGHAN)? And whatever the answer to that question, how do we generalise it beyond this particular genre?

One point found general agreement: that there was no evidence for a quantitative difference between speech and writing in the amount of structure, contrary to various claims that there is less structure in speech; and this is especially so if structure at the level of discourse organisation is taken into account (FAWCETT).

Question 5. Are there on the other hand any structural differences between speech and writing which are purely conventional?

This is the converse of the previous question. If we assume that some of the structural differences between spoken and written genres are inevitable, as was suggested by the answers to question 4, is this so of all the differences? We found some examples of differences which appeared to be purely conventional:

- the restriction of the French *passé simple* tense form to writing (STUBBS);
- the distinctive treatment of names in writing (by capitalisation) but not in speech (notice that languages may differ arbitrarily in this respect, as English capitalises the names of the days of the week, but French does not) (STUBBS);
- the marking of sentence boundaries and paragraph boundaries in some, (but not all) writing systems, in contrast with the debatable status of sentences and paragraphs in speech (see questions 6b and 9b below) (STUBBS);
- the avoidance of prepositional phrases as subjects in written genres of English but not in spoken ones (in contrast with sentences like *By his side sat a tall girl*, which are structurally similar but are more typical of writing than of speech (MILROY)).

However, some of the structural differences that were mentioned had already been discussed as examples of differences which might be explicable in functional terms (e.g. avoidance of "sentence fragments" and preference for hypotaxis in writing); so it seems that we don't have a great deal to say that is coherent on the distinction between conventional and necessary differences between speech and writing. Our problem is partly in deciding what is due to the channel difference as opposed to other parameters (ALLERTON); partly in knowing what is culture-specific and what general (WOOD); partly in distinguishing yesterday's functional explanation from

today's pure convention (e.g. commercial radio stations now favour premodification, just like newspapers (CORDINER)); and partly in isolating the functional demands of particular genres - for example, one of the purposes of a written genre may be precisely to distance the written text as much as possible from speech, in order to emphasise its permanence, authority, impersonality, etc. (HUDSON); and conversely, fillers may be needed in speech in order to avoid a didactic tone, associated with writing (PERERA).

Question 6. Are any structural differences associated directly and solely with the channel difference?

There was general agreement that writing contains no simple counterpart to intonation, though some conventions in our writing system match some parts of the intonation structure (e.g. underlining for marking tonic placement (CHANNELL)). Spoken language can exploit features which are simply not available in writing, e.g. pitch, speed and rhythm (STUBBS), and many structures which depend heavily on such features do not occur in writing (LOWE). Similarly, non-verbal gestures are an important part of spoken language, and are necessarily absent from most written genres (WOLL). Conversely, speech has no counterpart to some punctuation conventions. However, all the examples of this kind of mismatch which we discussed turned out to be unclear:

- a. Quotation marks - there is no exact counterpart in speech, but changes between unquoted and quoted material can be marked by change in pitch (JOHNS-LENIS) and tempo (CORDINER), as can changes from dictated material to instructions on a dictating machine (WUNT).
- b. Sentence boundaries - there was disagreement as to whether or not there is a counterpart of the sentence (as opposed to the clause) in spontaneous unprepared speech; one researcher claimed that 'sentence' is not a relevant category for such speech (COATES), while another maintained that sentence-like units are quite easy to identify in it (FAWCETT). This disagreement may turn out to be just a matter of terminology, but it clearly needs to be investigated.
- c. Paragraph boundaries - again there was disagreement about whether there is anything like a 'spoken paragraph' (MONAGHAN) or not (LOWE, ALLERTON).

In addition to the above differences there are differences involving syntax and vocabulary (e.g. the ban on the indefinite, specific use of this in writing, and the avoidance in speech of constructions like X supposes Y to be ... (MILROY), and the avoidance of indefinite they in writing (LOWE). However, these all seem to be examples of more or less conventional characteristics of particular genres of speech and writing, rather than features linked directly to speech and writing as such.

Question 7. Is speech less explicit than writing?

It is often claimed that writing is context-free and speech is context-bound, so that writing must be more explicit than speech, because it can rely on context to a smaller extent. There is some truth in this because of the way in which speech is tied to a particular time, place and set of participants, so that these elements can be referred to directly by deictic expressions (MILROY) - but such deictic reference is quite explicit. Indeed, the presence of intonation makes some parts of a spoken message more explicit than it would have been if written (CAMERON). In any case, marked

deictic differences between speech and writing only appear when abstract expository writing is contrasted with speech (STUBBS, quoting Nystrand 1983). The difference between speech and writing is not so much that one relies on a context but the other doesn't, but rather that writing relies on the context of reception (i.e. when and where it is read), whereas for speech the contexts of reception and production are (normally) the same (STUBBS). The extent to which context is exploited in some written genres is shown clearly by assembly instructions for self-assembly kits (LOWE). In general, then, we rejected the simple claim that writing is less context-dependent, and correspondingly more explicit, than speech.

Question 8. Is the notion 'grammaticality' different when applied to speech and to writing?

It has sometimes been suggested that the distinction between 'grammatical' and 'ungrammatical', and the rules which make the distinction, are a by-product of literacy. However, this cannot be so, because even preliterate societies, such as the Nambiquara, distinguish between 'correct' and 'incorrect' expressions in their language (LOWE). On the assumption that 'grammaticality' does not refer to the prescriptions of school grammar, but is taken in the Chomskyan sense where it refers to the expressions allowed by any grammar, then it must apply in the same way to speech and to writing (CHAN). On the other hand, it is clear that non-linguists find it easier to apply the notion 'grammaticality' to writing than to speech, partly because standardisation reduces the variety in a written language (STUBBS), partly because speech is harder to observe objectively (STUBBS), and partly because grammars familiar to non-linguists tend to apply to written language (MILROY). Because of this, we found it hard to discuss this question without turning it into a matter of pure terminological definition.

Question 9. Are our views of the nature of language biased by our literate culture?

