Dell Hymes (1996)
Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality:
Toward an understanding of voice

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Chapter 3

Speech and Language: On the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Speakers

> I conceive of two sorts of inequality in the human species; one, which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature and consists in the difference of ages, health, bodily strengths, and qualities of mind or soul; the other, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends upon a sort of convention and is established, or at least authorized, by the consent of men. The latter consists in the different privileges that some men enjoy to the prejudice of others, such as to be richer, more honored, more powerful than they, or even to make themselves obeyed by them.
>
> Rousseau (1964) [1756]

I use the second paragraph of Rousseau's second *Discourse* as an epigraph, and adapt its title, because I want to call attention to a link between his concerns and ours. Like him, we think knowledge of human nature essential and pursue it; like him, we think the present condition of mankind unjust, and seek to transform it. These two concerns, for example, provide the frame for Noam Chomsky's recent Russell lectures. Unlike Chomsky, but like Rousseau, moreover, some linguists are beginning to attend to a conception of linguistic structure as interdependent with social circumstances, and as subject to human needs and evolutionary adaptation. And like Rousseau, our image of the linguistic world, the standard by which we judge the present situation, harks back to an earlier stage of human society. Here Rosseau has the advantage over us. He knew he did this, and specified the limitations of it (see the end of note *h* to the *Discourse*). Many of us do it implicitly, falling back on a 'Herderian' conception of a world composed of traditional units of language-and-culture, for lack of another way of seeing the resources of language as an aspect of human groups, because we have not thought through new ways of seeing how linguistic resources do, in fact, come organized in the world. We have no accepted way of joining our understanding of inequality with our understanding of the nature of language.

Chomsky's Russell lectures (1971) are a case in point. The first lecture, 'On Interpreting the World', presents implications of a certain

conception of the nature of language and of the goals of linguistic research, leading to a humanistic, libertarian conception of man. The second lecture, 'On Changing the World', is about injustice, its roots in inequality of power, and the failure of scholars and governments to deal with the true issues in these respects.

There is little or no linguistics in the second lecture, just as there is little or nothing of social reality in the first. Such principled schizophrenia besets linguistics today; the scientific and social goals of many practitioners are compartmentalized. Edward Sapir warned years ago against such an alienation from experience and social reality on the part of 'the many kinds of segmental scientists of man' (1939, cited from Mandelbaum (1949): 578). It mirrors neither the true nature of language nor its relation to social life; it reflects, rather, a certain ideological conception of that nature and that relation, one which diverts and divorces linguistics from the contribution, desperately needed, that it might make to the understanding of language as a human problem.

The heart of the matter is this. A dominant conception of the goals of 'linguistic theory'[1] encourages one to think of language exclusively in terms of the vast potentiality of formal grammar, and to think of that potentiality exclusively in terms of its universality. A perspective which treats language only as an attribute of *man* leaves language as an attribute of *men* unintelligible. In actuality language is in large part what users have made of it. Navajo is what it is partly because it is a human language, partly because it is the language of the Navajo. The generic potentiality of the human faculty for language is realized differently, as to direction and as to degree, in different human communities, and is useless except insofar as it is so realized. The thrust of Chomskian linguistics has been to depreciate the actuality of language under the guise of rejecting an outmoded philosophy of science. We must see beyond the ideological effect of such a thrust and recognize that one cannot change a world on which one's theory permits no purchase. One of the problems to be overcome with regard to language is a widespread linguist's conception of it. A conception of how we encounter and use language in the world, a notion which I call that of *ways of speaking*, is needed.

Let me consider now four broad dimensions of language and of sources of inequality with regard to them. Throughout I shall try to indicate the place of a conception of ways of speaking. Linguistics as part of the problem will be addressed again at the end of the chapter, and as well in the chapter that follows, and in the final chapter of the book.

Some Dimensions of Language as a Human Problem

It is striking that we have no general perspective on language as a human problem, not even an integrated body of works in search of one. Salient problems, such as translation, multilingualism, literacy and language

development, have long attracted attention, but mostly as practical matters, constituting applications of linguistics, rather than as proper, theoretically pertinent parts of it. There have been notable exceptions, as in the work of Einar Haugen and Uriel Weinreich, but for about a generation most linguistic thought in the United States has seen the role of language in human life only as something to praise, not as something to question and study. Perhaps this situation reflects a phase in the alternation of 'high' and 'low' evaluations of language to which the philosopher Urban (1939: 23) called attention. The skeptical period after the First World War did see leading American theorists of language devote themselves to language problems, such as those involving new vehicles for international communication (Jespersen, Sapir), the teaching of reading (Bloomfield), literacy (Swadesh), language as an instrument and hence a shaper of thought (Sapir, Whorf), and linguistic aspects of psychiatric and other interpersonal communication (Trager, Hockett, in the early 1950s). Perhaps this issue of *Daedalus* (see Acknowledgments, p. xiii) is a sign that the climate of opinion is shifting once again toward a balanced recognition of language as 'at one and the same time helping and retarding us', as Sapir put it in one context ((1933), cited from Mandelbaum, 1949:11).

In any case, it is unusual today to think of language as something to overcome, yet four broad dimensions of language can usefully be considered in just that way: *diversity* of language, *medium* of language (spoken, written), *structure* of language, and *functioning* of language. Of each we can ask,

- when, where, and how it came to be seen as a problem;
- from what vantage point it is seen as a problem (in relation to other vantage points from which it may not be so seen);
- in what ways the problem has been approached or overcome as a practical task and also as an intellectual, conceptual task;
- what its consequences for the study of language itself have been;
- what kinds of study, to which linguists might contribute, are now needed.

I cannot do more than raise such questions; limitations of knowledge would prevent my doing more, if limitations of space did not. To raise such questions may help, I hope, to stimulate development of a general perspective.

Overcoming Diversity of Language

This problem may be the most familiar, and the historical solutions to it form an important part of the subject matter of linguistics itself: lingua francas, koines, pidgins and creoles, standardized languages, diffusion and areal as in India convergence, multilingual repertoires, and constructed auxiliary

languages. The myths and lexicons of many cultures show a widespread and presumably ancient recognition of diversity of language, although not uniformly in the mold of the Tower of Babel. The Busama of New Guinea and the Quileute of the State of Washington believed that originally each person had a separate language, and that community of language was a subsequent development created by a culture hero or transformer. Thus it is an interesting question whether it is unity or diversity, within or between speech communities, that has seemed the thing requiring an explanation.

In Western civilization the dominant intellectual response to the existence of diversity has been to seek an original unity, either of historical or of psychological origin (sometimes of both). The dominant practical response has been to impose unity in the form of the hegemony of one language or standard. The presence of the Tower of Babel story in the civilization's sacred book legitimated, and perhaps stimulated, efforts to relate languages in terms of an original unity and played a great part in the development of linguistic research. Indeed, some rather sophisticated work and criticism on the subject can be found from the Renaissance onward. The dating of the origin of linguistic science with the comparative–historical work of the early nineteenth century reflects institutionalization as much as or more than intellectual originality (Diderichsen, 1974; Metcalf, 1974). Christian and humanitarian concern to establish the monogenesis of man through the monogenesis of language was felt strongly well through the nineteenth century, from the dominance of the 'ethnological question' in the first part through controversies involving Max Müller, Darwin, Broca, and others (discussed in Hymes, 1971a). The special interest of Europeans in Indo-European origins became increasingly important in the century, the idea of a common linguistic origin stimulating and legitimating studies of common cultural origins and developments. Humanitarian motives played a part as well – Matthew Arnold appealed to Indo-European brotherhood as a reason for the English to respect Celtic (Irish) culture and perhaps the Irish, and Sir Henry Maine made a similar appeal on behalf of the peoples of India. Sheer intellectual curiosity and satisfaction must also always be assigned a part in motivating work in comparative–historical linguistics, and humanistic concern probably played a part in a major contemporary effort to establish a common historical origin for all languages, that of the late Morris Ṣwadesh (1971). (For other aspects of the history of linguistic anthropology see Hymes, 1983a).

The most salient effort toward a conceptual unity of human languages today is linked, of course, with the views of Noam Chomsky. Concern for such a unity is itself old and continuous – the appearance of disinterest among part of a generation of US linguists before and after the Second World War was a local aberration whose importance is primarily due to Chomsky's reaction against it. He has reached back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for an ancestral tradition (1966), when he had only to take up the tradition in this country of Boas and Sapir, or the European tradition, partially

transplanted to this country, of Trubetzkoy and Jakobson. In both of these traditions some significant things were being said about universals of language in the 1930s and early 1940s. It is true, however, that the history of the tradition of general linguistics stretching back through the nineteenth century (and, Jakobson would argue, continuing through the Enlightenment to origins in medieval speculative grammar), had been lost from sight in American linguistics, and a sense of it is only now being recovered. It is true, too, that the tradition since Herder and von Humboldt did not much appeal to Chomsky, since its universalism is combined with an intense interest in typology, understood as characterizing the configurations of specific languages as well as characterizing general features of language.

Here we touch on the inescapable limitation of either kind of effort to conceive the unity of human language. Although one used to speak of the discovery of a genetic relationship as *reducing* the number of linguistic groups, the word and the thought were both badly misleading. Languages may disappear through the destruction of their speakers, but not through the publication of linguistic papers and maps. Related languages remain to be accounted for as to their differences and developments as well as to the portion (often quite small) of their makeup that shows a common origin. Likewise, the discovery of putative universals in linguistic structure does not erase the differences. Indeed, the more one emphasizes universals, in association with a powerful, self-developing faculty of language, the more mysterious actual languages become. Why are there more than one, or two or three? And if the internal faculty of language is so constraining, must not social, historical, adaptive forces have been even *more* constraining, in order to produce the plenitude of languages actually found? For Chinookan is not Sahaptin is not Klamath is not Takelma is not Coos is not Siuslaw is not Tsimshian is not Wintu is not Maidu is not Miwok is not Yokuts is not Costanoan. . .(is not Tonkawa, is not Zuni, is not Mixe, is not Zoque, is not any of the numerous Mayan languages, or affiliates of Mayan, if one extends the horizon). The differences do not disappear, and the likenesses, indeed, are far from all Chomskian universals. Some likenesses exist because of a genetic common origin (Penutian), some because of areal adaptations (Northwest Coast for some, California for others), some because of diffusion, some because of limited possibilities and implications (à la Greenberg's typology). Franz Boas once argued (1920) against exclusive concentration on genetic classification, calling the true historical problem the development of languages in all their aspects. A similar point can be made today as against concentration on putative universals. Most of language begins where universals leave off. In the tradition from Herder and von Humboldt through Boas and Sapir, languages are 'concrete universals', and most of language as a human problem is bound up with the adjective of that term.

As modes of overcoming diversity of language intellectually, both genetic classification and putative universals locate their solutions in time. There is a past reference, a historical origin of languages or an evolutionary origin of

the faculty of language, and there is a present and future reference, one which draws the moral of the unity that is found. Neither speaks to the present and future in terms of processes actually shaping the place of language in human life, for the faculty of language presumably is a constant and genetic diversification of languages is mostly a thing of the past. For the present and foreseeable future the major process is the adaptation of languages and varieties to one another, and their integration into special roles and complex speech communities. Understanding this process is the true problem that diversity of language poses, both to humankind and to those who study humankind's languages.

