

**Towards an Ecology of Context and Communication:**

**negotiating meaning and language education.**

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PhD Submission

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May 1993



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## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the postgraduate students and course directors at King's College, London, who participated in this research and allowed recorded interviews to be made, data from which forms a central part of my thesis.

I also gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance given me by the Overseas Development Administration, in the form of an Education Development Scheme award, which enabled me to complete the work.

## **Abstract of Thesis**

In this thesis I set out to develop a social symbolic approach to context and communication which goes beyond a code-systemic perspective on language, and one of economic exchange in language use. I begin by reviewing relations between linguistics and language teaching, and the dangers to the latter when it becomes pre-occupied with linguistic theory and description. I consider the potential of applied linguistics to synthesise key ideas from various language related disciplines in descriptively adequate accounts of communication in social situations.

In the remainder of chapter one I examine a number of 'centrifugal' approaches to the analysis of language use, arguing a tendency for them to underestimate the importance of social symbolism in communication.

Taking a range of social symbolic structures and processes in educational contexts as the starting point for 'centripetal' investigations, in chapter two I describe salient aspects of social symbolism in contexts of communication. These include contrasting social, educational and economic forces in educational institutions, conceptions of role and role relations between students and teachers, and structural symbolic features such as dominance and dependency within rites of transition.

In chapter three I explore further aspects of social symbolism revealed in communication, such as identity and risk-taking. I also discuss criteria for developing and appraising models of 'an ecology of context and communication'.

Chapter four deals with the notion of negotiating meaning as a key process in social encounters, and the influence of social symbolic factors on meaning negotiation in dyadic communication.

Having explored important dimensions of social symbolism in both context and communication, along with implications for the negotiation of meaning, I argue the value of raising awareness of social symbolism in educational processes in the final chapter of the thesis. I address ways of incorporating major aspects of social symbolism into language education and discuss a range of issues involved in so doing.



## 1.1 Descriptive Adequacy and Pedagogic Relevance

The case for a principled approach to English language teaching has been cogently presented in recent years by, inter alia, Stevens (1974 & 1977), Brumfit (1980b) and Widdowson (1984a). Widdowson (1984b:36) expresses the interdependence of theory and practice as follows: "the effectiveness of practice depends on relevant theory: the relevance of theory depends on effective practice".

In accepting this proposition, our curiosity leads us to speculate on the ways in which theory and practice support one another. Inquiry into the relevance of theory for language teaching and learning entails examining a wide range of issues, such as the diverse forms of knowledge and skills required of teachers and learners, the multifaceted nature of language itself and its pervasive presence in not only education processes, but all forms of human endeavour.

A concern for promoting the kinds of knowledge and skills language learners may be expected to need for transactional purposes, characterises what has come to be known as a 'communicative approach' to language teaching (Brumfit and Johnson 1979, Littlewood 1981, Johnson and Morrow 1981).

A communicative approach ... makes us consider language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. ... We can therefore combine the newer functional view of language with the traditional structural view in order to achieve a more complete communicative perspective.

(Littlewood 1981:x)

Pedagogical proposals for enabling learners to use language forms appropriately in social situations (Wilkins 1972 & 1976, van Ek 1975, Munby 1978) show a concern for relations between language forms and user goals in the target language. Whether 'goal-oriented' or 'process-oriented' (Widdowson 1984b:178), the effectiveness of a communicative approach to language teaching depends, in part, on pedagogic proposals firmly rooted in descriptively adequate accounts of communication in social situ.

Arising out of recent developments in language teaching then is the key question of the degree to which descriptions of the styles and purposes for which language

is used by individuals in social contexts are comprehensive and coherent. Such descriptions must go beyond stereotypical definitions of situation and linguistic rituals for performing economic transactions, to account for how individuals make use of social symbolism in creating and sustaining communication in language contexts. The search for adequate descriptions of how individuals invest identities, personalities, perceptions of self and others, preferred styles of communicating and negotiating meaning, constitutes, I argue, a central area of enquiry for applied linguistics, and establishes the theme of the first chapter of my thesis.

### 1.1.1 Adequacy Criteria

A useful point of departure in seeking ways of appraising language descriptions is the ordered set of criteria which Chomsky (1957) first proposed as the litmus test for competing models of grammar. Radford (1981:25-6) summarizes them as follows:

A grammar of a language is observationally adequate if it correctly predicts which sentences are (and are not) syntactically, semantically and phonologically well-formed in the language. A grammar of a language is descriptively adequate if it correctly predicts which sentences are well-formed, and also correctly describes the syntactic, semantic and phonological structure of the sentences in such a way as to provide a principled account of the native speaker's intuition about this structure. A grammar of a language attains explanatory adequacy just in case it correctly predicts which sentences are well-formed, correctly describes their structure, and also does so in terms of a highly restricted set of optimally simple, universal, maximally general principles which represent psychologically plausible natural principles of mental computation, and are learnable by the child in a limited period of time, and given access to limited data.

Reflecting on these criteria as a general formula for evaluating theories and descriptions of language, we may characterise the history of linguistics this century as a continued opposition between two major research paradigms, each in its formulations and procedures focussing on a particular level of adequacy. The empiricist-functionalist tradition is one which values third person observations of actually occurring language behaviour. Observations provide data for researcher inferences concerning language diversity (qv Gumperz 1982a, Erickson and Schultz 1982 as examples of work in this tradition). By contrast, a rationalist-structuralist approach emphasises the detached production of theoretical statements,

usually in the form of single factor, maximally general **explanations** (qv Chomsky 1965, Levi-Strauss 1968, Sperber and Wilson 1986).

Where contact has on occasions been made between the two paradigms, it has not been altogether fruitful. Reviewing the relatively short history of second language acquisition research, Bourne (1988:88) refers to a basic flaw underlying much of the work caused by "a confusion of rationalist and empiricist conceptualizations of language and of modes of research".