This question is about the views of linguists, whose view of language is clearly likely to be influenced by the view prevalent in their society. We found a number of respects in which the dominant influence of writing has seriously distorted linguists' perceptions of language, in spite of our allegiance to the principle of giving priority to speech:

- a. We underestimate the amount of diversity in language because standardised writing is relatively uniform (STUBBS).
- b. The view that 'a language is a set of sentences' rests heavily on the unit 'sentence', which may well be less relevant to speech than to writing (MILROY); this question arose in question 6, but the disagreement continued here too, with references to Amerindian languages, for which the sentence is relevant (REIBEL), and to adults learning to read in Britain and the States, who do not automatically put full stops in the conventionally correct places, but have to learn to do so (BARTON).
- c. Written language is a set of permanent marks, or 'things', whereas speech is a set of events; our experience of writing tends to encourage us to see both kinds of language as consisting of 'things' rather than events or relations (FAWCETT). Interestingly, congenitally deaf people, who are often illiterate, often find it hard to believe that sign language could be written down, because sign language is so obviously a series of events (WOLL).
- d. Writing forces us to separate the linguistic from the non-linguistic,

whereas preliterate societies like the Nambiquara recognise no such distinction in their speech - e.g. they act out stories as they are telling them (LOWE); and more generally, speech is closely integrated with non-verbal behaviour.

e. Some written genres only allow structures that are highly edited and consist largely of sentences that are "complete" in the traditional sense; the self-conscious, introspective data of linguists are also often of this type, rather than like the less edited patterns of spontaneous speech (STUBBS).

f. A surprising amount of linguistic discussion is about academic formal written language (M. BLOOR), and many people (including perhaps a few linguists) believe that such language is the most typical, or perhaps even the only 'correct' kind of language (CAMERON).

g. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons why Bernstein's distinction between 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes proved so popular, and it is at least suggestive to point out the similarities between the properties (explicitness and context-independence) which both the elaborated code and written language are often supposed to have (see question 7). Possibly, then, the contrast between 'restricted' and 'elaborated' was seen as a parallel to that between speech and writing, as the latter was popularly perceived (COATES).

CONCLUSIONS

a. We reaffirmed the traditional linguists' view that speech is more typical of human language than writing is, but we noted that the relation between them is more complex than linguists have tended to assume, and we criticised the tendency for linguists' views of language in general to be unduly influenced by their experience of written language.

b. We noted that the effect of the contrast between speech and writing as such is hard to separate from the effects of a number of other parameters such as standardness; very many of the structural features which are said to characterise 'writing' are in fact associated with particular genres of writing, rather than with writing itself, and similarly for speech.

c. The structural characteristics of the least speech-like genres of writing can be very different indeed from those of the least writing-like genres of speech, and need to be kept clearly distinct in accounts of the language concerned. Some of these differences can be explained in functional terms, but some seem to be just conventional.

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Summary

The paper reports what was said in a discussion of the differences between speech and writing that took place at a meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain in 1984. We reaffirmed the stand taken traditionally by linguists on the priority of speech over writing, but noted that the relation was a lot more complex than linguists had often acknowledged, and that in general it was highly misleading to present written language simply as a derivative of spoken language. The main problem in identifying differences between speech and writing is that this contrast interacts in complicated ways with other contrasts, so it is hard to find comparable written and spoken texts that do not differ in other respects as well. It is probably misleading to assume that speech is most typically spontaneous, private, etc., and that writing is most typically planned, public, etc., since other permutations of these contrasts are common. We noted a number of structural differences between certain written and spoken genres, but we were unable to decide clearly which of them were predictable consequences of the differences between speaking/hearing and writing/reading, and which of them were just conventional. We disputed the claim that speech is less explicit than writing, and a number of other widely held views - including some which are widely held by linguists. We agreed that the view of language which is espoused by many linguists is unduly influenced by the idea that written language is basic.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the contributions of all the above to the discussion, and also for the support of those who attended the discussion but did not speak. I have tried hard to represent fairly the views that were expressed, and I have sent a copy of the preliminary version of this report to all those listed above, with a request for comments and corrections. I received such comments from nine of them (Barton, Coates, Cordiner, Deuchar, Fawcett, Johns-Lewis, Lunt, L. Milroy, Reibel and Stubbs), and have revised the report to take account of them. I have also had comments on the preliminary version from two linguists who did not participate in the meeting but expressed interest in the topic: Katherine Perera (Manchester University) and George Dillon (Maryland University). Their comments too are reflected in the final report. I feel this report represents a collective effort by a large number of distinguished scholars, and I sincerely hope that it will be useful to those both inside and outside the field of academic linguists who are interested in the things we discussed. I thank all those mentioned above for their help in producing it.

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING SCHOOL INSTRUCTION ABOUT LANGUAGE

INTRODUCTION

This document is a discussion paper commissioned by CLIE - the Committee for Linguistics in Education, a joint committee of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain and the British Association for Applied Linguistics. CLIE tries to make the findings of linguistics and applied linguistics more readily available to the world of education, in the belief that many of these findings are relevant and valuable. The present paper is about the linguistic education of our school children, in the broadest sense of "linguistic" - what children ought to know about language by the end of their school careers. The paper does not argue for the inclusion of "linguistics" as an examinable curriculum subject. That may or may not be a good idea, but it is a separate issue.

We try to show how inadequate the knowledge of language is which most school-leavers have, and how unnecessary this ignorance is. Academic linguistics has a considerable amount of more or less uncontroversial knowledge which would be easy for children to learn, and which would also be valuable for them. We leave open the questions of how this should be taught and by whom. We hope that the paper might provide general principles by which more specific proposals for syllabi and examinations could be evaluated.

1. THE NEED FOR A COHERENT LANGUAGE POLICY

1.1 The level of understanding of language among school-leavers is much lower than it should be. Even those who achieve high grades at A level are typically

ignorant about elementary matters to do with language, and are unaware of their ignorance. Instead of laying a solid foundation on which a mature understanding of language can grow, schools may even provide misinformation and prejudice which need to be removed before growth is possible. What pupils learn about language at school comes as much from the "hidden curriculum" as from formal teaching, and they also pick up many beliefs and myths about language outside school. Consequently it is essential for the "official" curriculum of schools to be carefully planned so as to counteract these sources of misunderstanding; and also for the training of future teachers to be planned with similar care. Hence the need for a coherent language policy both within each school and nationally.

1.2 A few concrete examples will help to illustrate how little school-leavers know about language. As university teachers of linguistics and applied linguistics we find that the following propositions are true of very many first-year students, even though these students have chosen to specialise in the study of language:

- a. They find it hard to distinguish between a word's pronunciation and its spelling.
- b. They are unaware that ordinary spoken language is tightly controlled by rules, believing that where speech is at variance with the written form it is simply wrong.
- c. They cannot define a single structural difference between their own language and some other language which they have learned at school.
- d. They know virtually nothing about the structure of their own language.
- e. They have very little terminology for discussing matters of style and other kinds of variation within their own language.
- f. They know very little about the history of their own

language or about its relations with other languages.

g. They know nothing about how children learn their first language or about the part that parents play in this.

We assume that our students are among those school-leavers most likely to be well informed about language, and that other school-leavers know even less.

1.3 We shall refer to the knowledge about language that most school-leavers have as "school linguistics", in contrast with academic linguistics as practised and taught in universities and colleges in this country and many others. By "academic linguistics" we mean any serious university-level research-based studies of language, and not just the particular variety often called "theoretical linguistics". There are of course theoretical disputes in academic linguistics, but beneath these there is also a substantial body of shared beliefs and assumptions significantly different from those found in school linguistics, which has been very little influenced by developments in academic linguistics. Because of these differences school linguistics is nearer to what we could call "folk linguistics" - the beliefs about language which are widespread in the population as a whole and which are transmitted independently of formal education.