The essence of the problem appears as communication, intelligibility. Some are concerned with the problem at the level of the world as a whole, and efforts to choose or shape a world language continue.[2] Some project this concern on to the past, speaking of a 'stubborn mystery' in the ' "profoundly startling", "anti-economic" multiplicity of languages spoken on this crowded planet' (Steiner, 1971:70). Such a view is anachronistic, for the diversity was not 'anti-economic' when it came into being; it was just as much a 'naturally selected, maximalized efficiency of adjustment to local need and ecology' as the great variety of fauna and flora to which Steiner refers in the passage just quoted. Universal processes of change inherent in language, its transmission and use, together with separation and separate adaptation of communities over the course of many centuries, suffice to explain the diversity. Simply the accumulation of unshared changes would in time make the languages of separate groups mutually unintelligible. There is of course more to it than physical and temporal distance (as Steiner insightfully suggests); there is social distance as well. Boundaries are deliberately created and maintained, as well as given by default. Some aspects of the structures of languages are likely due to this. If the surface form of a means of communication is simplified greatly when there is need to overcome barriers, as it is in the formation of pidgin languages, then the surface form of means of communication may be complicated when there is a desire to raise or maintain barriers (Hymes, 1971b: 73). This latter process may have something to do with the fact that the surface structures of languages spoken in small, cheek-by-jowl communities so often are markedly complex, and the surface structures of languages spoken over wide ranges less so. (The observation would seem to apply at least to North American Indian languages and Oceania).

Speech Communities

In any case, the problem is one of more than languages. It is one of speech communities. Here the inadequacy of concepts and methods is most painfully apparent. The great triumph of linguistic science in the nineteenth century, the comparative–historical method, deals with speech communities

as the source and result of genetic diversification. The great triumph of linguistic science in the twentieth century, structural method, deals with speech communities as equivalent to language.[3] Genetic diversification can seldom be said to occur any longer, and a speech community comprising a single language hardly exists. The study of complex speech communities must benefit mightily from the tools and results both of historical linguistics, for the unraveling and interpretation of change, and of structural linguistics, for the explicit analysis of linguistic form. But it cannot simply apply them, it must extend them and develop new tools.

The needs can be expressed in terms of what is between speech communities and what is within them. Despite their well-known differences as to psychology, both Bloomfield and Chomsky reduce the concept of speech community to that of a language (Bloomfield, 1933, Ch. 3; Chomsky, 1965: 3). This will not do. The boundaries between speech communities are thought of first of all as boundaries of communication, but communication, or mutual intelligibility as it is often phrased, is not solely a function of a certain objective degree of difference between two languages or some series of related languages. One and the same degree of objective linguistic differentiation may be taken to demarcate boundaries in one case, and be depreciated in another, depending on the social and political circumstances.[4] And intelligibility itself is a function not only of features of linguistic form (phonological, lexical, syntactic), but also of norms of interaction and conduct in conversation, and of attitudes towards differences in all these respects. In Nigeria one linguist found that as soon as members of a certain community recognized a related hinterland dialect, they refused to understand it (Wolff, 1959). Other communities are noted for the effort they make to understand despite great difference.

Such considerations cut across language boundaries. One may be at a loss to understand fellow speakers of his own language if his assumptions as to appropriate topics, what follows what, and the functions of speech are different (as happens often enough in classrooms between teachers of one background and students of another), while many of us have had the experience of following a discussion in a language of which we have little grasp, when the topics, technical terminology, and norms of conduct are professionally shared.

To repeat, communication cannot be equated with a *common* language. A term such as *the English language* comprises all linguistic varieties that owe their basic resources to the historical tradition known as English. That language is no longer an exclusive possession of the English, or even of the English and the Americans – there are perhaps more users of English in the Third World (just as there are more Christians), and they have their own rights to its resources and future. Many varieties of 'English' are not mutually intelligible within Great Britain and the United States as well as elsewhere. In fact, it is an important clarification if we can agree to restrict the term *language* (and the term *dialect*) to just this sort of meaning: identification of a

historically derived set of resources whose social functioning – organization into used varieties, mutual intelligibility etc. – is not given by the fact of historical derivation itself, but is problematic, needing to be determined, and calling for other concepts and terms.

We are in poorly explored territory here. Even with consideration restricted to groups which can communicate, there is a gamut from 'I can make myself understood' at one end, to 'she talks the same language' at the other. Probably it is best to employ terms such as *field* and *network* for the larger spheres within which a person operates communicatively. One's *language field* would be the sphere within which one has knowledge (or command) of languages as such; one's *speech field* would be the sphere within which one has knowledge (or command) of patterns of use (implicating competence in speaking, hearing, writing, reading); one's *network* would be the sphere of relationships in which the two kinds of knowledge (or command) are joined. The term *community* is best reserved for units with some degree of self-reproduction and support.

Clearly the boundary (and the internal organization) of a speech community is not a question solely of degree of interaction among persons (as Bloomfield said, and others have continued to say), but a question equally of attributed and achieved membership, of identity and identification. If interaction were enough, school children would speak the TV and teacher English they constantly hear. Some indeed can so speak, but do not necessarily choose to do so. Some years ago I was asked by teachers then at Columbia Point (Boston) why the children in the school did not show the influence of TV, or, more pointedly, of daily exposure to the talk of the teachers. A mother present made a telling observation: she had indeed heard children talk that way, but on the playground, playing school. When playing school stopped, that way of talking stopped, too.

Community, in this sense, is a dynamic, complex, and sometimes subtle thing. There are latent or obsolescent speech communities on some Indian reservations in this country, brought into being principally by the visit of a linguist or anthropologist who also can use the language and shows respect for uses to which it can be put. There are emergent communities, such as New York City would appear to be, in the sense that they share norms for the evaluation of certain variables (such as post-vocalic *r*), that have developed in this century. There are other communities whose stigmata are variable and signs of severe insecurity, like those of New York, or the community of *porteños* in Buenos Aires, composed principally of immigrants concerned to maintain their distance and prestige *vis-à-vis* speakers from the provinces (who, ironically enough, have lived in the country much longer). There can be multiple membership, and there is much scope for false perception; authorities, both governmental and educational, are often ignorant of the existence of varieties of language and communication under their noses. An unsuspected variety of creolized English was discovered recently on an island off Australia by the chance of a tape recorder being left on in a room where two children

were playing. When the linguist heard the tape and could not understand it, he came to realize what it was. That such a language was known by the children was entirely unknown to the school. Indians who have been beaten as children for using their Indian tongue or blacks who have been shamed for using deep Creole will not necessarily trot the language out for an idle enquirer.

In general, when we recognize that this diversity of speech communities involves social as well as linguistic realities, we must face the fact that there are different vantage points from which diversity may be viewed. One person's obstacle may be someone else's source of identity. In the United States and Canada today one can find Indians seeking to learn the Indian language they did not acquire as children. Leveling of language seems neither inevitable nor desirable in the world today. It is common to mock efforts at preservation and revitalization of languages as outmoded romanticism, but the mockery may express a view of human nature and human needs whose shallowness bodes ill.

What is within a speech community in linguistic terms has begun to be understood better through recent work in sociolinguistics. Empirical and theoretical work has begun to provide a way of seeing the subject steadily as a whole. It suggests that one think of a community (or any group, or person) in terms, not of a single language, but of a *repertoire*. A repertoire comprises a set of ways of speaking. Ways of speaking, in turn, comprise *speech styles*, on the one hand, and *contexts of discourse*, on the other, together with *relations of appropriateness* obtaining between styles and contexts.

Membership in a speech community consists in sharing one or more of its ways of speaking – that is, not in knowledge of a speech style (or any other purely linguistic entity, such as a language) alone, but in terms of knowledge of appropriate use as well. There are rules of use without which rules of syntax are useless. Moreover, the linguistic features that enter into speech styles are not only the 'referentially-based' features usually dealt with in linguistics today, but also the 'stylistic' features that are complementary to them, and inseparable from them in communication. Just as social meaning is an integral part of the definition and demarcation of speech communities, so it is an integral part of the organization of linguistic features within them. (Cf. Bernstein's concept of 'restricted' and 'elaborated' code, classical diglossia, liturgy.) The sphere adequate to the description of speech communities, of linguistic diversity as a human problem, can be said to be: *means of speech, and their meanings to those who use them.* (This concept is dealt with in more detail in Hymes (1972b; 1973a)).

No one has ever denied the facts of multilingualism and heterogeneity of speech community in the world, but little has been done to enable us to comprehend and deal with them. Until now a 'Herderian' conception of a world of independent one language–one culture units, a conception appropriate enough, perhaps, to a world pristinely peopled by hunters and gatherers and small-scale horticulturalists, has been tacitly fallen back upon.

There has begun to be work to characterize complex linguistic communities and to describe speech communities adequately. Such description must extend to the value of speech itself in the life of a community: whether it is a resource to be hoarded or something freely expended, whether it is essential or not to public roles, whether it is conceived as intrinsically good or dangerous, what its proper role in socialization and demonstration of competence is conceived to be, and so forth.[5] Through such work one can hope to provide adequate foundations for assessing diversity of language as both a human problem and a human resource.

Diversity could stand as the heading for all of the problems connected with speech and language, once our focus is enlarged from languages as such to speech communities – existing diversity as an obstacle, and sometimes diversity that it is desired to maintain or achieve. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to comment separately on three topics that have been singled out for attention in their own right. These are problems connected with the media, the structures, and the functions of language.

Overcoming the Medium of Language

Not long ago one might have said that most of the world was attempting to overcome the spokenness of language through programs of literacy, while some of the advanced sectors of civilization – the advertising and communications industries, and the university – were hailing the approaching transcendence of language in graphic form. McLuhan is not prominent now, but polarization of spoken and written language remain very much with us. A good deal has been said about speaking and writing, about oral and literate cultures (Wade, 1972), and I have no new generalization to add, but I do have a bit of skepticism to advance. We really know very little as to the role of the medium of language. Technological determinism is not generally popular, for good reason, so it is puzzling to find it avidly welcomed in the sphere of communication. There is no more reason to regard it as gospel there than elsewhere. Certainly, it is impossible to generalize validly about oral vs. literate cultures as uniform types. Popular social science does seem to thrive on three-stage evolutionary sequences – David Riesman, Margaret Mead, Charles Reich have all, like McLuhan, employed them – but if dogmatic Marxism is not to be allowed such schemes, for good reason, it seems a little unfair to tolerate them in dogmatic McLuhanism, Ongism e.g. that primary oral narrative is always prolix (Ong, 1988 [1982] – see the examples in Chapter 6), and the like.