Modes of language research need not however be mutually exclusive in principle or conflated in operation. As a crucial reference point for evaluating language observations and theories, the rather neglected criterion of **descriptive adequacy** could, I suggest, hold the key to a fusion of rationalist-structuralist and empiricist-functionalist paradigms of enquiry. As a benchmark and mediating criterion, descriptive adequacy offers a means of establishing the validity of researcher explanations by testing them against the psychological reality of first person language experience. In section 1.4.4.1, I discuss the limitations of a rationalist approach to pragmatics (Sperber and Wilson 1986), that produces a theoretical construct the psychological reality of which remains to be demonstrated. In section 1.4.6, I argue that empirical studies in which researcher inferences are used to construct a functionalist account of language (qv Harris 1984a and 1984b, Thorp 1983), pay insufficient attention to participant definitions of speech events, in particular to their cognitive constructs and interpretations of its social symbolism.

Testing language theories for descriptive adequacy can help gauge the potential relevance of models for pedagogic processes. Without knowing the degree to which accounts of language correspond to users' knowledge constructs, patterns of expectation and performance procedures, we have no firm basis for assessing their usefulness in formulating a principled approach to language teaching and learning.

### 1.1.2 Aspects of Descriptive Adequacy

In order then to attain a satisfactory degree of descriptive adequacy, accounts of language use must offer coherent descriptions from language users' points of view.

Though furnishing descriptions of the varied, at times conflicting, intuitions and experiences of language users is no easy task, if we can succeed in adequately accounting for the rich diversity of communicative behaviour in social situations we may help restore a sense of language belonging to the user as much as to the linguist. In so far as we can also achieve pedagogically relevant models, we may promote a sense of language belonging to the learner as well as the teacher.

A central dynamic of any model which aims to be descriptively adequate, is reconciling third person analysis with first person experience of language events. As a first step in that direction we can increase our awareness of some of the major differences in disposition and orientation between language analysts and users. In the following three sections I outline some of these significant contrasts.

#### 1.1.2.1 Analyst Models and User Constructs

Though retrospective analysis of language texts and real-time participant interpretation of communication share a common problem-solving orientation, there are many differences between the two discourse situations, processes and agents involved.

To begin with, decontextualised linguistic analysis has traditionally concerned itself with the production of relatively stable features of 'langue'. Real-time, context-specific interpretations of communication, however, focus not just on 'parole' but on the **human agency** involved, and the dynamic processes used by individuals to achieve understanding through contextual and communicative resources.

The investigatory framework in which formal language analysis takes place is necessarily an artificial construct. In order to reduce a relatively chaotic speech scenario into some kind of systematicity, analysts set about the business of controlling the language environment in such a way as to create an **artificial simplicity** that facilitates the analytic process. By the very nature of their position, analysts have time to retrospectively create order and coherence outside the language situation investigated. By contrast participants in social encounters have to deal with the **natural complexities** of communication, for example ambiguities

of social context, diverse identities of interlocutors, incomplete knowledge of discourse topics etc, as these arise in situ. The amount of time and energy which individuals can afford to spend in linguistic analysis is constrained by the coterminous nature of talk: participants are generally expected, unlike researchers, to carry out metalinguistic procedures whilst attending to other aspects of communication simultaneously performed.

A further difference between language researchers and users is that the position of the analyst as generally conceived is of someone **external** to the situation described, a **third-person, non-participant** in communication. It is from this 'detached' position that some researchers claim an 'objectivity' towards the phenomena under investigation. By contrast a participant is a **first-person agent** who operates **inside** a context of language use and is engaged in shaping events and understandings of communication that takes place.

Whereas the **theoretical** goal of formal analysis is to arrive at elegantly ordered, convincing **explanations** of language phenomena, a central goal of participation in communication is to achieve **practical understandings** of interlocutor meaning.

In recourse to analytic procedures the linguist seeks to account for language phenomena by methods of **situation-external validation**. Using procedures of standardisation, decontextualisation and abstraction (Lyons 1972), the linguist constructs formalistic generalisations in an attempt to **represent** an exact systematization of language structure or knowledge. By contrast, participants in social encounters attempt to solve ongoing problems of understanding by recourse to **participant-internal correspondence**. Using a set of dynamic communication procedures they seek to **present** and assimilate novel cognitions into existing structures of expectation to arrive at approximations of intended meaning.

The degree of precision required of participants in understanding communication is not measured by situation-external criteria of adequacy for explanatory statements about language, such as universal rules of grammar or principles of language acquisition. Rather it may be viewed as relative to a range of non-linguistic contextual features such as the interpersonal and transactional goals within a particular encounter, presumptions of shared knowledge and of role and status

relations obtaining between interlocutors. In other words, linguists and language users occupy different positions for different purposes and conceive of language in different ways in order to reach their respective goals.

Accounts of language use, therefore, seeking to achieve descriptive adequacy need to do more than produce third-person, external analyses. They also have to include first-person, insider understandings of communication, and achieve satisfactory ways of reconciling differences between researcher inference and participant experience of language events and processes.

#### 1.1.2.2 Analytic And Experiential Knowledge

The tendency in much of the western intellectual tradition has been to dissociate language and experience in such a way that language is seen as rather neutral, merely serving to 'carry' the fruits of experience. Whereas in this view language is seen as a kind of a 'conduit' subservient to experience in various ways, an alternative view ... would argue that language is itself not only a part of experience, but intimately involved in the manner in which we construct and organise experience. As such, it is never neutral but deeply implicated in building meaning.

(Christie 1989:v)

Another important difference between third-person accounts and first-person experiences of communication is in the kind of knowledge invoked. Whereas language analysts display knowledge **about** something, analytic knowledge gained by detachment from and external explanation of a language situation, users possess knowledge **of** something, experiential knowledge acquired by involvement in and understanding of communication events and processes.

Contrasting scientific explanation in the natural sciences with an understanding of human behaviour in the social sciences, Brumfit (1984:5) reminds us of this major distinction "much discussed in the late nineteenth century when the social sciences were being established as legitimate areas of study, though it has been ignored in more recent behaviouralist approaches to social sciences":

The human studies differ from the sciences because the latter deal with facts which present themselves to consciousness as external and separate phenomena, while the former deal with the living connections of reality experienced in the mind. It follows that the sciences arrive at connections within nature through inferences by means of a combination of hypotheses

while the human sciences are based on directly given mental connections. We explain nature but we understand mental life. (Dilthey, 1894, in Brumfit loc cit)

Dilthey's contrast between **explaining nature** and **understanding mental life** recognises "the unique character of an investigation of human activity carried out by another human being" (Brumfit loc cit), and reflects the vital distinction between **analytic knowledge** gained from traditional scientific procedures and **experiential knowledge** obtained by involvement in social activities. Berlin (1980:117) characterises first-hand, experiential knowledge as follows:

It is a knowing founded on memory or imagination ... This is the sort of knowing which participants in an activity claim to possess as against mere observers; the knowledge of the actors, as against that of the audience, of the "inside" story as opposed to that obtained from some "outside" vantage point; knowledge by direct acquaintance with my inner states or by sympathetic insight into those of others, which may be obtained by a high degree of imaginative power.