1.4 The discrepancies between school linguistics and academic linguistics are not inevitable, though it is of course inevitable that schools can teach only part of academic linguistics. There are many parts of academic linguistics which are sufficiently easy for children to understand them, and there is a range of good books available for teaching at this level. A more serious problem is the shortage of teachers with the necessary experience of academic linguistics, but this problem should not be exaggerated. For well over a decade linguistics has been available as an undergraduate subject and in colleges of education, and there are now enough linguistically sophisticated teachers in schools

to justify an increasing interest from the examining boards and from publishers. In any case, the need for more training should make more resources available. It is worth pointing out that most specialist teachers of English have not themselves been able to study the language as such beyond GCE O-level. This is a situation which would not be tolerated in any other subject area, and it is particularly unacceptable in a subject as central as English.

1.5 Why does inadequate knowledge about language matter? There are a number of reasons, including the following.

a. Language is a crucial part of our environment - for instance, it provides the main link between us and the culture of our society, and linguistic differences are among the most important distinguishing characteristics of different communities - and it is the aim of a humanistic education to improve pupils' understanding of their environment.

b. Linguistic prejudices are socially harmful - for example, prejudices about accents are divisive and demoralising.

c. It is vital for our citizens to be able to communicate successfully, both in speech and in writing, and our schools accept the responsibility for improving communication skills in their pupils. It is debatable whether explicit knowledge about language leads directly to improved communication, but at least it seems clear that the teacher's task will be easier if such knowledge can be assumed in pupils.

d. In particular, it is presumably easier to learn a foreign language if one understands how language works, and correspondingly harder if the learner is misinformed about language. Similarly, it is useful to know some grammatical terminology when learning a foreign language, as many foreign-language teachers make use of such terminology.

e. The information revolution makes it essential for citizens to understand how natural language works in order to understand how best to modify it in communicating with computers.

f. It is at best a waste of school time if it is spent on providing misinformation about language.

g. The presence of native speakers of foreign languages in a class should be an important source of enrichment for teaching about language, but where there is no general understanding of the nature of language their presence can only be seen as a problem. This is too often the case with bilingual members of ethnic minority groups.

h. If the citizens of this country knew more about language then there would be a better chance of our government developing sensible national policies on such matters as the treatment of ethnic minorities and the teaching of foreign languages.

1.6 These observations are similar to those made in support of "language awareness" courses in schools, and we welcome the growth of this movement (documented in, for example, the working papers of the Language Awareness Working party of the National Congress on Language in Education, and in Eric Hawkins, Awareness of Language: an introduction CUP 1984). In particular we are pleased to note the evidence produced by some experimental teaching schemes that quite sophisticated views of parts of language can be taught to children of average ability, given imagination and insight on the part of the teacher. It is also encouraging that suitable materials are becoming available in increasing quantities.

1.7 The contribution which we hope to make in this document is to outline what we see as a reasonable minimum knowledge about language which school-leavers should have. The next section defines three criteria by which this body of knowledge can be selected, and the third section lists some items of knowledge which satisfy

these criteria.

2. SOME GENERAL CRITERIA FOR SELECTING ITEMS OF KNOWLEDGE

2.1 We assume that each item of knowledge should satisfy all of the following conditions: it should be teachable, it should be valuable, and it should be reliable. We elaborate on these principles below.

2.2 An item is teachable if it can be taught, given the obvious limitations due to pupils, teachers and resources. This criterion rules out a good deal of what goes into a university course on linguistics, on the grounds that it would be too abstract for pupils and that it is unlikely that suitable teaching materials will become available soon. As already noted, however, the success of various courses currently being taught at school level shows that a lot of potential items are not ruled out by the criterion of teachability. This is true not only of matters which are somewhat on the periphery of academic linguistics (e.g. the history of writing), but also of more central topics to do with the nature of linguistic structure (e.g. word-classes, alias parts of speech).

2.3 An item is valuable if it is important to the quality of life. In 1.5 we listed a number of problems which are due to inadequate knowledge of language, and an item can be taken as valuable if it helps to solve any of these problems, from the most "practical" (e.g. improving language-learning) to the most "academic" (improving the pupil's understanding of his or her environment). This criterion rules out any item which has no consequences for the pupil. One example of such an item would be an analysis of some exotic language without a discussion of the similarities and differences between that language and some language already known to the pupil, and without any generalisation to "language" as a whole. Another example would be an abstract outline of some theory of language structure without a good deal of discussion of its implications for the structure of particular

sentences. Presumably virtually any item could be made valuable by an imaginative and knowledgeable teacher, but some items have more obvious consequences than others.

2.4 An item is reliable if it is compatible with the findings of academic linguistics (bearing in mind the broad definition which we gave to this term in 1.3). It is true that there is always a danger of putting too much faith in the experts, because they may be marching collectively up the garden path and folk linguistics could turn out to be right after all. However, this problem is faced in every area of life, and it is much more likely that the professionals are right. A more serious problem is that professional opinion is divided on a variety of issues in linguistics, so we feel it is safest to exclude such issues from our list of items. Even so we are left with a good number of areas of agreement among linguists, which include those documented in Richard Hudson, "Some issues on which linguists can agree", *Journal of Linguistics* 17, 1981. The items listed in the next section satisfy this criterion as well as the other two.

3. MINIMUM KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

3.1 The following paragraphs define five general types of knowledge about language, without picking out a list of particular instances of each type as specially worthy of teaching. For example our first type is defined as "some analytical categories", but we do not say which particular categories should be known. We have a number of reasons for leaving this choice open:

a. The number of possible categories is vast, even when we apply our three criteria, so we cannot expect a "complete" knowledge.

b. Any category is as good as any other when we consider one of the main purposes of learning categories, which is to illustrate the rule-governed nature of language and to understand how categories are defined by the rules which

refer to them.

c. Once a small number of categories are known, other categories can be added on more easily than if none were known, as the basic principles will have been learned; but again it probably matters very little which categories are learned first.

d. The needs of different pupils in later life will be different (for example, they may apply the categories in learning foreign languages or in improving their ability to communicate in their first language), and different needs will point to different sets of categories.

e. Teachers, schools and examining bodies will wish to make their own choice of categories in the light of their particular circumstances, and we would not wish to restrict their choice in any way.

3.2 Even if each pupil knew only one thing under each of these headings, this would constitute a great improvement on the present situation, but we hope that many pupils would learn a great deal more than this.

3.3 Some analytical categories. These should not be restricted to the level of grammar, but should also include categories relevant to pronunciation and to meaning. Within grammar some obvious examples would be the parts of speech; categories used in the analysis of person, number and tense among inflections; morphological categories like "suffix" and "compound"; and categories for defining relations among words or word-groups (e.g. "modifier" and "subject"). For pronunciation the basic categories are probably "consonant", "vowel" and "syllable", but intonation could also be studied with the aid of simple categories like "rise" and "pause", and sounds could be further classified for e.g. length, stress and voicing. Semantic categories include the traditional ones like "synonym" and "command", but linguistics offers a wide range of others which could be taught, such as "restrictive", "deictic" and "presupposed".