In such theses, nevertheless, lies a major threat and fascination of media. Is use of one medium of communication rather than another simply transfer of an underlying competence that remains constant? Or is there more to it than that? Is the communicative medium itself partly constitutive of meaning, even of reality, even perhaps of language itself?[6]

Undoubtedly the adaptation of communication to an oral–auditory channel – to mouth, throat, air and ear – has helped shape human language, for example, as to the range in number of phonological units in languages (a medium with different properties might have facilitated more or permitted less), and as to relation among units (sequences, kinds of change) conditioned by the physical characteristics of the sounds. So much has become a matter of considerable interest to linguists. Not so the adaptation of verbal communication to a manual–visual channel, to hand, things scripturable and eye. The origin and history of writing systems has sometimes attracted interest, but as a separate specialty; linguists do not usually think of the written channel as shaping, hence partly explaining, their object of study.[7] Writing is usually seen as a record of something already existing. Interest in the history of writing has to do with the nature of different modes of representation of language, their evolution, diffusion, and effect on what one can know about languages represented by them. Debates about writing have to do with adequacy of different representations (past or present), and, more generally, with the adequacy of any written norm as basis for linguistic analysis.

Many modern linguists, reacting against the inadequacies of conventional writing systems, and the role of conventional writing systems as symbols of cultural domination, have indeed insisted that written forms are entirely derivative of speech, entirely secondary, arbitrary, not, as so often thought in traditional cultures, intrinsic to what is expressed in them. (Hall, 1975, for example, maintains such a view vigorously.) Many linguists associated with Chomsky's approach have looked more kindly upon conventional English orthography, perhaps reacting against a preceding generation's reaction against tradition, and certainly on general principle. Whereas the preceding generation emphasized study of the spoken form of language, Chomsky and others deprecate the spoken form as a highly imperfect, even degenerate, manifestation of structure. The net effect is the same. The issue is the accuracy of a system of writing in representing something else, the something else being primary. As a secondary realization of the structure of language (whether in speech or in the mind), writing has had little or no theoretical interest of its own. Independent linguists, such as Dwight Bolinger, 1946; H. J. Uldall, 1944; and Josef Vachek, 1944–49, have defended the partial autonomy of writing, as requiring investigation, but their lead has been little followed.

The views of American linguists have perhaps been unduly influenced by the situation of English. The patent discrepancy between conventional spelling and actual pronunciation helped one approach dismiss writing; reaction has led others (Chomsky and Halle, 1968) to impute to speakers of English today a feature of conventional spelling that others cite as a salient example of how pronunciation has left spelling behind. Conventional

spelling of course does often fit earlier stages of pronunciation, for example, the 'gh' in 'right', 'night', 'light' once was pronounced as in Scots and in German *recht, nacht, licht.* But to claim that analysis shows that speakers have in their linguistic structure today a sound they do not know, may never have heard, and cannot pronounce is rather a tour de force, *épater les bourgeois.*

In any case, no general principle about writing is at stake, only an analysis of English. There are languages whose written form is not a spelling at all (Chinese), and there are languages whose conventional written form matches spoken phonology well (Spanish). Wherever English belongs between these two poles, it is inadequate as a basis for thinking about the relation between speech and writing.

The point is this: the general issue is not the degree to which one mode is an accurate equivalent of the other, or of underlying structure. Such a formulation limits the relation between speech and writing to one of representation. The true general issue is the relation between speech and writing as *modes of action.* It is as modes of action that speech and writing are fundamentally related to each other. Diversity and inequality are not manifest in matters of representation alone; they are manifest in what it means to speak, to write (or hear and read), at all, and of course in what it means to do so in one or another way. In sum, the fundamental relation between speech and writing is not between successive, or correlative levels of linguistic structure. The fundamental relation is that of choice of means within communicative repertoires. (Clearly my use of 'speech', 'speaker', etc., in much of this chapter must be understood as surrogate for all communicative modes, wherever speech is not specifically contrasted with others.)

This perspective, choices of means embedded in acts, helps keep in view two considerations essential to study of writing: a) graphic means (including electronic – cf. Murray, 1988) are not neutral, but have social meaning; b) graphic means have scope and organization of their own.

As to the first: linguists involved in practical work, such as literacy, standard language planning and education, have long had reason to know that to choose what form of language is to be written, and to choose how it is to be written, are never purely technical matters. Cultural values and social hierarchies are involved. A notable consequence for the situation of language in the world is that many languages, and varieties of language, have not been thought worth writing, or even capable of being written; their written forms, and what exists in them in writing, has come largely from outsiders with a religious or scientific mission. The efforts of outsiders have not always been welcome, and in any case, the sheer fact of the existence of a written form has not been sufficient reason for it to be used. A social interest must be mobilized, as many missionaries have found, (such facts show that it is silly to explain writing by appeal to its obvious advantages, as if the advantages were self-realizing; more is said on the cultural role of writing below) or a social interest may have to be overcome. A technically advantageous form of writing may be rejected because of the prestige of some alternative or to protect

some interest. [Thus, the Korean *hangul* had to wait several centuries and a change of social order to be generally adopted; the government of Somali had to resolve an orthographic impasse by fiat (the solution was indeed in the interest of the country as a whole); Chinese plans for Romanization seem to have been shelved].

Such questions occur within the United States with regard to the place of varieties of language other than standard English in classrooms, and modes of writing English dialects and Indian languages. A linguist's concern for the efficiency and universality of a phonetic orthography may encounter a Native American's preference for something emblematically different from English symbols, while a linguist taking the standard orthography for granted in his work may unwittingly reinforce social prejudice.

African-American parents may react strongly against the suggestion that their children be taught with materials that represent the speech of their community, as something distinct from standard English, while African-American college students may protest against being penalized for departures from standard orthographic practice.

Social meaning is not limited to ethnic, regional, or dialect differences. Joseph Jaquith (1983) has pointed out a contrast between conventional and vernacular spellings, particularly in signs and advertisements, associated with the durability, cost, prestige of a product or service. Vernacular spellings employ phonetic and quasi-phonetic approximations and substitutions ('rite', 'kwik', 'Andy's Chee-pees'), syllabary-like uses of alphabet letters (E-Z), etc. (The vernacular spellings of words such as 'rite', 'nite', 'lite', incidentally, are evidence against imputed psychological reality and phonological fit for the 'gh' in the conventional spelling.) Quite within the scope of the standard language, then, graphic competence in American English embraces more than one variety of spelling. The relation between speech and writing has to be discussed in terms of styles of writing, as well as of speech.

The above examples have dwelt on the representational relation of writing to speech, but of course scriptorial competence is not limited to knowledge of how to represent speech or structures strictly common to writing and speech alike. In keeping with a tendency that might be called 'communicative plenitude' – meaningfulness expands to fill available means – the significance of graphic signs is not restricted to representation of phonic ones or of an element of structure indicated by both. Nor, of course, is the significance of a phonic sign restricted to manifestation of a graphic one, or of an element indicated by both. Users notice not only the respect in which such signs convey the referentially-based relationships of grammar, but also the respects in which such signs, and some of their referentially indifferent details, are associated with persons, places, purposes, and styles, are susceptible to play and aesthetic patterning, etc., and elaborate these possibilities. Such elaboration gives rise to devices and relationships that are specific to each medium, having no exact counterpart in the other, but being part of what one can do with language only when language is being used in

the medium of question. Within the field of language, of competence in language, styles of speech and styles of writing become partly autonomous families of symbolic form. Such growth in the range of means is one respect in which the resources of languages change in scope in the course of history. Part of the competence in language of many people is shaped by, must be partly explained by, the availability and characteristics of graphic channels.

We are often reminded of how much is missed when linguistic analysis is based on examples that omit essential features of speech, such as intonation and voice quality. This is indeed a crucial obstacle to be overcome by linguistics if it is to deal adequately with language. One seldom thinks of the converse, of how much is missed when one neglects features specific to writing and print. It is as if the field of competence in language had the shape of a butterfly, one wing specific to speaking, one to writing, the body common to both. Linguistic analysis has focused on the body, as it were, and while that is vital, so are the wings.

Put another way: sometimes to speak is to read aloud, sometimes to write is to transcribe. Such cases of close equivalence are special cases, interesting just because of that. Unfortunately, linguistic analysis has proceeded as if such cases were general.

Having emphasized that speech and writing are not isomorphic, but have autonomy, I do not want to suggest that they are wholly disjunct. It would be a mistake to postulate a universal, absolute contrast between styles of speaking and styles of writing. We need instead to broach the more general topic of *communicative styles*. The organization of communicative means may follow lines dictated by modalities, but need not. A style may integrate features from different components of structure, so that a style of graphic English might select and group together features of orthography, morphology, syntax, diction, discourse. With regard to any one component, it may select some and not other features (e.g., one spelling, alternate, or construction rather than another); may have features uniquely its own (as in a specialized typography); may integrate features from more than one medium.

The integration of spoken and gestural signs within a communicative paradigm should be well known (for an excellent analysis of a case, see Sherzer (1973) cf. Hymes (1974): 102). Integration of spoken and graphic signs should not be surprising. The metalinguistic use of finger-indication of written characters in the midst of conversation is well enough known from Japan. *Ad hoc* hand depiction of letters does occur in interactions in the United States (quite independently of sign language). The relation between spoken presentation and styles associated with print (what might be called scriptive styles) has undergone great change in the last generation or so, both in lectures and public talk generally. There has also been a marked rise of engaged performance, as distinct from prudent reading, by poets. Identification of the social meaning of styles and analysis of their appropriateness and effect must deal with such shifting and mingling.[8]

In sum, the point of view from which to grasp the relation between speech and writing, as media or modalities of language, is function. How are the features of modalities organized for the purposes of those who employ them?

Having emphasized that speech and writing are to be seen as modes of action, I do not want to seem to suggest that they are everywhere the same modes of action. Their degree of autonomy from each other, their relative hierarchy, their integration into communicative styles, all these are problematic and to be determined ethnographically.

As a general principle, one may assume that difference of means will condition differences in what is accomplished. That would seem to hold for all symbolic forms. That speech and writing are not simply equivalent, but have been developed historically in at least partly autonomous ways; that choice of a style specific to speech, or specific to writing, or mingling both, may affect meaning and outcome, all this seems obvious. There is little systematic knowledge, however, as to repertoires of choice and strategies for choosing, as to the degree of autonomy and the consequences of it.

One thing we do know is that a given society may define the role of any one medium quite differently from another society, as to scope and as to purpose. I have elaborated this point with regard to speaking elsewhere. Here, let me illustrate it briefly with regard to writing.[9] For one thing, new writing systems continue to be independently invented – one was devised in 1904 by Silas John Edwards, a Western Apache shaman and leader of a nativistic religious movement. The sole purpose of the writing system is to record the 62 prayers Silas John received in his vision and to provide for their ritual performance. Competence in the system has been restricted to a small number of specialists. Discovery and study of this system by Keith Basso (Basso and Anderson, 1973) has shown that existing schemes for the analysis of writing systems fail to characterize it adequately, and probably fail as well for many other systems, having been devised with evolutionary, *a priori* aims, rather than with the aim of understanding individual systems in their own terms. The development of an ethnography of writing, such as Basso (1974) has proposed is long overdue.[10] Here belongs also study of the many surrogate codes found round the world – drum-language, whistle-talk, horn-language, and the like. Their relation to speech is analytically the same as that of writing (Stern, 1957), and they go together with the various modalities of graphic communication (handwriting, handprinting, typing, typographic printing, electronic mail, etc.), as well as the various modalities of oral communication (chanting, singing, declamation, whispering, etc.) in an account of the relations between linguistic means and ends.