Experiential knowledge then embraces imaginative and affective aspects of human experience, acknowledging the processes of engagement and subjectivity so often filtered out of traditional scientific research. The part that this kind of knowledge plays "in the understanding of the simplest communication addressed by one sentient creature to another" is highlighted by Wiemann and Backlund (1980:193, citing Weinstein 1969) who identify **empathy** as the most crucial aspect of communicative competence: in showing affiliation and support, "the individual must be able to take the role of the other accurately; he must be able to correctly predict the impact that various lines of action will have on alter's definition of situation". Thus experientially acquired knowledge is central to our ability to anticipate interlocutor response and perform a range of communication strategies in pursuing encounter goals.

If we wish to account for the role of experiential knowledge in language use, we must begin to question the usefulness of predominantly scientific procedures in the field of human enquiry, and make room for a focus on participant definitions of situation and interpretations of communication.

A further kind of knowledge is that acquired not as part and parcel of participation in everyday life, nor consciously created by self or others: its actual occurrence is

unpredictable and we have little control over the form in which it becomes manifest. Nevertheless the knowledge that is produced can be most enlightening. Discussing problem-solving in the scientific domain, Kuhn (1970:5-6) makes a vivid contrast between the limitations and constraints of 'normal' scientific research: "a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education", a science which "often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments"; and the process of scientific revolutions, "the tradition-shattering complements to the tradition-bound activity of normal science". Kuhn (op cit:122-3) highlights the crucial role of this **intuitive knowledge** for paradigmatic renewal in the sciences as follows:

... normal science leads only to the recognition of anomalies and to crises. And these are terminated, not by deliberation and interpretation, but by a relatively sudden and unstructured event like the gestalt switch. Scientists then often speak of the "scales falling from their eyes" or of the "lightning flash" that inundates a previously obscure puzzle, enabling its components to be seen in a new way that for the first time permits its solution. On other occasions the relevant illumination comes in sleep. No ordinary sense of the term 'interpretation' fits these flashes of intuition through which a new paradigm is born.

Berlin (op cit:115) also makes reference to states of being that cannot be contained by analytic knowledge processes or products. He contrasts certain states and actions over which we have little control with deliberate acts of creation which, taken by themselves, omit too much:

... unconscious and irrational 'drives', which even the most developed and trained psychological methods cannot guarantee to lay bare; the unintended and unforeseen consequences of our acts, which we cannot be said to have 'made' if making entails intention; the entire natural world by interaction with which we live and function, which remains opaque inasmuch as it is not ex hypothesi, the work of our hands or minds; since we do not 'make' this, how can anything it possesses be grasped as verum? How can there be a scienza of such an amalgam?

In his account of the structure of scientific revolutions, Kuhn uncovers a central paradox of the sciences, that although intuitive knowledge gives birth to new scientific paradigms, thus sustaining "normal" science, the latter dismisses the importance of "subjective" knowledge to its own endeavours, as "unscientific". A similar criticism can be levelled against linguistics in its decontextualised, analytic

mode which tends to marginalise or exclude experiential knowledge as irrelevant to the production of explanatory models of 'langue'.

Experiential knowledge however plays an important role in social encounters. We draw on frames and schemata (Tannen 1979) constructed from previous experience to understand present contexts of communication. Furthermore, in interaction there is the potential transformational power of intuition on our personal constructs (Kelly 1955). One implication for producing descriptively adequate accounts of language use is that if we are to achieve practical understandings for renewal of knowledge constructs and language behaviour, we need to incorporate first-person experiences and intuitions into our accounts of communication and interaction.

#### 1.1.2.3 Teaching and Analytic Knowledge: Education and Experiential Knowledge

As far as 'education' is concerned, analytic knowledge is most often associated with externally produced, teacher dispensed factual material. In short, analytic processes and knowledge structures pervade teaching. In language teaching, for instance, syllabuses are often an expression of analytic knowledge - structural, notional or functional. This state of affairs reflects both the predominance of analytic research techniques in linguistic science, and language teaching's continuing emphasis on the formal products of linguistic analysis (Brumfit and Johnson 1979).

The descriptive convenience of separating communication continua into discrete stretches, of reducing contextual complexity to linguistic order and abstracting patterns to produce elegant explanations of language system, facilitates the prescriptive process of selecting and ordering language forms for pedagogical purposes. A syllabus based on inventories of forms, notions or functions contains units produced by applying analytic principles of isolation and classification to language phenomena. Thus a 'communicative' syllabus can be described as follows:

If a syllabus is a 'list of items we wish to teach' and if we are prepared to see language learning as a question of mastering not only structures but also 'meanings' or 'uses', then our

syllabuses must list items of 'meaning' or 'use' as well as items of structure .. semantic syllabus inventories contain not one, but many lists - not just structures but notions, functions, settings, topics, roles (and often other types of category as well). ... We must select one of these types of item as our 'unit of organisation'.  
 (Johnson and Morrow 1981:8-9)

The preponderance of third-person analytic knowledge forms in language teaching suggests an undervaluing of first-person experiential knowledge, for example of being in the role of student or teacher, as part of the communication process. A taxonomically driven syllabus, whether structural, notional, functional, task or skills based, may also neglect salient procedures for negotiating meaning in communication.

Teaching as the dispensing of analytic knowledge contrasts markedly with the process of education (5.1) which embraces experiential knowledge: constructs acquired by learners on the basis of first-hand experiences of what it is **to be**, for instance a teacher or learner, as distinct from factual knowledge **about**, or skills-based knowledge **how to**.

Rousseau's conviction that "education should liberate natural potentialities instead of suppressing them" (Sherover 1984:xiv) is a reminder of the meaning of 'educare', to draw out from latent existence more intuitive forms of understanding. Within education too comes the potential for transformation of personal constructs, a process vital to the development of practical understanding.