3.4 Pupils would benefit from learning analytical categories in the following ways:

a. Some of these categories have been part of the terminology of linguistics for thousands of years, and are now well established in books such as dictionaries and grammar books; such books will be inaccessible to school leavers if they do not understand the terminology. Moreover, many foreign-language teachers make use of such terms, so it is important for pupils to understand them properly.

b. Analytical categories make it possible to study the grammar of a pupil's own language, as recommended in 4 below.

c. They are also useful tools in any discussion of texts, such as would take place in a course on communication.

3.5 We recommend that the emphasis should be on understanding the categories themselves rather than on the terms used for naming them. However, where terms are well established in non-technical publications (such as grammars and dictionaries for the lay-man), such terms should be taught in preference to spuriously "simple" terms like "doing word".

3.6 Some rules. (By rules we mean here general statements about particular varieties of language, including rules about what is possible in particular non-standard varieties of English.) Analytical categories should be introduced in relation to rules which refer to them, and which in so doing define them. Thus rules will be needed in relation to all the levels of language mentioned above (pronunciation and meaning as well as grammar), but they could also be developed in relation to spelling, and in relation to language use (e.g. the rules for choosing between surnames and first names when addressing people, or the rules for choosing between standard and non-standard English). We recommend that some rules should be developed with reference to the

pupils' own ordinary language, though we recognise the possible value of explicit rules in the teaching of both written standard English and foreign languages.

3.7 Linguistic rules are important for various reasons.

a. If the pupils work out the rules for themselves, they learn important fundamental principles of science (relating to the formulation and testing of hypotheses, the need for sensitive treatment of data, and so on).

b. By learning the connection between categories and rules they will learn the difference between scientific explanations and taxonomy, and will develop a less dogmatic and sterile attitude to grammatical terminology than is commonly found among educated people at present.

c. When pupils explore their own ordinary speech and work out rules which govern it, they will find out for themselves that it is rule-governed, and interesting. This discovery will be valuable as an exercise in self-knowledge, but also as an antidote to the prevailing view in folk linguistics that only standard written English and foreign languages are governed by rules. This view leads to particularly low self-respect among non-standard speakers, which is socially divisive and demoralising.

3.8 Some major structural peculiarities of English. This type of item would be an application of the knowledge of rules recommended in 3.6. It would require a comparison between English and at least one other language which would pinpoint differences between them, but once such differences have been identified other languages could be brought into the comparison, and pupils would thereby learn some of the ways in which languages may be expected to differ. Examples of suitable areas for comparison would be word-order, the relative importance of inflections, the types of syllable structure permitted, whether particular semantic contrasts are optional or obligatory, and writing-systems.

3.9 Such an introduction to linguistic typology would bring various benefits:

a. It would be useful preparation for learning a foreign language, whether at school or in later life.

b. It would reduce ethnocentricity among monolingual English speakers.

c. It would raise the social status of pupils who could speak other languages, including members of ethnic minorities, since they could be used as "experts" on their languages; and the explicit consideration of these languages would raise the social status of the languages themselves.

3.10 Some facts about languages of the world. Pupils should know roughly how many languages there are (far more than the figure most people guess at), and roughly how they are distributed throughout the world - e.g. that there is no language called "African", and that a very high proportion of the world's population is multi-lingual.

3.11 The benefits of this kind of knowledge include the following:

a. More knowledge about the linguistic background of ethnic minorities can only improve the attitudes of the majority community, and the self-respect of the minorities.

b. This kind of knowledge could provide a link between different school subjects, notably between the language-based subjects and geography and history.

c. It could be helpful to pupils who are likely to travel abroad for work or pleasure in later life.

3.12 Some structural differences between standard and non-standard English, and between written and spoken English. This type of knowledge would be another

extension of the knowledge of rules recommended in 3.6.

3.13 The advantages of this type of knowledge include the following:

a. It should improve the linguistic self-respect of English-speaking pupils by setting their own ordinary language on the same level as standard written English.

b. In so doing it is likely to make them more willing to learn written standard English, because it will no longer be seen as a threat to their own language (as it too often is at present).

c. It should also improve their understanding of the rules of the written standard, since the latter would have to be made explicit.

d. In comparing written standard English with their own speech, they will discover not only differences but also similarities, which again should help them in learning the former.

3.14 We should like to emphasise in conclusion that we are not recommending a "back to basics" return to the grammar teaching practised in the past. The main characteristics of our recommendations which we should like to stress in this connection are:

a. We recommend a descriptive approach, not a prescriptive one.

b. We recommend a much more wide-ranging syllabus, including pronunciation and semantics as well as grammar, applied to different varieties of language, and with attention paid to use as well as structure.

c. We recommend teaching which reflects developments in academic linguistics.

d. We recommend teaching which is matched to pupils' needs and interests.

LANGUAGE AND SEXISM

Jennifer Coates

Language and sexism is a vast subject and this paper cannot begin to do it justice. A session on language and sexism was held at the meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain in September 1984 because of growing interest in the subject and because we wanted to encourage this interest and to increase our knowledge of it. We felt it was important to bring linguists together to discuss research findings and their implications in the area of language and sexism; this paper constitutes a report of that discussion.

Over fifty linguists attended the meeting, but, although some general discussion took place, the session was dominated by the responses of a panel of experts to an agenda of questions. Each question was discussed primarily by just one member of the panel, which consisted of: Deborah CAMERON (questions 1, 3, 7, 8, 11), Jenny CHESHIRE (questions 4, 5, 10) Jennifer COATES (questions 6, 7) and Joan SWANN (questions 2, 9). (Other speakers' names are given in the text after their contributions.) Deborah Cameron has written a book on feminism and linguistic theory and publishes in both fields. Jenny Cheshire is well known for her work on the speech of adolescents in Reading; this work involved her in an analysis of sex differences in syntax and morphology. Jennifer Coates has taught a course on language and sex since 1977 and has just completed a book on the subject. Joan Swann works for the School of Education at the Open University where one of her interests is sexism in language; she is writing a book on the subject in collaboration with her colleague David Graddol. The panel was chosen to provide a range of expertise, to help us to tackle the various aspects of the topic.

The selected bibliography at the end of the paper shows the wide range of work being carried out in this area. This report, unlike previous ones, will make

detailed reference to the research literature. The panel, as well as expressing their own views, were presenting a summary of research findings in this area; we feel it is important that we provide accurate references to the research and other relevant writing. We are aware that the session had at least one failing: our discussion dealt almost exclusively with English, as very little is known about sexism in other languages. It seems very likely, though, that our general comments will be valid for most languages, since gender is an important social construct in all known cultures.

QUESTION 1. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SEXISM IN LANGUAGE?