As to ends, the Hanunoo of the Philippines are literate – they have a system of writing derivative of the Indian Devanagari – but they use it exclusively for love-letters, just as the Buan of New Guinea use their writing. In central Oregon the town of Madras has many signs, but the nearby Indian reservation, Warm Springs, has almost none, and those only where strangers impinge – the residents of Warm Springs do not need the information signs

give (Philips, 1974). At one time Vista workers tried to help prepare Warm Springs children for school by asking Indian parents to read to them in preschool years. US schools tend to presuppose that sort of preparation, and middle-class families provide it, showing attention and affection by reading bedtime stories and the like, but Warm Springs parents show attention and affection in quite other ways, had no need of reading to do so, and the effort got nowhere. The general question of the consequences of literacy has been forcefully raised for contemporary European society by Richard Hoggart in a seminal book (Hoggart, 1957; note also Hoggart, 1971).

Many generalizations about the consequences of writing and the properties of speaking make necessities out of possibilities. Writing, for example, can preserve information, but need not be used to do so (recall IBM's shredder, Auden's 'Better Burn This'), and we ought to beware of a possible ethnocentrism in this regard. Classical Indian civilization committed vital texts to memory, through careful training in sutras, for fear of the perishability of material things. Classical Chinese calligraphy, the cuneiform of Assyrian merchants, and the style of hand taught to generations of Reed students by Lloyd J. Reynolds, are rather different kinds of things. Television may have great impact, but one cannot tell from what is on the screen alone. In any given household, does the set run on unattended? Is the picture even on? Is silence enforced when a favorite program or the news comes on, or is a program treated as a resource for family interaction?

We have had a great deal more study of means than of meanings. There appear to be many more books on the alphabet than on the role of writing as actually observed in a community; many more pronouncements on speech than ethnographies of speaking; many more debates about television and content-analysis of programs than first-hand accounts of what happens in the rooms in which sets are turned on. The perspective broached above with regard to speech communities applies here, since media are a constituent of the organization of ways of speaking (i.e., ways of communication). We need particularly to know the meanings of media relative to one another within the context of given roles, settings and purposes, for the etiquette of these things enters into whatever constitutive role a medium may have, including the opportunity or lack of it that persons and groups may have to use the medium. In England and France a typed letter is not acceptable in some contexts in which it would be taken for granted in the United States; the family Christmas letter in the United States is a genre that can be socially located; subgroups in the United States differ dramatically in their assumptions as to what should be photographed and by whom (Chalfen, 1987; Worth, 1972).

At Warm Springs reservation in central Oregon, at the burial of a young boy killed in a car accident, his team-mates from the Madras High School spoke haltingly in turn beside the grave and presented the parents with a photograph of the boy in athletic uniform, 'as we would like to remember him' – a shocking thing, which the parents stoically let pass – for them the last

sight of the dead person, which bears the greatest emotional distress, had already been endured in the church before coming to the cemetery. When the rites were complete, Baptist and Longhouse, when all the men, then all the women, had filed past the gravesite, taking each in turn a handful of dirt from a shovel held out by the uncle of the boy, and dropping it on the half-visible coffin within the site, when the burial mound had been raised over the coffin, the old women's singing ended, and the many flowers and the toy deer fixed round the mound, then, as people began to leave, the bereaved parents were stood at one end of the mound, facing the other, where their friends gathered to photograph them across it. That picture, of the manifestation of solidarity and concern on the part of so many, evident in the flowers, might be welcome.

The several media, of course, may occur together in several mixes and hierarchies, in relation to each other and in relation to modalities such as touch. Communities seem to differ as to whether tactile or vocal acts, or both together, are the indispensable or ultimate components of rituals of curing, for example. In some parts of Africa, languages are evaluated partly in terms of their greeting systems, and the Haya of northern Tanzania, who are acquiring Swahili, find it less satisfying than their own language, for in a Haya greeting one touches as well as talks.[11]

Finally, the use of media and modalities needs to be related to the norms by which a community takes responsibility for performance and interpretation of kinds of communication. My stress here obviously is on the qualitative basis of assessing media as a human problem. Statistics on radios and newspapers and the like barely scratch the surface. I think it entirely possible that a medium may have a constitutive effect in one community and not in another, due to its qualitative role, its social meaning and function, even though frequencies of occurrence may be the same in both. We have to do here with the question of identities and identifications, mentioned earlier with regard to varieties of language in schools. We need, in short, a great deal of ethnography.

Overcoming the Structure of Language

Concern to overcome the structure of language seems to have centered around the function of naming, either to achieve a uniform relation between language and meaning as a semantic ideal, or to avoid it as a spiritual desert or death. Early in the development of Indo-European studies, when modern languages were thought degenerate in form, the great pioneer of reconstruction, Franz Bopp, sought to infer an original Indo-European structure in which meanings and morphemes went hand in hand, reflecting perhaps an original, necessary relationship. Others have sought to realize a semantic

ideal in the present, by constructing an artificial language, or by reconstructing an existing one to convey the universal meanings required by science and philosophy. One thinks especially of the late seventeenth century (Dalgarno, Bishop Wilkes, Leibniz) and the early twentieth century (Russell, the early Wittgenstein, Carnap, Bergmann, and others). Still others have thought that the ideal relationship between meaning and form might be glimpsed in the future, once linguists had worked through the diverse structures of existing languages to the higher level of structure beyond them. Such was Whorf's vision (Whorf, 1942).

At an opposite extreme would be a philosopher like Brice Parain (1969) who despairs of the adequacy of language, and, of course, adherents of the Zen tradition that regards language's inveterate distinguishing of things as a trap to be transcended. Intermediate would be the conscious defense of other modes of meaning than that envisioned in the semantic ideal, in particular, the defenses of poetry and of religious language (Burke, 1941). And here would belong conceptions of literary and religious use of language as necessarily in defiance of other, conventional modes of use (Mascall, 1968; Ramsey, 1957). Much of philosophy and some of linguistics seem to have found their way back to an open-ended conception of the modes of meaning in language; and are experiencing great surges of interest in poetics and rhetoric.

Such work is of the greatest importance, but it does leave the general question of the adequacy of language, or of a particular language, in abeyance. It would seem that the structures of languages have never been wholly satisfactory to their users, for they have never let them rest. Shifts in the obligatory grammatical categories of languages over time, like the shift from aspect to tense in Indo-European, bespeak shifts in what was deemed essential to convey. Conscious reports of such concerns may have appeared first in classical Greece, when Plato complained that the processual character of Greek verbs favored his philosophical opponents, although, at the time, devices such as the suffix *-itos* for forming abstract nouns were growing in productivity. When in the fourth century AD Marius Victorinus tried to translate Plotinus from Greek into Latin, there was no adequate abstract terminology in his contemporary Latin, and his clumsy efforts to coin one met with little acceptance, thus inhibiting the spread of the Neo-Platonic philosophy in that period. Some centuries later 'theologisms' had evolved in Latin which quite matched the terms of the Greek fathers in precision and maneuverability.[12] In the early modern period, English writers lamented the inadequacies of English and set out to remedy them (Blackall, 1959; Brunot, 1947; Jones, 1953).

At Warm Springs, some fifteen years ago, a speaker of Wasco (a Chinookan language), acknowledging Wasco's lack of a term for a contemporary object, said that when he was a boy, if one of the old men had come out of his house and seen such a thing, he would have coined a word for it, 'just like that' (with a sharp gesture). There are no such old men

anymore to coin words or shape experience into the discourse of myth (Sapir, 1909: 48, lines 1–2).

Such fates are common, though not much attended to by linguists. The official preference is to stress the potentiality of a language and to ignore the circumstances and consequences of its limitations. Yet every language is an instrument shaped by its history and patterns of use, such that for a given speaker and setting it can do some things well, some clumsily, and others not intelligibly at all. The cost, as between expressing things easily and concisely, and expressing them with difficulty and at great length, is a real cost, commonly operative and a constraint on the theoretical potentiality of language in daily life. Here is the irreducible element of truth in what is known as the 'Whorf hypothesis': means condition what can be done with them, and in the case of languages, the meanings that can be created and conveyed.

The Chomskian image of human creativity in language is a partial truth whose partiality can be dangerous if it leads us to think of any constraints on linguistic communication either as nugatory or as wholly negative. As to the force of such constraints, the testimony of writers[13] and the comparative history of literary languages should, perhaps, suffice here. As to their positive side, we seem to need to repeat the development of thought discerned by Cassirer (1961: 24–5) in Goethe, Herder, and W. von Humboldt:

> To them, the Spinozistic thesis, that definition is limitation, is valid only where it applies to external limitation, such as the form given to an object by a force not its own. But within the free sphere of one's personality such checking heightens personality; it truly acquires form only by forming itself . . . Every universal in the sphere of culture, whether discovered in language, art, religion, or philosophy, is as individual as it is universal. For in this sphere we perceive the universal only within the actuality of the particular; only in it can the cultural universal find its actualization, its realization as a cultural universal.

We need ethnography to discover the specific forms which the realization of universality takes in particular communities, and, where the question is one of speech, we need ethnographies of speaking.

Whorf (1941) himself led in describing the organization of linguistic features pertinent to cultural values and world views as cutting across the usual sectors of linguistic description, and as involving 'concatenations that run across . . . departmental lines' (that is, the lines of the usual rubrics of linguistic, ethnographic, or sociological description that divide the study of a culture and language as a whole). Whorf referred to the required organization of features as *a fashion of speaking*, and one can see in his notion an anticipation, though not developed by him, of the sociolinguistic concept of *ways of speaking*. The crucial difference is that to the notion of speech styles, the sociolinguistic approach adds the notion of contexts of situation and patterns relating style and context to each other.

Here, as before, the great interest is not merely in diversity or uniformity, but in the possibility that such differences shape or constitute worlds. Do semantic-syntactic structures do so? Sapir and Whorf thought that for the naive speaker they did, although contrastive study of language structures was a way to overcome the effect. What Chomsky describes as the seemingly untrammeled creative aspect of language use was treated by Sapir as true, but not true in the same way for speakers of different languages. Each language has a formal completeness (i.e., it shares fully in the generic potentiality of human language), but does so in terms of an orientation, a 'form-feeling' of its own, so as to constitute quite a unique frame of reference toward being in the world. A monolingual's sense of unlimited adequacy is founded on universality, not of form or meaning, but of function, and that very sense, being unreflecting, may confine him all the more. The particular strengths of a given language are inseparable from its limitations. This is what Sapir (1924) (in Mandelbaum, 1949: 153, 157), preceding and giving the lead to Whorf, called

> a kind of relativity that is generally hidden from us by our naive acceptance of fixed habits of speech as guides to an objective understanding of the nature of experience. This is the relativity of concepts, or, as it might be called, the relativity of the form of thought . . . It is the appreciation of the relativity of the form of thought which results from linguistic study that is perhaps the most liberalizing thing about it. What fetters the mind and benumbs the spirit is ever the dogged acceptance of absolutes.