Yet how many language teaching syllabuses attempt to incorporate something of the subtlety and complexity of experiential knowledge in their content? How many recognise the significance of first-person constructs of social situation in performing and evaluating communication: constructs, for instance, of social identity, position and status obtaining between participants; of role relations, rights and responsibilities; or the effect of these on communication strategies and overall style? However if **teaching for communication** is to include insider, participant-as-subject understanding and to broaden into **education for interaction** (chapter 5), then classroom processes will have to engage student-constructed experiential understandings as well as teacher-dispensed analytic knowledge.

## 1.2 Language Teaching and Linguistics

The recent history of English language teaching reflects the ways in which linguistics and its sub-disciplines have developed. Challenging a narrowly structuralist approach to language teaching, the general learning theory implied by Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar (1957 and 1965) amounted to an assault on behaviourism and "stimulated the growth of alternative theoretical models which reinstated the importance of cognition in accounting for human language activity" (Howatt 1984:270). A cognitive code theory allowed for greater emphasis on the learning of rules to generate sentences than on the memorisation of patterns, and thereby provided an antidote to the excesses of structural language teaching. Though it little influenced language teaching directly, transformational-generative grammar was to have far-reaching consequences for the organisation and presentation of its syllabuses.

Largely ignoring questions internal to linguistic theory, such as whether descriptions of language are best characterised in a structuralist or transformationalist framework, applied linguistics has tended to a simple faith in the relevance of linguistics per se for language teaching. The most common expression of faith in the pedagogic relevance of linguistics is the belief that "the linguistic sciences can ... provide good descriptions" for language teaching (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens 1964:167). This view is reiterated by Corder (1973:30-31) who saw the relevance of 'the linguistic approach' (sic) to language teaching as being the provision of "by far the most detailed and comprehensive descriptions of language ... The linguistic approach is responsible for determining how we describe what we are to teach".

However there are a number of reasons why we should treat calls for a linguistic approach to language teaching with a deal of circumspection. Firstly there is Chomsky's caution (cited in Allen and van Buren 1971:155) to distinguish between the desirability of incorporating **specific insights** from linguistics and psychology that can be demonstrated, by language teachers, to be useful to the business of language teaching, and the danger of adopting linguistic models or procedures in language teaching. The issue here then is indeed the pedagogic relevance of language descriptions which Widdowson (1984b:7) claims cannot be taken for

granted, "because it is not obvious that the way linguists conceive of language is the most appropriate for teaching purposes".

Secondly, in adopting a linguistic approach to language teaching there is the danger of assuming a hierarchical, uni-directional relationship between the disciplines. The trickle-down theory, in which linguistic descriptions filter through to language teaching and the role of applied linguistics is defined as the application of linguistics to language teaching, is restrictive and does little to foster alternative models of language use. That language teaching ought not to be a mirror image of linguistics, and that any invoked parallelism between them can be misleading, is implied in Corder's (op cit:16) distinction between the questions and preoccupations of theoretical linguistics and the practical business of language teaching:

Describing natural languages is of course an activity in which the purely theoretical linguist engages but his objectives are those of testing the validity of his theory and not those of providing information or instruction to the non-linguist.

The linguist then is engaged in activities and goals quite different from those of the language teacher as characterised by Roulet (1975:73):

the principal aim of teaching modern languages is to permit individuals to communicate with others in the diverse personal and professional situations of daily living.

Roulet's view complements that of Widdowson (1972:17) who, distinguishing between language 'use' and 'usage', claims that:

it is a radical mistake to suppose that a knowledge of how sentences are put to use in communication follows automatically from a knowledge of how sentences are composed and what signification they have as linguistic units ... There is no simple equation between linguistic forms and communicative functions.

Herein lies a third observation which further undermines a belief in the capacity of linguistics, as traditionally conceived, to provide language teaching with 'good' descriptions of how individuals use language to communicate in social situations. It is that mainstream linguistics, through its emphasis on relations within and between syntactic, semantic and phonological systems, by and large confines itself

to the study of language as a self-contained symbolic code.

Given the increasing divergence between linguistics' preoccupation with language as internal system, and movements towards the teaching of language as and for communication (Widdowson 1984b:215), it is perhaps not surprising that Roulet (op cit:65) concludes, "though traditional grammar is insufficient to the task, modern grammatical theories and the descriptions which derive from them are far from furnishing complete solutions to the teacher's problems."

Roulet (op cit:77) proposes quite a different relationship between language teaching and linguistics:

Rather than starting from the contribution of most well known linguistic theories and asking of them what they can bring to language teaching pedagogy, it would in fact be better to begin from the demands of teaching languages as instruments of communication and on that basis look at other approaches to language.

Since linguistic theory and description has often demonstrated little pedagogic relevance, Roulet's suggestion appears commendable. Starting from the viewpoint of teaching language for communication, language teachers looking for adequate descriptions of their subject matter can gain valuable insights from other approaches to language.

Recognising that communication is essentially a social act taking place in 'contexts-of-situation' (Firth 1952 *passim*), social anthropology seeks to shed light on the nature of such contexts and their significance for communication therein (Leach 1976, Turner 1974).

Social psychology has much to relate about the presentation of self in social encounters (Goffman 1967 and 1969), and about the role of non-verbal communication (Argyle and Dean 1965, Birdwhistell 1970, Hall 1959).

Sociological insights into the nature of position, status and role show how externally derived social structures affect language performance (Bernstein 1970). Counterbalancing this deterministic tendency is a view from cognitive anthropology, (qv Frake 1964, Geertz 1973 and Goodenough 1969), cognitive psychology (qv Eiser 1980) and cognitive sociology (qv Cicourel 1973) suggesting that individuals use language to negotiate their own definitions of situation, and

that locally produced contextual frames and schemata have a reflexive action on communication performances (Tannen 1987).

Given such valuable sources of insight into social contexts and communication processes, language education can benefit greatly from studying these non-linguistic approaches to language behaviour. In calling for language educators to consider the relevance of other approaches to their subject matter, the question arises as to how we can make sense of the kaleidoscope of views expressed within the social sciences. To answer the question and alleviate the dangers of opening this 'Pandora's box', we need to look closely at the role of applied linguistics in the matter.