'Sexism' is a manifestation in attitudes, beliefs and practices of the systematic inequalities that exist in our society between women and men. It is (unjust) discrimination against one sex relative to the other. When feminists speak of sexism in language, they raise the question of what part language plays in creating, maintaining and justifying these inequalities. The three main areas of concern are as follows:

- (a) sex difference in language use. What are the social and political implications (if any) of differences in language use between women and men?
- (b) sexism in the system. Does the linguistic system reflect our characteristic beliefs about the nature and relative importance of the two sexes? (Interest here has focused on politically significant registers like formal written language, insult terms and semantic fields such as sexuality; the possibility is often envisaged of deliberate reform.)
- (c) 'alienation from language'. Can the language as presently constituted adequately express the experience of women? There are two positions which claim it cannot: the Whorfian position of Dale Spender (1980) (i.e. men create language in the image of their experience; language determines thought/reality; women therefore have to see things from a male viewpoint); and the

post-structural position whose linguistic theory is drawn from Saussure/Jakobson and reinterpreted through Lacan's psychoanalytic theory (i.e. human subjectivity is produced by "entering the Symbolic Order", that is, learning language, and because of the importance of the phallus as a signifier, the process is different for female and male subjects). Even if neither position is accepted, the question of determinism is still real, that is, we are entitled to ask what social and psychological effects sexism in language might have on speakers both female and male.

QUESTION 2. IN WHAT WAYS ARE LANGUAGES SEXIST?

By looking at the ways sexism manifests itself generally, we can see what linguistic counterparts there are.

- (a) Sexual divisions in society. Gender is an important social division - it affects the treatment an individual receives from babyhood onwards and is a central organising principle of society. You would expect the lexicon to carve up the world in a way which reflected important social divisions, and this is the case for English and gender. Examples are: girl/boy, woman/man, sister/brother, spinster/bachelor, barman/barmaid, etc. There is of course no logical reason why this particular distinction should be made. However, distinguishing things in this way does not seem to be sexist, but it opens the way to some of the examples of sexism in (b) and (c) below.

- (b) The male as norm; woman as the hidden sex. This refers to the absence of women in history, in literature, in science, etc. (teachers are now aware that this is a serious problem in many school text books). Related to this is the argument that male experience is regarded as the norm - for example, research may be carried out using male subjects and the results generalised to the population as a whole. The linguistic counterpart of this is that women, and women's experiences, are linguistically hidden. Here are three examples:

i. GENERIC MASCULINE FORMS. Chiefly he, and man on its own or in compounds. (Note claims that such usage has been reinforced by male authorities such as grammarians.) Research shows that "generic" forms aren't interpreted as generic - see Question 3(c).

ii. FORMAL MARKING. The feminine form tends to be derived from the masculine by the addition of a suffix (-ess, -ette, etc.). Note also the use of woman/lady preceding nouns, e.g. lady doctor, woman cellist.

iii. LEXICAL GAPS. There are gaps in the lexical system such as no feminine equivalent of emasculate, effeminate, virile; no masculine equivalent of nymphomaniac. There are also gaps in the sense of a lack of words to refer to women's experiences - recently the rise of the women's movement has led to the coining of new words and meanings: sexism, male chauvinism, sexual harassment, sisterhood.

The last category overlaps with (c) below; not only is there an absence of words to refer to women's experiences, but also lexical gaps show what is regarded as normal or appropriate for women and men in our society.

(c) Stereotyping of women and men; trivialization or denigration of women. Stereotypes exist for both sexes. They may have some social basis but become exaggerated. They are reinforced by institutions such as the education system and by the media. The important point is that, while both sexes are stereotyped, women's role and experiences are more often than not seen as having less value. Linguistic counterparts to this include:

i. lack of parallelism between female- and male-referring terms. Terms like mother and father come to be distinguished by more than just the feature +FEMALE or +MALE. In other words, very few pairs of words are distinguished by sex alone.

ii. female-referring terms tend to have lower status (and often acquire sexual connotations). Compare master/mistress; lord/lady; manager/manageress.

iii. semantic pejoration/derogation of women. Words referring to women systematically acquire negative (often sexual) meanings through history. E.g. hussy, wench, dame, mistress, etc.

WORK ON OTHER LANGUAGES.

There has been work showing a sexist bias in languages as diverse as German (Pusch 1980), Japanese (Lee 1976) and a Lebanese dialect of Arabic (Jabbra 1980), amongst others. But while this work supports the general arguments based on English, it really only scratches the surface. It was pointed out that, even in languages without sex-based gender, such as Finnish and Hungarian, male terms can still be semantically and morphologically unmarked compared with female (CROCKER).

QUESTION 3. IS LINGUISTIC REFORM FEASIBLE OR DESIRABLE?

In terms of feasibility, it is certainly the case that speakers and writers can make serious efforts to change their usage (for practical suggestions, see Miller and Swift 1980). So-called generic he seems to be a prime candidate for reform. They appeared to be the favoured solution, though alternate use of he and she was suggested (ROSS). It was pointed out that this would lead to confusion where he and she were coreferential (HUDSON).

On what grounds is reform desirable?

(a) Avoiding offence to women. Sexist example sentences and pronouns, for instance, incense many female students and professional linguists, and also serve to keep women in their place.

(b) Symbolic identification with women's aspirations to equality. Refusal to use sexist conventions makes a

point: "every act reproduces or subverts a social institution" (Pateman).

(c) Making sure women are included. Psycholinguistic findings indicate that there is confusion about 'generic' masculines, with both women and men interpreting he and man as referring to males only (see for example Schneider & Hacker 1973; Moulton et al. 1978).

But sexism in language goes deeper than the formal surface marking of certain items, as the following extract illustrates:

The lack of vitality is exacerbated by the absence of able-bodied young adults. They have all gone off to look for work, leaving behind the old, the disabled, the women and the children. (Sunday Times)

Adult here is used as if it were masculine. Reform of our morphology will not make any impact on this kind of example (which is in fact very common). It is the social group 'women' that is marked, not the lexical item.

Similarly, reformist items like -person can be subverted by our all-pervasive ideology of female markedness: 'person' is frequently regarded as equivalent to feminine:

True justice to a steamed pudding can only be done by a true trencherman; I use the term advisedly, for I have never met a female trencherperson whose curves could expand to accomodate a second helping. (Sunday Times)

These examples call into question the idea that we can somehow invent a neutral language, and that language exists to reflect the world accurately (so that sexist pronouns are a historical aberration and reform is functionally justified, as argued by Miller and Swift 1980). If we change our usage, it is an ideological decision about representation, desirable on political and social grounds.

QUESTION 4. WHAT ARE THE FINDINGS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH IN RELATION TO SEX DIFFERENCES IN PHONOLOGY, MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX?

The findings are diverse:

(a) In societies where women and men lead fairly separate lives, with clear role delimitations, there are clear linguistic differences in their speech. For example:

Chukchi (spoken in Eastern Siberia). Phonological differences - women use /ʃ/ where men use /tʃ/ or /r/; so 'people' is /ʃaŋkʃʃɪn/ for women, and /raŋkitʃɪn/ for men.