I think this is as fair a statement of the evidence and parameters of the situation today as it was more than a half-century ago when Sapir wrote it. I cite Sapir here partly because linguistics in the United States, having worked its way through a decade or so of superficial positivism, shows some sign of having worked its way through another decade or so of superficial rationalism, and a readiness to pick up the thread of the complexly adequate approach that began to emerge in the years just before the Second World War in the work of men like Sapir, Firth, Trubetzkoy, and Jakobson.

Multilingualism

To return to relativity: the type associated with Sapir and Whorf in any case is underlain by a more fundamental kind. The consequences of the relativity of the structure of language depend upon the relativity of the function of language. Take, for example, the common case of multilingualism. Inference as to the shaping effect of some one language on thought and the world must be qualified immediately in terms of the place of the speaker's languages in his biography and mode of life. Moreover, communities differ in the roles

they assign to language itself in socialization, acquisition of cultural knowledge and performance.

Community differences extend to the role of languages in naming the worlds they help to shape or constitute. In central Oregon, for example, English speakers typically go up a level in taxonomy when asked to name a plant for which they lack a term: 'some kind of bush'; Sahaptin speakers analogize: 'sort of an A', or 'between an A and a B' (A and B being specific plants); Wasco speakers demur: 'No, no name for that,' in keeping with a cultural preference for precision and certainty of reference.[14]

This second type of linguistic relativity, concerned with the functions of languages, has more than a critical, cautionary import. As a sociolinguistic approach, it calls attention to the organization of linguistic features in social interaction. Work has begun to show that description of fashions of speaking can reveal basic cultural values and orientations. The worlds so revealed are not the ontological and epistemological worlds of physical relationships, of concern to Whorf, but worlds of social relationships. What are disclosed are not orientations toward space, time, vibratory phenomena, and the like, but orientations towards persons, roles, statuses, rights and duties, deference and demeanor (cf. Bauman and Sherzer, 1974; Darnell, 1972; Hogan, H.M. 1971). Such an approach obviously requires an ethnographic base.[15]

Overcoming the Function of Language

Diversity is a rubric under which the phenomena of language as a human problem can be grasped; the questions which underlie our concern with diversity can be summed up in the term, *function.* What differences do language diversities make through their role in human lives? Some of these differences have been touched upon, and I want to take space for only general consideration here. Linguists have mostly taken the functions of language for granted, but it is necessary to investigate them. Such investigation is indeed going on, but mostly not in linguistics. It is a striking fact that problems of overcoming some of the ordinary functioning of language in modern life attract increased attention from philosophers, writers, and sociological analysts of the condition of communication in society, while many linguists proceed as if mankind became more unified each time they used the word *universal,* freer and more capable of solving its problems each time they invoked linguistic competence and creativity. (This is what I mean by superficial rationalism.)

Serious analysis of the functioning of language has been found in England and the continent much more than in the United States. Let me merely mention here Merleau-Ponty on the 'prose of the world', Heidegger on speaking as 'showing', Brice Parain (already cited) on the inadequacy of language, Barthes on *l'écriture,* LeFebvre on *discours,* Sartre on precoded interpretations of events such as the Hungarian uprising, and Ricoeur on

hermeneutics, and state briefly the significance of two approaches, those of Bernstein and of Habermas.

Bernstein

Bernstein's work has a significance apart from how one assesses particular studies, which have been considerably shaped by the exigencies of support for practical concerns. His theoretical views, which precede the studies, are rooted in belief that the role of language in constituting social reality is crucial to any general sociological theory, and that that role has not yet been understood, because it has been approached in terms of an unexamined concept of language. For Bernstein, linguistic features affect the transmission and transformation of social realities through their organization into what he calls *codes*; that is, through selective organization of linguistic features, not through the agency of a language, such as English, as such. He is noted for his twin notions of *restricted* and *elaborated* codes. This dichotomy has not always done the texture of his thought good service, for the two notions have had to subsume a series of dimensions that ought analytically to be separated, dimensions that may combine differently in different communities. (See discussion in Hymes, 1974, Ch. 4, and discussion below.)[16] Nevertheless, one dimension essential to his work is essential to understanding any language as a human problem in the contemporary world. It is the dimension of a contrast between more implicit and more explicit styles.

Let me interpret Bernstein's view of a major importance of the contrast. It is not that one of the styles is *good*, the other *bad*. Each has its place. The more implicit style, in which many understandings can be taken for granted, is essential to efficient communications in some circumstances, and to ways of life in others. But, and this is an aspect of Bernstein's view that has sometimes been overlooked, the more explicit style is associated with predominantly universalistic or context-free meanings, while the more implicit style is associated with particularistic or context-specific meanings. And, argues Bernstein, the universalistic meanings possible to the more explicit style are essential, if one is to be able to analyze means of communication themselves, to describe the ways in which meanings come organized in a community in the service of particular interests and cultural hegemony, and so gain the knowledge and leverage necessary for the transformation of social relationships.

Bernstein has surely put his finger on a crucial issue. There is difference in command of verbal resources, and in access to them, and it is not the case that inequality would be overcome by ending prejudice and discrimination against all forms of speech. Some discrimination among verbal abilities and products is not prejudice, but accurate judgment. The transformation of society to a juster, more equal way of life requires transformation of genuine inequalities in verbal resource. But – here is the crux – we know very little

about the actual distribution of verbal resource and ability in our society. We know too little to be able to specify the complex ways in which such a distribution becomes a source of inequality. We must be thankful to Bernstein for the courage to insist on an essential truth – with one and the same language, there are socially shaped contrasts in way of speaking and verbal resource – but we must go beyond his analytic scheme.

The implication of Bernstein's argument is that command of the more explicit style ('elaborated code') should be common to all. To apply such a remedy, one would have to enable others to identify reliably the more explicit style, on the one hand, and the desired kind of cognitive power, on the other, and assume a necessary link between them. Let me suggest some of the difficulties. It would hardly suffice to equate the style with the proprieties of the standard language, although some (not Bernstein) would be tempted to do so; nor can one equate cognitive power with profusion of words. Certain kinds of analysis of social life no doubt require certain kinds of verbal resource, but we are far from knowing how much of the verbal style in which we now couch such analysis is necessary, how much merely customary. There are verbal repertoires without something of what is necessary – in this I agree with Bernstein. But is the problem merely a matter of lack of certain concepts and terms? of certain modes of analytic statement (together with verbal means that facilitate them)? or of an entire orientation toward meanings, as Bernstein suggests?

There is further difficulty in linking the one style to universalistic, context-free meanings. No use of language is ever wholly context-free. The indexical function, as C.S. Peirce called it, is ever-present and ever essential to interpretation (as Harold Garfinkel has stressed in developing the perspective known as *ethnomethodology*). Certainly there are differences in degree of dependence and independence, but their relationship to forms of social life and cognitive power is not self-evident. We may think of science and scholarship as dealing in universalistic, context-free meanings, but such work can be highly particularistic and context-dependent, if one thinks in terms of ability and opportunity to share in it. There are large elements of faith and authority, both for those outside these fields and for those within them (as studies in the sociology of science and knowledge show). If public communicability of analytic knowledge is considered, then adaptation to particular contexts of understanding may have an essential role. Some forms of knowledge, indeed, may require literary rather than scientific methods for their effective transmission, and it is not clear where such verbal methods fit within the contrast in question. The understanding of the perspective of others that is necessary to desired forms of change requires uses of language with narrative and expressive qualities; these qualities often partake of particularistic, context-dependent meanings. It may be that some who would be said to have an 'elaborated code' need greater command of such qualities, and the devices that convey them, to make effective their effort to change ideas and practices. It may be that some who would be said to have a

'restricted code' have sufficient analytic power, but need command of certain of such qualities and devices in order to be heard by some they seek to reach. Finally, we tend to think of explicitness as frankness, as egalitarian and democratic (at least in public communication), yet in some societies (cf. Rosaldo, 1973) explicitness is experienced authoritarian, whereas implicitness, allusion, and indirectness is essential to traditional, reciprocal, consensual modes of resolving issues.

It seems that Bernstein's analytic scheme has inherited a longstanding tendency to dichotomize kinds of meaning and communication and to consider kinds primarily in terms of a cognitive ideal, whereas the actual fabric of relationships among kinds of meaning, communicative style, and social consequences is more intricate.

This is not to depreciate Bernstein's work. More than anyone else in sociolinguistics, he has called attention forcefully to essential dimensions of the organization of ways of speaking and styles of speech. A contrast or polarity of explicitness and implicitness is probably a universal dimension of means and speech. The same is true of simplification and complication of message-form, another dimension associated prominently with the notions of restricted and elaborated codes. One or the other is frequently the salient feature of an important, institutionalized use of language. There is need for analytic clarification of these dimensions, as elements of general linguistic theory, and for a wide range of descriptive and comparative studies. Contemporary linguistics has given attention to simplification and complication as aspects of pidginization and creolization, but their universal relevance has been neglected (cf. Hymes, 1971b).

Bernstein himself does not claim validity for his analysis beyond the English situation. The fact that his work attracts international attention indicates that it corresponds to something real in other situations. The proper use of the stimulus of his work is not to impose its categories, or conjure with them, but to discover how the dimensions to which he calls attention do come organized in the given case.

In doing so, it is necessary to differentiate dimensions from one another, for example, explicitness/implicitness, and complication/simplification. Explicitness may be found with either a complex or simplified message-form; so may implicitness. It is necessary to disentangle three factors of communicative events, message-form, content, and context. A broad dichotomy, such as restricted vs. elaborated, may seem to subsume them – to posit restriction (or elaboration), in all three. The three factors are analytically, and often empirically, distinct. One needs to discover the relationships among them.

In applying the global contrast, or a contrast of dimension, then, one must not begin with a simple two-fold choice (as many have done and continue to do). There may be restriction or elaboration in respect to each factor. Such a contrast (symbolized here R/E) generates eight possible types of relationship, as the following table shows.

	Message-form	Content	Context
(1)	R	R	R
(2)	R	R	E
(3)	R	E	R
(4)	R	E	E
(5)	E	R	R
(6)	E	R	E
(7)	E	E	R
(8)	E	E	E

The eight-fold framework provides a more adequate, because more differentiated, starting point, but chiefly it simply illustrates the need of differentiation and needs to be superseded in the light of empirical work.

Bernstein himself has elaborated his initial dichotomy in different respects, and it is instructive to consider each critically. One kind of elaboration develops additional distinctions of content and application (cf. Bernstein 1972; 1973; 1977a; 1977b; 1990). These distinctions have their own interest. The critical observation to be made is that the basis of elaboration remains binary contrast as to the range of alternatives. At each point, one category has greater, one lesser, range.