### 1.3 The Role of Applied Linguistics in Language Education

Applied linguistics has an important mediating role to play in language education in terms of promoting a dialogue between the language teaching professions and approaches to language description from a range of informative sources. Though still generally conceived with reference to the dialectic between language teaching and linguistics, applied linguistics has the potential to bring together insights from language-related disciplines for the benefit of language teachers and learners.

Tracing the development of applied linguistics in Britain and its fruitful collaboration with language teaching over the past 100 years, Howatt (op cit:214) appraises the seminal applied linguistics contribution of the Jones-Palmer association:

[it] effectively ensured that one of the 'ground rules' of English as a foreign language was an applied linguistic philosophy.

Howatt (op cit:226) adds, "if there is a single source which has been responsible for stimulating innovation and activity, it is (in one or another of its various guises) applied linguistics".

Continuing the British tradition, Widdowson (1984b:7) states the central task of applied linguistics as the pursuit of relevance, to establish "appropriate concepts or models of language in the pedagogic domain". His statement that "what is required

is a model of language use rather than one based on linguistic analysis of the kind that has conventionally informed the practice of teaching", points the way forward by indicating a need for closer attention to 'parole' and 'performance', "if language teaching is to develop the ability to use language as a resource for communication in the natural manner."

Perhaps the most comprehensive and far-reaching assessment of the potential role of applied linguistics for language teaching comes from Brumfit (1980a:162-3):

[Applied linguistics] has within it the seeds of an integrated view of language applied to the world which should underlie the work of all applied linguists ... If applied linguistics is to be perceived as a fundamentally important discipline, this will only be when it produces ideas of sufficient generality to affect any language-using situation - when it performs the task of integrating all the various attitudes to language of researchers in other fields, and produces an account of language in use which is both convincing and readily comprehensible ... an account which is dynamic, fluid, and increasingly motivated by reference to interaction, to active learning and using strategies associated with learners' responses to social demands ... an account, in short, of users' application of language to the problems of the world and being in it ... (an account) concerned with a level of generality somewhat higher than the immediate concern of many who call themselves applied linguists.

This statement represents an enormous challenge to applied linguistics, for if it is to succeed in its search for adequate descriptions of language - accounts which give prominence to "users' applications of language to the problems of the world and being in it", which integrate "all the various attitudes to language of researchers in other fields", and which produce "ideas of sufficient generality to affect any language-using situation" - then there is a clear need to move away from the restricted position of 'linguistics applied' (Widdowson 1984b:21).

One way of moving closer to pedagogically relevant models of language use is to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in the first instance, in the search for descriptively adequate accounts of context and communication. By interrelating relevant aspects of social setting and individual cognitions with communicative behaviour, insights from anthropology, psychology and sociology can enable us to account for the richness and diversity of socially situated language use. In an applied linguistics of this kind, language users' personal constructs of social context, their presentation of self and evaluation of interlocutor become as central

to an understanding of actually occurring language behaviour as external analyses of language structures or functions.

The description of language which I seek to develop with reference to encounters in educational settings, is one which attempts to combine external analyses of context with first person constructs of social setting and process (chapter two); and to foreground the social symbolism of communication (chapter three) as central to language use. It seeks also to portray communication as a dynamic, problem-solving activity centreing around the negotiation of meaning; to describe some of the major constraints on the negotiation of meaning, particularly in 'unequal encounters'; and to demonstrate the range of individual responses to the interpersonal risks entailed in actively engaging in meaning negotiations (chapter four).

In the following sections of chapter one, I discuss a number of major linguistics-internal or 'centrifugal' approaches to language use, in terms of their scope and usefulness in accounting for such important features of context and communication.

#### 1.4 Centrifugal Approaches to Language Description

We may summarise the dominant approach to linguistics this century as being essentially code-based, synchronic - accounting for contemporary 'langue' in contrast with a historical approach - and concerned with a desire to stake out its own academic territory.

In the following sections I review some of the major developments within the discipline, particularly their usefulness in providing adequate descriptions of communication in context.

##### 1.4.1 Transformational Grammar

Hailed by linguists as a remarkable development in descriptive and theoretical

linguistics, the appearance of Syntactic Structures may be seen by those outside the discipline as an extension of the linguist's pre-occupation with generating theories of language through a process of idealisation (Allen 1975). Whilst regularisation, standardisation and decontextualisation procedures (Lyons 1972) may be used to produce abstract representations of formal systems, the resulting hypothetical constructs, it can be argued, yield a narrowly delimited view of language and knowledge essential to communication.

The notion of 'linguistic competence' holds an important place in Chomsky's grammar, setting clear boundaries with 'language performance' and thus providing Chomskyan linguistics with its subject matter. The distinction forged between 'competence' and 'performance' reinterprets in a cognitivist frame Saussure's (op cit) sociological distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', and thus continues the linguistic tradition of discriminating between language phenomena deemed suitable for systematic enquiry, and features of 'parole' or 'performance' viewed as unamenable to, and therefore outside the bounds of, formal analysis:

linguistics has as its unique and true object of study the  
language system considered in itself and for its own sake  
(Saussure op cit:317, cited in Lyons J. 1987:154)

Paradoxically, the emergence of psycholinguistics with its concern for relations between language systems and cognitive processes, can be understood as a corollary of the need to test the cognitive claims of Chomsky's theory, to assess the degree of "psychological reality" of transformational-generative grammar (Fodor and Garrett 1967, Bever et al 1969, Johnson-Laird 1970, Bever 1974, Fodor et al 1974, and Lyons 1977). Here too, a focus on language as code has been retained in the dominant approach to the relatively new sub-discipline.

#### 1.4.2 Functional Linguistics

A very different approach to language description, systemic grammar, is that offered by Halliday (qv 1970 and 1973). Drawing on the work of the Prague school of linguistics, and on Firth and Malinowski's approach to meaning, Halliday uses psychological and sociological generalisations to describe language functions, working towards a synthesis of structural and functional linguistics. Allen and

Widdowson (1975:73) summarise his approach thus: "he begins with the question: Why is language structured in the way it is and not in some other way? And his answer is: Because it reflects the functions which language is required to serve as a means of social communication."