Koasati (AmerIndian language from Louisiana). Morphological differences, for example in the verb forms used by women and men.

Other languages have different forms whose use depends not only on the sex of the speaker, but also on the sex of the addressee.

(b) In societies like ours, where differences in the lives of women and men are more subtle, differences in their language are more subtle too, and are only revealed by quantitative analyses of variation. These analyses are of two main kinds: there are those that have grouped speakers into different socioeconomic classes, and those that use criteria other than socioeconomic class for grouping speakers.

i. SURVEYS BASED ON SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS. A consistent finding that has emerged from all studies of this type is that women use a higher proportion of standard forms than men, for all social classes. This appears to be so both for phonological variables and for morphosyntactic and syntactic variables, though there are fewer analyses of the latter. A number of 'explanations' for these findings have been suggested: for example, that women are socially insecure; that

non-standard forms have covert prestige associated with masculinity. However, it seems likely that the large-scale patterns of sex differentiation that emerges from studies of this kind mask smaller-scale patterns that may be better able to explain sex differences in language.

ii. STUDIES NOT BASED ON SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS. The findings from studies that do not group speakers according to socioeconomic class are less consistent. Kemp (1981) reports on the analysis of morphosyntactic variables and of differences in the lexical marking of some grammatical categories in Montreal French: he found that older speakers showed the expected pattern of sex differentiation, with men using more of the non-standard features than women, but the speech of younger people showed no significant sex differentiation.

The results of Trudgill's (1972) self-evaluation tests suggest that a similar pattern might exist in Norwich. His analysis of covert prestige compared the evaluation of the (er) variable (as in here, ear) by younger female speakers with its evaluation by female speakers as a whole (i.e. without grouping female speakers into different socioeconomic classes). Both younger female speakers and male speakers appeared to attach covert prestige to the non-standard variant.

Studies that analyse the speech of more homogeneous social groups have produced varied results. Sent (1982) analysed the speech of a single age-group (35-47 years) in a Kaiserslautern metal factory and found no major sex differences in phonology or syntax. On the other hand, an analysis of the speech of high school students in the Transvaal did find sex differentiation, with female speakers using a higher proportion of standard phonological features than male speakers (reported in Trudgill 1983). Cheshire (1982) found that although most non-standard grammatical forms were used more often by boys, some were used more often by girls, and some showed no sex differentiation at all.

The most revealing analysis of sex differentiation in language is given in Milroy's (1980) analysis of variation in three working class areas of Belfast. Speakers' social network scores interacted with sex as follows:

In Ballymacarrett there were large sex differences, with men using more non-standard features than women. This was a traditional working class community, with the men in local employment entering into dense, multiplex social networks, and the women working outside the area, entering into different, looser social networks.

In the Clonard, on the other hand, non-standard features were used more often by women than by men, and there was a complex age by sex by area interaction. In this case the women worked in the area and had strong social network ties (particularly the young women), whereas all but two of the men whose speech was analysed were unemployed. The men's social networks were relatively loose.

In the Hammer there were few sex differences. The area was being redeveloped and the traditional patterns of community life were breaking down, so that social network ties were loose for all speakers.

If we accept that social networks act as norm-enforcing mechanisms, then this gives considerable insight into sex differentiation in language. The social networks of speakers of Chukchi and Kosati, for example, will presumably tend to be dense and multiplex for both sexes, but different. In a related way, it is possible that many older speakers in western societies belong to different social networks, depending on their sex, whereas younger speakers tend to mix more freely.

The main point to emerge from sociolinguistic analyses of sex differentiation, though, is that it is unrealistic to attempt a simplistic explanation of the

findings. Where sex differentiation in language exists, it interacts in a complex way with other kinds of social differentiation.

QUESTION 5. DO THE RESULTS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDIES OF WORKING CLASS SPEECH SUGGEST THAT SOME LINGUISTIC FEATURES HAVE DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS FOR MEN AND WOMEN?

The answer to this question is yes: working class speakers use their language to symbolise their loyalty to the local community, and adolescents in particular make use of this social function of non-standard speech. Some studies have found that the two sexes choose different linguistic features to fulfill this function. For example:

(a) Silva-Corvalan (1981) found that postverbal clitic pronouns in the Spanish spoken by her informants in Santiago were used very much more frequently by adolescent boys than by any other group of speakers, whereas adolescent girls used them relatively infrequently.

(b) Cheshire (1982) found that some non-standard grammatical features appeared to signal adherence to the adolescent subculture for boys but not for girls, others for girls but not for boys, and still others for both boys and girls.

It is possible that during adolescence speakers choose to signal sex differences through their language as well as in other ways, and that after adolescence they no longer use language in this way. However Milroy (1980) found that adults used language in this way too. The Belfast (a) and (th) variables, for example, correlated closely with network scores for women but less closely for men; whereas the Belfast () variable shows the reverse pattern. This suggests that male and female speakers choose different linguistic features to show their loyalty to the local community.

Although the findings of sociolinguistic studies do suggest that male and female speakers use language differently, no explanation for these findings has so far been suggested. Such linguistic differences may seem innocuous, but they are evaluated quite distinctly by speakers (Lodge).

QUESTION 6. IN WHAT WAYS DOES MALE/FEMALE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE DIFFER?

Quite a lot of work has been done in this area, but it is scattered and of varying merit. Work on communicative competence often directly challenges cultural beliefs, for example, on the question of whether women talk more than men. Some of the research findings are summarised below.

(a) INTERRUPTIONS AND CONTROL OF TOPICS. Zimmerman and West (1975) analysed the turn-taking patterns occurring in 31 conversations - 10 between two men, 10 between two women, and 11 involving a man and a woman. They found that interruption and overlaps were evenly distributed between speakers in same-sex pairs, but in mixed pairs interruptions were much more frequent and were nearly all cases of the man interrupting the woman (46:2). It was noted that interruptions often produced silences on the part of the other speaker. In the same-sex pairs the average silence lasted 1.35 seconds, whereas in the mixed pairs, it lasted 3.21 seconds. Silence is a symptom of malfunction in conversation. Zimmerman and West concluded that in mixed pairs, men infringe women's right to speak, specifically their right to finish a turn, and this results in silence on the part of the woman.

Leet-Pellegrini (1980) carried out a similar analysis to explore the notion of conversational DOMINANCE: she established that speakers who were both male and had expertise (i.e. were knowledgeable about the topic under discussion) dominated in conversation - they talked more and infringed the other speaker's turn more.

(b) MINIMAL RESPONSES. Minimal responses, such as aha,

yeah, function in conversation to indicate the listener's active attention. Both Zimmerman and West and Leet-Pellegrini found that women use more than men, and at appropriate moments (men sometimes use delayed minimal responses to signal lack of support for the speaker's topic). This finding is supported by many other researchers, e.g. Strodtbeck and Mann (1956), Fishman (1980).