Here is the source of a limitation of Bernstein's development of his initial insight, and of applications of such ideas. First, binary contrasts may be inadequate to the actual organization of ranges of alternatives. The locally relevant, valid categorization may not be binary, but quantitatively variable along a scale, may be ternary, etc. If one discovers local norms, there may be a contrast between two styles, one more and one less explicit, or complex. There may also be an unmarked norm, from which a second and third style are distinguished, as markedly more and less explicit, or simple and complex, respectively. Binary categories, however suggestive, prejudge.

Second, there is a persistent tendency to interpret the wider range of alternatives (the 'elaborated' category) as more valuable, even though Bernstein himself sometimes cautions against this. It is hard to avoid such interpretation, especially if one thinks in terms of a cognitive ideal. 'More' suggests more information, more precision, etc. Yet in actual life, forms of message with the widest range of contexts open to them may be the least valued, others with a narrower range valued the most. A message more elaborated in form may be considered more trivial in content. Evaluation cannot be built into the descriptive framework. Local orientations toward meaning or values must be discovered.

Consider an illustration of rows (5, 6) above. Within institutions and circles of high prestige, most of the elaboration of form of a genre of message may be treated as incidental reaffirmation, even if not predictable in detail, and the key to interpretation, found in manner or nuance of expression; such an orientation is very similar to the orientation described for restricted code use in Bernstein's initial formulations and identified there with lower social status.

Again, consider an illustration of rows (3, 4). A message may be restricted in form, highly predictable, context-determined, yet considered rich and open in content. Men and women of high status, commanding what their community considers valued elaborated forms, may give much of themselves to repeated experience of a message, a piece of music, ritual sequence, literary or religious text, finding not increase of information so much as increase of connection, resonance, depth.

Spareness, predictability, context-dependence or form may go with either shallowness or with depth, with poverty or with richness of meaning, and so may prolixity, unpredictability, context-independent of form. The value of the meaning is analytically independent of the code-characteristics. There may be a tight connection in particular cases, but one cannot prejudge what will be connected to what.

It is indeed an important step toward an adequate basis of research just to transect the initial dichotomy with this one of valued meaning, so as to be able to speak of 'deep elaborated/shallow elaborated' and 'deep restricted /shallow restricted' codes, variants, or styles. (Nothing of course depends on the particular adjectives 'deep 'and 'shallow'; another pair, such as 'thick' and 'thin', would serve.)

This four-fold distinction resembles, but seems different from, an elaboration that Bernstein himself has made. He has come to distinguish 'codes' from 'variants' (Bernstein, 1973). Earlier, some persons had been said to have both elaborated and restricted codes, and others only restricted codes. Now each code is considered to have both restricted and elaborated variants. Obviously this is not to reduce the two codes to equivalence. Code continues to designate an underlying, selective orientation toward kinds and possibilities of meaning. And it seems that a person is still considered to come to have essentially one code-orientation or the other.

Now, recognition of parallel variants in both codes does mean that one cannot readily determine the presence of a code from the form of messages. Much of Bernstein's earlier work sought to identify codes from features of message-form, and is called into question by the change. If the implications of the change are pursued, then future research must concentrate on communicative strategies in natural settings and employ participant observation fully. Operative orientations toward meanings cannot be assessed adequately from text apart from context. An apparently restricted utterance may be merely practical in a context in which something is known to one's hearer; an apparently elaborated utterance may be elaborated from pedantic habit, not cognitive force.

To adapt and revise an assumption formulated by Joos, 1961, by and large 'text does not signal its own strategy'. Much of what is needed for assessment of orientations is accessible only in persons, not in transcripts. And it becomes essential to speak in the first instance, not of codes, but of styles, as I have done earlier in interpreting Bernstein's view of the

implicit/explicit dimension. To speak of a style leaves open the meaning of the style to those who use it; code, in Bernstein's work, does not.

As noted, Bernstein seems to consider that a person comes to have essentially either one code-orientation or the other. The restricted variant of the elaborated code seems intended to account mainly for predictable aspects of social interaction, greetings, casual conversation, and the like (as did the earlier attribution of a restricted code to elaborated code users), rather than for the experience, say, of a middle-class Christian Scientist hearing the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy in fixed text, Sunday after Sunday – and finding new meaning. Bernstein sometimes attends to such situations, but the thrust of his analysis continues to be that the distribution of code orientations in the society is tantamount to a distribution of people. (Else why distinguish distinct codes as underlying parallel variants?)

I want to suggest that there is something answering to the two types of code-orientation, but not, on that basis alone, two types of people. I want to suggest that persons *in fact have alternative code-orientations*, that such indeed is the common state of affairs in modern society, and that *the central problem is not that some people have one and others do not* (as most users of Bernstein's ideas have assumed). *The central problem is the management of the relation between the two.*

If people differ as types in terms of code-orientations, it is in terms of types of management of the relation. There may be many types of management; there is no reason to assume in advance that there are just two. (For an account of an analogous situation at a national level, cf. Neustupny [1974].)

In sum, each ideal type of code-orientation identified by Bernstein has a necessary part in the life of a person, whatever the person's social origin and experience. Each person must, to some extent, project an analysis of the social life and change in which he or she is caught up, and each must to some extent 'traditionalize' some sphere of experience and relationships. Both orientations are to some degree inevitable for all. To understand people in this regard, one must think of them as having repertoires of code-orientation, and as having to adapt to a communicative ecology that favors now one, now another, element of the repertoire, there being often enough serious tension between person and niche. Many people can be thought of as having to spend much of their waking life in 'verbal passing', employing a style constrained by job or group, and unable to satisfy felt needs for use of language in other ways.

Such ecological deprivation may involve lack of others with whom to pursue certain kinds of cognitive elaboration and play, or lack of others with whom to have certain meanings taken for granted. Many life choices are made for the sake of 'someone to talk to' in these senses. The problem, then, is not absence of the orientation in the person, nor absolute absence of contexts for an orientation, but a specific network of relations between orientations, contents and contexts.

Habermas

This analysis brings us to the way in which problems of modern society have been interpreted as problems of contrasting code-orientation by Jurgen Habermas (see Habermas, 1970a,b; 1971; Schroyer, 1970; 1971).

Habermas develops a contrast analogous to Bernstein's. His starting point is not observation of class and family differences in communication, but analysis of theories of knowledge and communication in science and everyday life. Starting from the neo-Marxian tradition of the Frankfurt School, with its attention to the Hegelian roots and cultural problems of Marxist thought, Habermas has turned to the positive contributions of a psychoanalytic perspective and the possibilities of grounding a theory that is critical of society and emancipatory in aim in the nature of language and communication. He may be said to give a reinterpretation of Marxian categories of analysis in communicative and linguistic terms.

Like Bernstein, Habermas contrasts two orientations toward communication. One is a technical cognitive interest, and has to do with activity guided by technical rules based on empirical knowledge; such activity comprises 'instrumental action systems' or, generally, 'purposive rational action systems'. Scientific, technological, and to some extent bureaucratic modes of rationality and communication are based on this interest. There is, however, an equally fundamental and valid orientation, a practical cognitive interest, which has to do with activity guided by the symbolic processes of everyday life. It is typically dialogic and narrative in its forms of verification and explanation and involves interpretive understanding and indeed reflexive self-understanding. It cannot be reduced to the models and formalizations of instrumental action.

It is Habermas' view that whereas the free market was the dominant ideological rationalization of the capitalist order in the nineteenth century, the notion of technological progress serves that role today, and that a great threat to human life in modern society is the invasion of spheres of practical symbolic interaction by the technological orientation. Value preferences and special interests masquerade in the idiom of instrumental necessity; personal and expressive dimensions of meaning become inadmissible over a greater and greater range of activity. Official social science in its positivistic interpretation of its task actually aids in the maintenance and establishment of technological control, in contrast to those trends in social science concerned with understanding socio-cultural life-worlds and with extending intersubjective understanding (what may loosely be called a family of interpretive approaches), and those trends concerned with analyzing received modes of authority in the interest of emancipating people from them. Whereas the criterion of critical evaluation advanced by Marx stressed material inequality, and the contradiction between production for use and production for profit (use-values vs. exchange-values), Habermas stresses communicative inequality and the conflict between an ideal speech situation and communication distorted and repressed by actual patterns of socialization and interaction. To quote him:[17]

> We name a speaking-situation ideal where the communication is not only not hindered by external, contingent influences, but also not hindered by forces which result from the structure of communication itself. Only then does the peculiarly unforced compulsion of a better argument dominate.

This conception has left Marxism and much of social science behind. Habermas' ideal adds an invaluable dimension, necessary to critical analysis of social appearances, but there is no adequate link to ongoing social processes and projected states of affairs. Real situations can be criticized in terms of the ideal. No means of progressing toward the ideal, other than criticism, is given. This is why Schroyer (1973) in a sympathetic account considers Habermas only to complement, not to replace, a Marxian analysis of inequality and change. One can go further and suggest that Habermas' analysis contributes only the generic notion of the ideal communicative situation, as a notion that must be integrated into the foundations of a linguistic theory adequate to social life. He does not contribute a satisfactory formulation of the notion.

Notice that the ideal, as formulated by Habermas, is in the end analogous to the ideal implicit in Bernstein's treatment of the 'elaborated code'. The need for a complementary orientation is sympathetically recognized by both, and Habermas gives it foundation in a thorough-going critique of narrow conceptions of knowledge. But in the end, the role of the mode of symbolic interaction, for Habermas, is to permit complete explicitness. The explicitness is rooted, not in a code as such, but in the dialogic relations of the participants in a communicative situation, and that is a decisive advance. But the possibility of a positive role for restrictions within symbolic interaction is forgotten. In the light of the ideal (quoted above), all restrictions fall short.

This, I submit, is utopian, not in the good sense of an imagined ideal, but in the bad sense of an ideal whose unrealizability may distort evaluation of situations and efforts toward change. The ideal of unrestricted speech is said to be inherent in human communication, and it seems to be assumed that the logic of historical development moves toward its realization. An ethnographically informed analysis of ideals of communication suggests otherwise.

The ideal of unrestricted speech is not the sole ideal inherent in attested ways of speaking. In some societies, indeed, unrestricted speech is viewed as dangerous, and the view is pervasively institutionalized (e.g., traditional Ashanti society, Hogan, 1971; Burundi, Albert, 1972; Malagasy, Keenan, 1973). Speech as a source of mischief and evil is a recurrent theme in cultural wisdom. Such cases might be said to represent a stage of human history to be transcended, and the particular practices may indeed yield to change (they tend to go with dichtomization of sex roles, for example). Still, there are particulars that express functions that appear to be perennial requisites of social life.