Sinclair et al (1972:42) see Halliday's main focus as essentially a grammatical one, externalising traditional concerns for language as an autonomous formal structure to study how language, in its functioning, is structured as a systemic code. They arrive at a similar conclusion to Allen and Widdowson concerning Halliday's motivation: "Halliday is interested in the use made of language in order to give principles for explaining why the structure of language is organised in one way rather than another."

Halliday suggests that clause structure has three major functions: the 'ideational', to express propositional meaning; the 'interpersonal' for establishing and maintaining social relations; and the 'textual' which provides links with the language situation and allows for the construction of cohesive texts.

He describes (op cit:143) the ideational function as follows:

Language serves for the expression of 'content': that is, of the speaker's experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness. We may call this the ideational function ... In serving this function, language also gives structure to experience, and helps to determine our way of looking at things, so that it requires some intellectual effort to see them in any other way than that which our language suggests to us.

The notion that it requires some intellectual effort to see things in any other way than that which our language suggests to us, implies a version of the 'Sapir-Whorf' hypothesis that language "powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes", and that human beings "are very much at the mercy of the particular language that has become the medium of expression for their society" (Sapir 1949:68-9). However in 'the socialisation process', language not only "plays a unique role in the transmission and formation of the values, identity and culture which make up an individual's and a group's social reality" (Jupp 1981:1); it also serves as an existential resource to enable individuals create order and meaning in

their experiences of the world. As Brumfit (1980a:160) points out: "language cannot be seen purely as a creator of ideology because we can break its meaning if we choose to".

To the three major language functions which Halliday foregrounds, others can be added that are of equal importance in understanding the nature and use of language. There is, for instance, the role of language as a heuristic device for increasing self-awareness and awareness of communication and social context. An individual's exploration of "the inner world of his own consciousness" represents a meta-linguistic function which enables the language user to recognise the fundamental limitations of existing knowledge constructs, a reflexive procedure that offers the possibility of transcending "the speaker's experience of the real world" (cf Fromm 1957). The function of language then for meta-linguistic purposes, as an awareness-raising device for transforming cognitive structures and an empowering tool for individuals to take greater control over social events and processes, is one which requires a central place in language descriptions.

The value of Halliday's contribution to linguistics lies in the connections he makes between aspects of language code on the one hand and categories of language function on the other. Functional linguistics thus goes some way towards extending descriptions of language to take account of user purposes.

The main focus of systemic grammar, in common with other 'centrifugal' approaches to language description, appears to be on linguistic system, in this case at the semantic level. Based on the notion of stratification, systemic grammar has largely concentrated on illuminating choices made within this stratum.

In terms of producing adequate descriptions of communication in context, the linguistic analysis offered by systemic grammar could be extended to incorporate relevant aspects of social structure as these influence syntactic and semantic choices. Comprehensive descriptions of social settings could be integrated in the form of grammars of social contexts or ethnographies of speech events. Another possibility would be to combine personal constructs of social situation with a Hallidayan type analysis to describe the vital connections between individual

perceptions of social structure and choice of language forms and functions.

Additionally, in so far as communication hinges on strategic competence and capacity to perform a range of procedures for producing and interpreting meaning, an adequate account of language use will also seek to describe these procedures. Systemic grammar has some way to go to achieve the task of accounting for differential rates of knowledge and use of meaning negotiation procedures.

### 1.4.3 Sociolinguistics

In defining studies of relations between language and social structures, Ardener (1971c:lxxvi-vii) distinguishes two approaches to sociolinguistics paralleling those of structuralist and functionalist social anthropology: Sociolinguistics A, paradigmatic in nature and concerned with the symbolic meaning of social structures, contrasts with Sociolinguistics B, syntagmatic in approach and concerned with the functions or transactional import of language forms:

Sociolinguistics as generally described is essentially a Sociolinguistics B ... It looks likely that Sociolinguistics B will for some time to come appear to be the major bearer of the label 'sociolinguistics', while Sociolinguistics A will be apprehended as a kind of social anthropology, a kind of linguistics, or a kind of philosophy, according to the point of view of the practitioner.

Though extending somewhat the traditional domain of linguistics to incorporate a number of social correlates, Sociolinguistics B retains a primary emphasis on the structure of language, having "mainly linguistic goals". Deuchar (1987:296) suggests it aims, "to contribute ultimately to linguistic rather than social theory". Hudson (1980:4ff) defines sociolinguistics as 'the study of language in relation to society' as distinct from the sociology of language, 'the study of society in relation to language'. For Hudson too, "the value of sociolinguistics is the light which it throws on the nature of language in general, or on the characteristics of some particular language".

In the course of the last few decades a 'correlational approach' to sociolinguistics (Deuchar op cit), evidenced in numerous quantitative studies of speech (qv Labov

1970 and 1972, Trudgill 1974 and Milroy 1980), has come to dominate sociolinguistic research (Gumperz 1982a:25). Its concern is largely for the nature of relations obtaining between large scale social factors and discrete language items.

The development of quantitative studies of speech has coincided with that of sociolinguistics and, for many linguists whose main interest is the structure of language, this part of sociolinguistics apparently makes the most relevant contribution ... quantitative studies of speech seem particularly relevant to theoretical linguistics because they involve precisely those aspects of language - sounds, word-forms and constructions - which theoretical linguists consider central.

(Hudson op cit:138)

The dominant approach to sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics then, is one that retains a primary emphasis on code and restricts its study of 'parole' to a selection of discrete items which can be accommodated in a further selection of discrete categories of 'langue'.

Deuchar (op cit:310) argues that the correlational approach to studying relations between linguistic and social structures "means that its results are to be interpreted with care, and that there is no in-built explanation". This assessment supports Gumperz's (1982a:26) claim that "the very process of formalizing variable rules ... requires assumptions about cognitive processes and about what is shared. These assumptions seriously limit the extent to which findings can be generalized across populations and social settings".

Whilst acknowledging the importance of quantitative sociolinguistics, Gumperz (ibid) stresses the limitations of "its applicability to the analysis of actual processes of face to face communication". Furthermore, as Sinclair et al (1972:59) point out, "there is a need for an integrated study of language and its social use which attempts more than the correlation of the independent results of linguistics and sociology", a case for which Hymes (1977 passim) also argues.