(c) VERBOSITY. It is a folklinguistic belief that women talk more than men. Research findings consistently contradict this - men have been shown to talk more than women in settings as diverse as staff meetings, television panel discussions, experimental pairs and husband-and-wife pairs in spontaneous conversation. Swacker (1975) got male and female subjects to describe three pictures - men took on average 13 minutes per picture, compared with women who took 3.17 minutes. (This actually underestimates the amount of time taken by men, since some of the male subjects were still talking when the tape ran out!)

(d) USE OF QUESTIONS. Fishman (1980) taped the daily conversations of three couples. During the 12.5 hours of conversation she transcribed, a total of 370 questions was asked, of which women asked 263. Brouwer et al (1979) taped people buying a ticket at Central Station in Amsterdam; their results support Fishman's: women asked more questions than men, especially when addressing a male ticket seller.

(e) COMMANDS/DIRECTIVES. Goodwin (1980) observed the group play of girls and boys in a Philadelphia street, and found that boys used different sorts of directives from girls (she defined a directive as a speech act which tries to get someone to do something). The boys used explicit commands: Gimme the pliers, Get off my steps, whereas the girls used Let's: Let's use these first, Let's ask her. Girls also used the modals can and could as a way of suggesting action: We could go around looking for more bottles. Hey maybe tomorrow we can come up here and see if they got some more. Goodwin demonstrates that

in same-sex interaction boys and girls use quite different linguistic means to express directives. But she points out that girls can use more forceful directives (for example in cross-sex arguments). She argues that differential usage is derived from different social organisation - the boys belong to a hierarchically organised group, with leaders using commands to demonstrate control; the girls belong to a non-hierarchical group, with all girls participating equally in decision-making.

Engle (1980) studied the language used by parents playing with their children, and concluded that parents are providing different models for their children, depending on their sex. Fathers tended to give directions to children: Take it off, Why don't you make a chimney?; mothers were more likely to consult the children's wishes: Do you want to look at any of the other toys over here?, What else shall we put on the truck?

(f) SWEARING AND TABOO LANGUAGE. It is a folklinguistic belief that men swear more than women. There is very little hard evidence on the subject; most linguistic work seems content to reflect folklinguistic beliefs. Jespersen (1922) claims that women have an "instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and a preference for refined and (in certain spheres) veiled or indirect expressions." Lakoff (1975) claims that men use stronger expletives than women. Labov (1971) argues that "In middle-class groups, women generally show much less familiarity with and much less tolerance for non-standard grammar and taboo". None of these linguists present any evidence to support their claims. The evidence there is inconclusive. Cheshire (1982) selects swearing as one of the measures to be included in her Vernacular Culture Index since "this was a major symbol of vernacular identity for both boys and girls". However, we have no comparative data. Gomm's (1981) study of conversation showed that men in all-male groups swear more than women in all-female groups and more than men or women in mixed groups. Women certainly have a reason for avoiding taboo language as much of it (i) puts women down, and (ii)

links male sexual activity with violence done to an object (CROCKER).

(g) WOMEN TALKING TO WOMEN. It is only recently that women's talk has been treated as serious linguistic data. Pulling together many of the features discussed above, Jones' (1980) work on the language used by women talking to women suggests an interesting global difference between men and women - she argues that women use a cooperative style in conversation, where men use a competitive style. Men tend to argue, to try to overturn each others' points; women tend to acknowledge and build on each others' contributions. Kalcik's (1975) work on the linguistic strategies used in women's consciousness-raising groups came to the same conclusion. If men and women are pursuing these different conversational strategies, then it is not surprising that women are at a disadvantage in mixed conversations. Both modes have their advantages: the ideal (androgynous) speaker would be competent in both the male/competitive mode and the female/cooperative mode.

The evidence suggests that women and men do adopt different interactive styles. In mixed-sex conversations men tend to interrupt women; they use this strategy to control topics of conversation and their interruptions tend to induce silence in women. Women make greater use of minimal responses to indicate support for the speaker, and ask more questions, while men talk more, swear more and use imperative forms to get things done. Women use more linguistic forms associated with politeness. These clusters of linguistic characteristics are sometimes termed "men's style" and "women's style". This terminology is disputed by O'Barr and Atkins (1980), who claim that the linguistic features found in the speech of many women are typical of people of low status in society, both women and men, and should more accurately be called "powerless language". This is clearly an area which merits more research.

QUESTION 7. HOW HAVE FOLKLINGUISTIC BELIEFS AFFECTED THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE?

Clearly linguists are affected by socio-cultural myths: as the discussion of swearing and taboo language shows, linguists like Jespersen and Labov make statements about women's use of language which seem to owe more to folklinguistic belief than to hard evidence. This has led to contradictory findings at different points in history. For example, in the 18th century when the goal was to "fix" the language and eliminate change, women were blamed for introducing new words into the lexicon. In the 20th century, on the other hand, Jespersen asserts that it is men rather than women who introduce "new and fresh expressions" into the language, and thus men who are "the chief renovators of language" (Jespersen 1922:247). A second example comes from traditional dialectology: in many parts of Europe (e.g. France, Italy, Switzerland, Romania) women were considered to be more conservative in their speech and were therefore favoured as informants; other dialectologists, often in the same areas but with different prejudices, considered men to be more conservative. These beliefs in supposed differences between men's and women's speech affected both their methodology and their results. Such apparent contradictions and inconsistencies can be accounted for by assuming a general rule, The Androcentric Rule: "Men will be seen to behave linguistically in a way that fits the writer's view of what is desirable or admirable; women on the other hand will be blamed for any linguistic state or development which is regarded by the writer as negative or reprehensible".

How far have linguists in the second half of the 20th century succeeded in resisting this rule? The answer seems to be, not as far as they imagine! It is noticeable for instance that where the vernacular is highly valued (as in the work of Labov and others) its typical speaker is believed to be male. Women are thought to be poor at producing the "true" vernacular, an oversimplification criticised in Cameron and Coates (1984). Another area where cultural beliefs intrude is the explanation of sex-related differences. Sociolinguists have often resorted to psychological stereotypes of the crudest

kind: "women are conservative" and "women are status-conscious", for example. These generalisations are widely believed, though rigorous evidence for them is never produced. Research is needed not so much into the accuracy of such assertions, as into whether this type of psychological explanation is appropriate as an explanation of variation at the level of the group.

QUESTION 8. HAS LINGUISTICS ANYTHING CONSTRUCTIVE TO SAY ABOUT SEXISM?

No - on the contrary, linguists have quite often chosen to obfuscate the issue and discourage reforms called for by feminists. An example is the popular labelling of English feminine and masculine pronouns as "marked" and "unmarked" respectively (which implies that the asymmetry is a matter of grammar rather than sexual politics). Unless one is making universalist claims about hierarchy in gender systems, the claim of markedness reduces to one about frequency or neutrality of meaning, and the question then arises why the masculine is used more frequently: by what criteria is it semantically more neutral? The history of English seems to show the "neutrality" of the masculine was reinforced by prescriptive practices, which were themselves related to beliefs about the nature and relative importance of the sexes (Bodine 1975). While linguists need to counter inaccurate claims by writers such as Spender (1980) that prescriptivists actually introduced "generic" he (CROCKER), it was agreed that ideologically-based processes in language change are little understood; they should not be dismissed out of hand. It was suggested that linguists, psycholinguists and pragmaticists might help in exploring how the hearer chooses to interpret he, as neutral or as male (HUDSON).