Habermas' ideal of unrestricted communication is specifically a cognitive ideal of colloquy. It is an ideal of the right and contribution of every member of a group in the resolution of problems. As such, it is an advance over a purely scientific ideal, for it comprises political decision as well. (It resembles the ideal of persuasion long advocated by Kenneth Burke, and taken by many to be regulative for science and democracy). But the ideal does not speak to the perennial requisite of structure. What may appear as restriction is, from another point of view, simply the existence of structure. And it is not possible to envisage viable social life without structure in the sense at least of shared understandings of rights and duties, norms of interactions, grounds of authority, and the like. Even the most free conversational situation, in norms about turns, inherently shows elements of restrictive structure. Habermas presumably is concerned simply that no structure prevent a member of a group from having a right to participate in decision. But if one considers the possibility of an obligation to contribute what one knows and wants, the lack of a right to remain silent or to refuse commitment to a consensus – real enough issues – one has again a matter of constraint. In general, the universality of *appropriateness* as a meaning and ideal of speech situations is equivalent to the inherent presence of a principle of structure.

Moreover, not all social life is problem-solving and decision-making in the intended sense. There are everywhere satisfactions in uses of language that embody play, employ unequally shared performance abilities, accept ritual-life repetitions of words accepted as authoritative. One cannot envisage a viable form of life in which every point is open to dialogic determination at every point – in which everyone can say everything to everyone in every way at every moment in every place.

It can be objected that this is an unfair *reductio ad absurdum*, but Habermas does not show how to avoid such reduction. Such a reduction can be avoided only by a theory of communicative competence based on more than rational reflection alone, but built up through patient study and comparison of ideals of communication developed in actual communities.

In sum, every community embodies alternatives to the unique cognitive ideal, and any community (such as a revolutionary group) that could bring closer approximation to the ideal would have to embody alternatives.[18] The theory can only criticize communicative structure in the light of its absence; it cannot address real structures and choices among them. Yet therein lies the true problem for any community and person, revolutionary or not.

The problem can be phrased in terms of Habermas' ideal: What costs in communicative inequality should be accepted in order to gain the benefit of greater equality than now obtains? It could be more adequate to say: What kinds of communicative inequality are acceptable, what unacceptable, in the light of the historical situation and aspirations of a given community? (I say 'given community', for if a community wished to maintain certain forms of communicative structure, Habermas' ideal would not condone its being 'forced to be free'.)

The psychiatrically informed ideal of the ending of repressed communication seems faulty on similar grounds. The cognitive ideal, presumably, is to overcome repression that prevents solution of life-problems. From this it does not follow that no repression is permissible, that life should be lived in terms of an ideal of access to all unconsciously held knowledge. One could not play tennis that way – but to be serious, such a prescription would resemble a Christian ideal of a life without hidden sin, and might entail neurasthenia if rigorously observed. A healthy view of the relation between conscious and unconscious knowledge seems to me to be found in a statement by Sapir and its gloss by Harris (Sapir, 1927, cited from Mandelbaum, 1949: 559; Harris, 1951: 330):

> 'Complete analysis and the conscious control that comes with a complete analysis are at best but the medicine of society, not its food.' Which means: Don't take it as food; but also: Do take it as medicine.

Bernstein and Habermas are important in their pioneering efforts to analyze the problems of linguistic and communicative inequality. Both fall back on a cognitive ideal to which the absence of restriction, hence 'more is better', is intrinsic. Such an ideal is essential to certain aspects of social problems, but not sufficient to all. Both scholars are able to criticize cultural situations, but not to articulate alternative situations that answer the cultural nature of human life, that give a legitimate place to the practicalities of ordinary life and the full range of needs of human nature.

Both have a sense of a range of needs, to be sure, and other contemporary theorists have hardly addressed the issues at all. Bernstein and Habermas are representative particularly in the fact that the analysis of each revolves around a dichotomy. The influence of each indicates that the dichotomy touches something real in our experience and also that the realities involved have only begun to be analyzed. Dichotomies are symptoms of recognition of an issue; first approximations in addressing it. Adequate knowledge and successful change require linking the insights in such dichotomies to actual situations. Such linkage depends on ethnography, and ethnography leads to reconstruction of initial theories in more articulated, diversified form. Communicative theory, as a foundation of social theory and practice, will be informed by cases, and dichotomies will give way to sets of dimensions, diversely ranked and apportioned, in justice to the experience and aspirations of specific communities.

In sum, overcoming the function of language is first of all a problem of discovering the functions language does have. It is valuable to conceive ideal states of affairs, but the imagining and, equally, implementing of ideal situations should be, as Habermas implies and Bernstein would agree, open and dialogic. If diverse communities and traditions are among the voices, the outcome is likely to be a plurality of conceptions of what should be. For many communities, the goal of transformation will be not only to overcome

obstacles to openness, but also to overcome threats to patterns interwoven with the meaning of a way of life.

If we seek to evaluate such things critically, comparative ethnographic perspective is essential, in order to overcome the obstacle of unwitting ethnocentrism in efforts to think about principles and premises of verbal interaction. We are likely to extrapolate and project ideal notions of our own tradition, unwittingly misrepresenting the realities of our own conduct and the ideals of others. For example, many would be likely to link Habermas' speaker-situation ideal of unforced compulsion with the explicitness of Bernstein's ideal-type 'elaborated code', and think of explicitness (in public communication at least) as frank, direct, egalitarian. As noted earlier, however, explicitness and directness may be experienced as authoritarian, and associated with imposed decisions (cf. Darnell and Foster, 1988; Hymes, 1986; 1990; Rosaldo, 1973; Rushforth, 1981).

Thinking About Linguistic Inequality

Occasionally linguists have been so carried away by ideological certitude as to state that all languages are equally complex. This is of course not so. It is known that languages differ in sheer number of lexical elements by a ratio of about two to one as between world languages and local languages. They differ in number and in proportion of abstract, superordinate terms. They differ in elaboration of expressive and stylistic devices – lexical, grammatical and phonological. Languages differ in number of phoneme-like units, in complexity of morphophonemics, in complexity of word-structure (both phonological and morphological), in utilization of morphophonemically permitted morpheme-shapes, etc.

The usual view is that such things are distinctions without a difference, that all languages are equally adapted to the needs of those who use them. Leaving aside that such equality might be an equality of imperfect adaptations, speech communities round the world simply do not find this to be the case. They are found to prefer one language for a purpose as against another, to acquire some languages and give up others because of their suitability for certain purposes. No government can afford to assume the equality of all the languages in its domain.

The usual answer to this objection is that languages are potentially equal. This is so in one vital respect: all languages are capable of adaptive growth, and it is a victory of anthropologically-oriented linguistic work, particularly, to have established this point. The difficulty with the usual answer is twofold. First, each language constitutes an already formed starting point, so it is not clear that expansion of resources, however far, would result in two languages being interchangeable, let alone identical. Limiting consideration to world languages, we find that many who command more than one prefer one to

another for one or more purposes, and that this is often enough a function of the resources of the languages themselves. Second, the realization of potentiality entails costs. The image of a child acquiring mastery of language by an immanent unfolding misleads us here. It has an element of truth to which the world should hearken, but it omits the costs and the constitutive role of social factors. Most languages of the world will not be developed, as was Anglo-Saxon, into world languages over the course of centuries. (It is speculated that Japanese may be the last language to join that particular club.)

I regret to differ from so many colleagues on this issue, but if linguistic work is to make its contribution to solution of human problems, it is necessary not to blink realities. How could languages be other than different, if languages have any role in human life? To a great extent, languages, as said, are what has been made of them. There is a truth in the thesis of potentiality and a truth in the thesis of equivalent adaptation across communities, but both truths fall short of contemporary reality, where languages are not found unmolested, as it were, one to a community, each working out its destiny autonomously. Not to start from that reality is to fall back on the Herderian image, a falling back that is all too common. If the image were a reality, then analysis of linguistic inequality would perhaps be only an exercise for some who take pleasure in languages the way one may take pleasure in kinds of music. Given our world, analysis of linguistic inequality is of practical import.

What, then, are the sources and consequences of linguistic inequality? The kinds of diversity discussed above contribute, of course, but having hardly raised the question, we have no clear notion of the answer. Four categories articulated by the sociologist Talcott Parsons can serve as an initial guide.

First, languages differ in their makeup as *adaptive resources*; the linguistic resources of speech communities differ in what can be done with them, as has been indicated. A generation ago some kinds of difference were regarded with a spirit of relativistic tolerance, as special virtues of the languages that had them, and so one got at least some account of their lexical and grammatical strengths. A present temper treats mention of differences as grounds for suspicion of prejudice, if not racism, so that Whorf, who believed fervently in the universal grounding of language, and extolled the superiority of Hopi, has become, like Machiavelli, a perjorative symbol for unpleasant facts to which he called attention. Such a temper discourages learning much about this fundamental aspect of language.

Second, linguistic resources differ as an aspect of *persons* (agents) and personalities. In addition to variability inevitable on genetic grounds, there is variability due to cultural pattern. Conceptions of male and female roles, or of specialized roles, including that of leadership, may differ markedly among speech communities, so that eloquence or other verbal skills may be necessary for normal adult roles in one society (commonly for men, not

women), and essential to no important role at all in another. The requirements of a speaking role may be simple, or subtle and difficult, as in the special bind of a traditional Quaker minister who had to speak out of spiritual silence and, desirably, after periods of doubting his calling (Bauman, 1974). Differences in desired skills, of course, feed back upon the ways in which the linguistic resources of a community are elaborated.

Third, linguistic resources differ according to the *institutions* of a community. So far as I know, comparative analysis of institutions has not much considered the ways in which they do or do not require or foster particular developments of verbal skill and resource, or at least has not phrased its findings as contributions to the understanding of language. There are indeed some analyses of the development of the verbal style and resources of particular sciences, of science as a social movement and of religious and political movements. My impression is that there are case studies, but not coordinated efforts toward a comparative analysis.

Fourth, linguistic resources differ according to the *values and beliefs* of a community. Infants' vocalizations, for example, may be postulated as a special language, one with serious consequences, such that special interpreters are required, so that a child's wishes can be known and its soul kept from returning whence it came. The shaping of linguistic resources by religious concerns appears to be attracting interest (cf. Samarin, 1976). A community's values and beliefs may implicitly identify spontaneous speech as a danger to the cultural order, as among the traditional Ashanti, or they may treat speaking, and especially elaborate speaking, as a badge of inferiority, both between persons and among the orders of a social hierarchy, as is the case with the Wolof of Senegal. The normal condition of a community may be constant chatter on the one hand, or pervasive quiet on the other, according to how speech is valued.

Such a fourfold guide to differences does not in itself go beyond a Herderian perspective of discrete speech communities, each part of the cultural plenitude of the world. Such description bears on inequality, however, when speech communities are viewed in a larger context. Differences by themselves would constitute inequality only in the sense of lack of equivalence, not in the sense of inadequacy. But just as the resources of a speech community must be described as speech styles in relation to contexts of situation, when the community is being described, so also must they be assessed in relation to contexts of human problems.