Bourne (1988) claims that psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics perpetuate an internal - external dualism and argues that the joint effect of the new disciplines is to 'fix' language as unitary, systematic and objective: the effect of

psycholinguistics being to locate language in the deep structure patterns of the mind; of sociolinguistics "to objectify variation in forms by listing and fixing rules of appropriacy, thus masking social inequalities as mere differences".

However, as Gumperz (op cit:27) points out, language use is not simply a matter of conforming to norms of appropriateness, "but is a way of conveying information about values, beliefs and attitudes that must first be discovered through ethnographic investigation". Thus, for sociolinguistics to offer useful insights into the ways in which people use language in social situations, into the diverse forms of knowledge which inform communication and the plurality of interpretations of speaker intent, it must move some way from a code-based correlational approach towards a speaker-oriented ethnographic investigation in which descriptions of language are contextualised in social situations and personal cognitions of such.

By investigating the social symbolism of an educational setting, both as 'explained' anthropologically and 'understood' by participants themselves, my own research represents one such effort to overcome the analytic artifice of the innate - social division and the decontextualising process of correlational sociolinguistics.

#### 1.4.4 Pragmatics

A further foray into the field "that defines itself as the study of language in use (an area traditionally covered by rhetoric)" (Dillon et al 1985:448) comes from the philosophical linguistic tradition within which the discipline of pragmatics has developed.

It is unfortunate that such an important area of enquiry into language should appear, to the outsider at any rate, to be characterised by much terminological confusion. Lyons (1987:157) lists a series of eight propositions which "have been asserted or implied by linguists in recent years in connection with the distinction between semantics and pragmatics" some of which, he claims, are mutually inconsistent.

Following Bar-Hillel's (1971) reference to "the pragmatic waste-basket", Lyons (loc cit) distinguishes between a residualist approach to defining the scope of pragmatics - "the definition of X as all of Z that is not Y" - which produces a mixed bag of otherwise unrelated topics, and a more positive one which "tries to define pragmatics in terms of what it covers, rather than in terms of what is covered by the complementary term semantics" (ibid). For Levinson (1983), pragmatics includes the study of deixis, conversational implicature, presuppositions, speech acts and conversational analysis, a list which prompts Dillon et al (op cit:448) to remark that "he defines pragmatics ostensibly by the list of topics covered in his book, and negatively by those topics he chooses to omit".

Though a positive approach "does not of itself remove any heterogeneity that there might be in the group of topics that is subsumed by this or that scholar under the term pragmatics ... it does promote a more critical attitude towards the assumption that there is a God-given area of research for which we have just found a name" (Lyons loc cit). Lyons concludes that the distinction between semantics and pragmatics rests not "upon some as yet only partly understood facts of nature (including facts relating to the organization and operation of the human mind), but upon the sound methodological principle of 'divide and conquer' "(ibid).

Despite the fact that "current presentations of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics tend to be riddled with inconsistencies and unjustified assumptions", and that how the terminological distinction is drawn "varies from author to author" (Lyons:loc cit), there is a clear sense in which pragmatics is conceived, by some at least, as an extension of the logico-semantic tradition of linguistic philosophy evidenced in the work of Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975).

Progressing from the study of meaning in sentences to the interpretation of utterances (qv Smith and Wilson 1979:148ff) necessitates paying attention to notions such as 'performance'; 'principles', 'maxims' or 'strategies' associated with the use of language (qv Leech 1983); and 'context' (Sperber and Wilson 1986:passim), upon which utterance meaning crucially depends.

Dillon et al (op cit) trace the philosopher's pursuit of indirect and implicated

meanings (qv Searle 1975, Morgan 1978 and Clark 1979) to the development of a theory of politeness and interaction (Brown and Levinson 1978, Leech 1980 and Blum-Kulka 1987) and to a general theory of inference and utterance interpretation (qv Grice op cit, Leech 1983 and Sperber and Wilson op cit).

#### 1.4.4.1 An Appraisal of Relevance Theory

The appearance of 'relevance theory' (Sperber and Wilson 1986) which claims a high degree of explanatory power, marks a notable development in theoretical pragmatics. By reducing Grice's rules for conversational co-operation to the maxim of relevance, the authors produce a single factor theory which, they claim, is also the sole principle governing verbal communication. Simply stated, it is as follows: "I suggest that I have information to communicate that is relevant enough to be worth your attention". This speaker guarantee of relevant information is not confined to systemic indices and textual structures but can equally be applied to displays of interpersonal meaning in communication.

The philosophical linguistic tradition in which relevance theory has been generated is a theoretical pragmatics whose origins lie in an essentially rationalist research paradigm. Within the assumptions and according to the demands of that context, the resulting model of inference centres around a concept-driven theory of cognition the psychological reality of whose theoretical constructs, such as 'pragmatic hypotheses', has to be clearly demonstrated if claims for the model's universality are to be taken seriously.

In generating a model of communication around a "simple idea", informational relevance, which might be "enough on its own to yield an explanatory pragmatic theory", the authors have been obliged to severely restrict their conception of 'cognition', 'communication' and 'context'. Rather than referring to general comprehension processes, cognition is restricted to matters of formal logic, such as representing a relationship of conditionality deemed to exist between two or more propositions. Context is made subservient to this notion of cognition in order to accommodate a highly rationalist process; and yields both the notion of 'contextual assumptions' and the possibility of a particular assumption being referred to as 'the

context' for communication. Communication likewise becomes subordinated to the demands of formal cognitive procedures, to yield the notion of 'inferential communication', which itself is made dependent on 'the relevance principle'.

Since there is no a priori reason for assuming an isomorphic relationship between "a highly restricted set of optimally simple, universal and maximally general principles" and "psychologically plausible natural principles" of comprehension, it is important to ascertain whether, and to what degree, our "knowledge of the world" and "general reasoning abilities" actually correspond with the formalised pragmatic structures and inferential procedures Sperber and Wilson propose as the universal method of comprehending verbal communication.

Offering a methodological construct consisting of formalised, inferential procedures for communication, the authors take little account of existing models (cf Anderson 1985 and Johnson-Laird 1983) which describe more general cognitive structures and processes for language inference and problem-solving in verbal communication. Conversational analysis, for example, offers the notion of 'situated meaning', that is, "meaning constructed in specific contexts by actors who must actively interpret what they hear in order for it to make sense" (Garfinkel 1972:302). Here an emphasis is placed on the shared, 'common-sense' knowledge and practical reasoning skills shared by competent co-members of society, particularly in the open-ended, ad hoc way we seek correspondences between symbolic representations and the 'reality' being described. At the very least, these suggest a constraint on the degree of formal interpretative procedures invoked to comprehend communication.