QUESTION 9. WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEXISM IN LANGUAGE?

(a) IN TERMS OF THE FORMAL CURRICULUM. It was suggested that pupils/students should be taught about the areas covered in the LAGB session as part of a more general

"language awareness" programme. Language awareness is quite widely taught nowadays (or at least it is part of the rhetoric that it is taught). Teachers should be encouraged not to accept language as a neutral medium but to examine the possibility of bias, the way language reinforces social norms, etc. Discussing some aspects of sexism may have a more direct pay-off: for example, teaching about differences in women's and men's interaction styles and exploring classroom interaction may actually change the way pupils behave. Though sexism will not be eradicated by changes in linguistic usage alone, the teacher can help to create the awareness that leads to a change of attitude by discussing linguistic sexism and by giving guidance on language use (CROCKER).

(b) IN TERMS OF SCHOOL POLICY, CLASSROOM ORGANISATION, ETC. It was suggested that schools and other institutions should have a formal policy for the avoidance of sexism in all public language (speech as well as writing), in much the same way as publishing houses (e.g. McGraw Hill 1974), professional organisations (e.g. National Union of Journalists 1982, American Psychological Association 1977) and some other educational institutions (e.g. the School of Education at the Open University).

The sexist term chairman was taken as an example. "Sex-neutral" alternatives (chairperson) tend to be recommended for stylistic reasons, but, although this avoids a "generic masculine" term, a "sex-neutral" term may eventually be assumed to refer to a man if it isn't formally marked for femaleness (by the male-as-norm rule). "Sex-explicit" alternatives (chairman/chairwoman) are stylistically awkward but women's presence is always made explicit. The very stylistic hiccup may serve a useful function in making people aware of this. However, if female-referring terms tend to acquire negative meanings there would be a constant need to find new (temporarily neutral) alternatives. It was suggested that resistance to the term chairperson may be explained by the notion of agency being involved in the suffix -man, but absent from a semantic representation of -person (DEUCHAR).

Teachers should be aware of the research findings on female and male differences in interaction, and should try to investigate what happens in their lessons. A teaching aim might be something like "everyone should have the chance to speak; everyone should be required to listen". Some people have advocated single-sex classes or groupings as a way of promoting this; although this may help some girls, on its own it won't guarantee equal opportunities for everyone. However teachers organise their classrooms, they need, first, to monitor what goes on in their lessons, and second to adopt certain strategies to correct any imbalance they observe. Some obvious examples are: introducing both "male" and "female" topics, consciously calling on girls as well as boys to speak, looking at girls when addressing the class, getting girls to chair groups and to read out reports of group work. The point is, however, not to provide a definitive list of strategies but to convince teachers that such strategies are necessary - inequalities won't just correct themselves.

QUESTION 10. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF SEX DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE FOR OUR IDEAS ON THE MECHANISMS OF LINGUISTIC CHANGE?

(a) The findings from studies based on socioeconomic class that women use more of the prestige standard forms than men has been taken as suggesting that women are more likely to lead changes that are in the direction of the prestige norms. There have been a large number of studies that appear to confirm this, from Gauchat (1905) to more recent studies in New York (Labov 1966) and Norwich (Trudgill 1974). It is often assumed that it is middle-aged, middle-class women who lead changes of this kind. Conversely, it seems that working-class men may lead changes that are in the direction of non-standard vernacular norms (see Labov 1963, Trudgill 1972).

(b) Studies based on social networks have suggested that where social networks are dense and multiplex, and the patterns of social interaction are stable, language

change is unlikely to occur. Furthermore, where a particular linguistic feature functions as a symbol of loyalty to the local community for one sex but not for the other, then the sex which uses it as a symbol of loyalty will tend to be the most conservative: if there is a change, it will be led by the sex for which it has no such function. When changes are introduced into a community, it is speakers with weak network ties who are likely to be the innovators (Milroy and Milroy 1984).

It is misleading however to make generalisations about language change that are based on the sex of speakers alone. Sex differentiation interacts with other social factors, such as age, social network, education, social values and personality.

QUESTION 11. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE AND SEXISM FINDINGS FOR LINGUISTIC THEORY IN GENERAL?

It was suggested that linguistic theory should observe the following caveats:

(a) Beware of inadvertently incorporating folklinguistic beliefs and stereotypes into methods and explanations.

(b) Beware of gross demographic variables in variationist research; interactions may be important.

(c) Not forget the ideological aspects of languages or underestimate the significance of ideology in regulating usage and as a factor in linguistic change.

(d) Consider the possible links between language and conceptualisation, and the social/educational consequences of such links.

(e) Set a good example in using language that both avoids offence and also avoids conceptual confusion.

CONCLUSION

General discussion after the last two questions supported the idea that the LAGB should publish some non-sexist guidelines. Some participants felt that this would lead linguists into the sin of prescriptivism, but since this is a question of moral rather than linguistic correctness (SWANN) it would seem to be incumbent on linguists to encourage good practice and discourage sexist usage.

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SUMMARY

This paper reports what was said in a discussion on language and sexism at a meeting of the "Education linguistics" section of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain, held at Essex University in September 1984. There was general agreement that languages can be sexist, that the English language is sexist, and that linguists ought to be sensitive to linguistic sexism and should beware of folklinguistics beliefs about male/female differences. Sociolinguistic research has revealed clear differences between women and men both in formal aspects of language (phonology, morphology, syntax) and in communicative competence. How far such differences can be said to lead to disadvantage was debated: certainly, there is enough evidence to establish that girls' communicative competence leads to their receiving less attention in class. Sex differences in language also have an important role in the process of linguistic change. In conclusion, it was felt that linguistic theory ignored language and sexism findings at its peril. In particular, linguists were urged to give a lead in avoiding sexist terms and in establishing non-sexist usage.

SPEAKERS

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I am grateful to the above for their contributions to the discussion (which are shown by names in brackets after each reported item); and in particular to the panel of discussants. I would also like to thank everyone who came to the meeting, for their comments and/or support; I apologise to anyone who feels their comments have been omitted from the report - I have done my best, in the space available, to record the main points that arose. I would also like to thank Dick Hudson for typing up the report. I sent a preliminary copy of this report to those listed above with a request for comments and corrections, and have revised the report to take account of them. The fact that fewer linguists have been involved in the production of this report than the one on speech and writing (CLIE working paper 3) reflects the fact that, until very recently, linguists have neglected language and sexism. We hope this report will stimulate more interest in the area, and will enlighten and inform those both inside and outside the field of linguistics who are interested in language.