The essential thing seems to me to be to assess a speech community in terms of the relation between its abilities and its opportunities. Every speech community is to some degree caught up in a changing relationship with a larger context, in which opportunities for the meaningful use of traditionally fostered abilities may be declining, and novel opportunities (or requirements) may be impinging – for which members have not been prepared. The term *competence* should be employed within just such a perspective. It should not be a synonym for ideal grammatical knowledge, as

it has been used by Chomsky, or extended to a speech community collectively, as used by David De Camp, or extended to ideal communicative knowledge as by Habermas, or done away with, as Labov has seemed to prefer. Rather, *competence* should retain its normal sense of actual ability. Just such a term is needed to address the processes at work in actual communities and their consequences for persons. As a term for ideal knowledge, competence may overcome inequality conceptually, but only as a term for actual abilities, assessed in relation to contexts of use, can it help to overcome inequality practically. (On the development of the idea of communicative competence, see Hymes 1967d, 1971c, 1979b, 1984, 1985c, 1987e, 1992d. Habermas took up the term but changed the direction.)

Conclusion

To sum up: from one standpoint the history of human society can be seen as a history of diversity of language – diversity of languages as such, diversity as to their media, structures, and functions and of diversity as a problem. From another standpoint, diversity has been a resource and an opportunity – for scholars to understand the potentialities of language and for speakers to develop the potentialities of forms of life and identities.

From antiquity it has been the mark of a true science of humanity, of greatness, to attempt to comprehend the known diversity of cultures and history. Herodotus did so in a narrative of his age's great conflict between East and West, incorporating his world's ethnology. The Enlightenment, while recognizing a debt to antiquity, was conscious of the superiority and the challenge of a new horizon provided by knowledge of manners and customs from the New World and from remoter Africa and Asia. The Victorian evolutionists, while recognizing Enlightenment precedent, were conscious of superiority and challenge in a horizon provided by recognition of humanity's great prehistoric antiquity. In this century there has been no brand-new horizon of data in space or time to vivify the whole, but sheer expansion of numbers of scholars and studies, a new depth as well in primate studies and finds of fossil man, gradual establishment of a principle of methodological relativism, and now increasing participation in the study of one's own society, can count as equivalent.

Now we are at a juncture where only the future, not the scope of the past or the present, offers the possibility of a new horizon. The choices appear to be retrenchment and irrelevance, the service of domination or the service of liberation through universalization. The sciences of humankind have developed in the matrix of a certain relationship between one part of the world and the rest. Anthropology has been fairly described as the study of colored people by whites.[19] That matrix has changed irreversibly. A science limited to certain societies or interests was always implicitly a contradiction in terms; increasingly, it has become an impossibility or a monstrosity.

Knowledge about people is a resource, just as control of oil and armies. Peoples cannot accept permanent inferiority in this regard.

For the scholar, the problem is complicated by relations not only between his or her own country and others, but by relations between the governments of other countries and their own peoples. Usually any knowledge worth having, that he or she can gain, entails a relationship of mutuality and trust with people being studied. Thus universalization of the science must mean extension not only to all countries of participation, but to all communities. The proper role of the scientist, and the goal of his and her efforts, should not be 'extractive', but mediative. It should be to help communities be ethnographers of their own situations, to relate their knowledge usefully to general knowledge, not merely to test and document. Such a role could be the safeguard of both the intellectual and the ethical purposes of the science itself.

The study of language has had a checkered career in the history just sketched. It became a self-conscious activity, and to a great extent has developed, as an instrument of exclusion and domination. The analysis of Sanskrit in ancient India, of classical songs and writings in ancient China, of Greek and then Latin in the ancient Mediterranean, of nascent national languages in the Renaissance (e.g., Nebrija's grammar of Castilian), were in the interest of cultural hegemony. Only in our own century, through the decisive work of Boas, Sapir, and other anthropologically oriented linguists (as components of the general triumph of methodological relativism in the human sciences), has every form of human speech gained the right, as it were, to contribute on equal footing to what is known of human language.

The present situation of linguistics in the United States is mixed, if not obscure. A Chomskian perspective holds out the liberation of mankind as an aspiration, but its practice can contribute only conceptually at best, if it is not in fact an obstacle to work that is needed. This chapter has argued for understanding speech communities as actual communities of speakers. In this way one can go beyond a liberal humanism which merely recognizes the abstract potentiality of languages, toward a humanism which can deal with concrete situations, with the inequalities that obtain and can help to transform them through knowledge of the ways in which language is organized as a human problem and resource.

Notes

1 The phrase 'Linguistic Theory' ought to refer to a general theory of language, or at least a general theory of the aspects of language dealt with by linguists, but it has been appropriated for just those aspects of language dealt with in transformational generative grammar – or by competing forms of formal grammar – another consequence of Chomsky's skill as a polemicist. Hence the quotation marks.

2 For example, discussion of 'The Problem of Linguistic Communication in the Modern World', *La Monda Lingvo-Problemo*, **3**, 9 (1971): 129–76.

3 There are noble exceptions – Schuchardt in the nineteenth century, for one, and the Prague School and J. R. Firth in the twentieth century, but the main thrust of successive developments has been as described. Transformational grammar is included under structural method here because it shares the same assumptions when contrasted to a functional approach. Cf. the contrast drawn in Hymes (1967a).

4 Assumptions as to the bases of mutual intelligibility, and as to relations among linguistic boundaries, ethnic boundaries, and communication are analyzed in Hymes (1968).

5 On complex linguistic communities, see Ferguson (1966; 1991). On comparative study of the role of speaking, see Hymes (1966; 1970a; 1972b) . The work of John Gumperz and William Labov and their students has been of special importance to the understanding of the problems dealt with in this section.

6 Fourteen paragraphs were added to the original article at this point.

7 The possibility is considered by Greenberg, 1968: 133, in the course of a lucid account of approaches to language classification. He suggests the semantic features of richness in quasi-synonymity as a possible example of a characteristic that would permit one to treat languages that exist in written form as a class from the standpoint of linguistics proper.

Greenberg's requirement is that the external fact of a functional role go together with linguistically internal facts of structure. In what follows I argue that the fact of written form does not itself uniquely determine functional role; there is need for a typology within the category, 'language with a written form'. Greenberg's requirement would still hold for several types within the category, provided that the notion of 'internal facts of structure' is interpreted in the broad sense of the organization of means of speech (and writing), not in the narrow sense of grammar proper.

8 Both plenitude and integration are perhaps illustrated by traditional and vernacular styles pointed out by Jaquith. Each may entail something in speech. A sign in one spelling may perhaps be read aloud in one way, a sign in the other in another. If so, if 'right', *et al.*, go with one spoken style, 'rite', *et al.*, with another, the differences cannot be in the sounds the letters are considered to spell. The spelled sounds are the same. The differences would be in sub-phonemic detail, tempo, voice quality, intonation, and perhaps other aspects of manner.

Other examples of interacting styles:

- Allen (1992) describes a common, complex interplay of speech characters drawn by hand in the air by users of Chinese.
- Smith and Schmidt (1994) explore the social and stylistic meanings associated with the several styles of Japanese writing, (*kanji, hiragana, katakana rômaji*).

Ronald Scollon – responding (personal communication) to an observation that about thirty years ago American academics began not to read prepared texts, but speak to or from them, so much so that to read now may make a presentation seem boring, however cogent the material – points out that in overseas and international settings speaking in English to one's audience in a less formal manner (as has come to be expected in many situations in the United States) can be prejudicial to non-native users of English. People who have assiduously studied

written English discourse for years can follow a condensed, written essay read out loud more easily than a more audience-sensitive talk with nuances of intonation, irony, and jokes. Scollon suggests that the oral features that make a talk more effective than reading a written text may work against those not part of the speaker's community of oral style. Having learned to be chatty and jokey to humanize presentations, one may not include, but exclude people whose competence is in formal written style.

9 See works cited in Note 5, and, on writing, Hymes, 1964: 24–5.

10 For steps toward a much needed ethnography of reading, see Boyarin (1992) and Heath (1983); note especially Boyarin, p. 3.

11 I owe this information to Sheila Dauer.

12 From a comment by G. E. von Grunebaum, in Hoijer, 1954: 228–9.

13 For example, T. S. Eliot, 1943: 16:

> one has only learnt to get the better of words
> For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
> one is no longer disposed to say it.

The question of Herderian standpoint and the mixed standing of linguistic resources as determinants is reviewed in Hymes (1970a)

14 From work of David French. On the general issue, see Hymes (1966; 1972b).

15 Cole, Gay, Glick, Sharp (1971) is an excellent demonstration of the necessity of ethnography for assessment of linguistic and cognitive abilities, even though, unfortunately, the authors do not disclose the linguistic characteristics of the material on which their work rests.

16 Thirty-four paragraphs were added to the original article at this point. For more on the significance of Bernstein's work, see Chapter 9.

17 From an article, 'Summation and Response', *Continuum*, Spring–Summer 1970: 131, as cited in Schroyer, 1973: 161.

18 Cf. these lines from a conscientious-objector camp in Oregon in World War II ('Chronicle of Division', Part v) (Everson, 1968: 199–20):

> The pacifist speaks,
> Face to face with his own kind, And seeks to fashion a common course
> That all may mark.
> But whatever he offers,
> Finds already framed in another's thought
> A divergent approach.
> The binding belief that each allows
> Is cruxed on rejection:
> Thou shalt not kill.
>
> But for all the rest,
> What Voice shall speak from the burning bush,
> In the worksite noons,
> When the loaf is broken,
> And brief and rebuttal countercross,
> And no one wins?

19 Cf. Willis (1973). This discussion draws on my introduction to the book in which his paper appears (Hymes, 1973b).

Chapter 4

Report from an Underdeveloped Country: Toward Linguistic Competence in the United States[1]

There is nothing new in the goal of understanding language as a part of social life. What is new, as we near the end of the century, is the proliferation of activity toward that goal. Forty-odd years ago a paper on the meanings of kinship terms could count as a bridge between formal linguistics and social life and have a special designation, 'ethnolinguistic', in its title (Garvin and Riesenberg, 1952). Today the scholarly world abounds with bridges and designations – 'sociolinguistic', 'ethnography of speaking' 'ethnography of communication', 'pragmatics', 'conversational analysis', 'sociology of language', 'social psychology of language', together with 'communication', 'intercultural' and 'cross-cultural communication', 'semiotics)' ethnomethodology', 'discourse'. Yet work that has useful bearing on the situation of particular communities and groups is not as commonplace as one might hope, nor is work that builds a truly social study of language that is concrete, yet comparative, cumulative, yet critical, as normal as one might expect. More such work is appearing, yet, with regard to knowledge of itself in terms of language the United States remains a largely underdeveloped country. There is more authority about language in linguistics and among savants of the media, than knowledge to explain, and even transform, the role that language has in our lives.

It would be useful to compare the United States with other countries in regard to the connection of established disciplines, practical situations, and the life of language. What is taken for granted in the United States might come into focus as something particular, the result of a certain social history and certain valuations. The United States might come into focus as one kind of place, or series of places, alongside China, Dênmark, India, Nigeria, and other countries (cf. Berry, 1983).

We are not far enough along to be able to ask 'Why is the United States the way it is?' because we have yet to realize that the United States is a certain way. One way we are, I suspect, is due to an interaction of subtle forms of