In so far then as relevance theory does not adequately deal with alternative descriptions of comprehension processes from neighbouring disciplines, any claim to the supremacy of the model as an account of communication and cognition in context cannot reasonably be considered. In addition, relevance theory seems to presuppose the existence of "the liberal bourgeois ideal of an autonomous subject that informs much current pragmatic theory" (Robinson 1986:652). By contrast, Fairclough (1985:755) argues that " 'goal-driven' explanatory models of interaction tend to exaggerate the extent to which actions are under the conscious control of

subjects". He offers a Marxist critique (cf Borutti 1984 and Fairclough op cit) which rejects the underlying premise of individual subjects free from linguistic constraints or social conventions to operate as independent agents in the pursuit of goals.

Robinson (loc cit) takes up the middle ground, his aim being "to clear a practical space for pragmatics in the grey area between idealized individuality and idealized collectivity". His rationale for this results from reflection on instances of his own language behaviour wherein:

I was operating pragmatically neither within the autonomous subjectivity of the bourgeois ideal nor within the ideologically constituted subjectivity of the Marxist ideal, but somewhere between the two - a 'somewhere' that I would claim is the pragmatic realm all of us, in varying ways and degrees, inhabit.

Robinson's position is one which our own experience and intuitions may concur with. It also offers a way out of the dualist thought trap wherein we need no longer be bound by either psychological claims of "idealized individuality" nor sociological dogma of "idealized collectivity". Instead we can begin to come to terms with the richness and complexity of language behaviour in contexts that are partly framed by social structures external to participants, partly created by individual constructs in social situ and, most importantly, reinterpreted in the dynamics of local communication.

Some of the perplexities and sterilities of a philosophic tradition which elevates rationalist procedures to a supreme state are highlighted by Robinson who concludes (op cit:669):

short of deliberate self-parody, it surely cannot be the aim of a 'pragmatic' approach to language to retreat further and further into the mirror-world of metascrutiny, into paralyzing self-reflexive speculation grounded in an ever more sophisticated philosophical awareness of its own impracticability. Theory, I suggest, should free us not into more abstruse theorizing but back into practice, into the pragmatic real world we all inhabit outside our books and articles.

This surely is the most fundamental challenge to a pragmatics which aims to produce descriptively adequate accounts of language use.

#### 1.4.5 Discourse Analysis

Essentially discourse analysis is one more aspect of the problem of context (Tyler 1969:16)

It is to the 'real world' of language use that discourse analysis turns in pursuing descriptions of language functions and principles of coherent discourse. Remarking on the paucity of such enquiry despite expressions of its significance, Sinclair et al (1972:35) state that:

It is a sociological commonplace to acknowledge the importance of language and face-to-face interaction in the maintenance of social relations yet in fact we know very little about how language is used in the management of everyday life.

Fowler (1974:x) traces a movement away from the study of language structure to a recognition of discourse analysis as a legitimate field of language enquiry:

Whereas, twenty years ago, language was seen as an abstract code detached from human experience, it is now seen as a vital communicative system inseparable from other processes of living.

By extending the sentence boundary of linguistic study, discourse analysis shows a concern for "the identification and description of supra-sentential structure in written and spoken texts. The analytical concern is supra-sentential in that it focuses on the way in which 'sentences' combine into larger units to form coherent texts" (Coulthard 1978:22). The need to identify and describe discourse structure is seen by Sinclair et al (1972:51) as a pre-requisite to further enquiry:

Once the formal structure of the interaction is describable, the identification of which options are taken up and by whom can then contribute to our understanding of the roles participants play in a situation, how they define them and sustain them.

Early structural discourse analyses produced a plethora of terms to denote different levels and units of organisation. Analysing conversation from a sociological perspective, Sacks Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) proposed a five unit model of 'turn', 'pair', 'sequence', 'topic', and 'conversation'. In their analysis of classroom interaction from a linguistic viewpoint, Sinclair et al (op cit) make use of the notions of 'rank', 'unit' and 'class' from Hallidayan grammar, proposing five 'ranks' or levels of discourse: 'act', 'move', 'exchange', 'transaction' and 'lesson'

or 'interaction'. Coulthard and Ashby (1973) expanded this model to include a sixth unit, 'sequence', inserted between 'exchange' and 'transaction'. Coulthard (1978:30) suggests that "despite the different labels, the units proposed by Sacks and Sinclair et al are remarkably similar".

Besides early descriptions of the organisation of 'textual surface', interest has centred around discourse as process. Premised on the notion that "casual conversation is the most basic language activity, and in an analysis of it one is most likely to find what is inherently characteristic of spoken discourse" (Gardner 1984:102), work in conversational analysis from the sixties and seventies (Garfinkel 1967, Schegloff and Sacks 1973, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974, Schenkein 1978), has done much to shape present perceptions.

It is also largely from this ethnomethodological tradition that the notion of participant equality has emerged. Citing the influence of Grice's co-operative principle and the work of ethnomethodologists in conversational turn-taking, Fairclough (1985:757) claims this descriptive approach "has virtually elevated co-operative conversation between equals into an archetype of verbal interaction in general", such that conversation is defined as "very much co-operative interaction between equals".

However, equality of role, status and position may not occur in discourse within social institutions. Fairclough (ibid) argues that the descriptive approach to discourse analysis has resulted in "such an emphasis on co-operative conversation between equals that even matters of status have been relatively neglected"; that "the asymmetrical distribution of discursal and pragmatic rights and obligations according to status has not been the focal concern"; and that "the absence of a serious concern with explaining norms results in a neglect of power".

Though it may not be as widely known as the earlier work of the ethnomethodologists, a significant amount of discourse analysis has been carried out over the last two decades in a wide range of institutional settings, such as the classroom (Sinclair et al 1972, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), the hospital (Candlin, Leather and Bruton 1976, Candlin, Bruton and Leather 1978), the

psychotherapeutic encounter (Labov and Fanshel 1977), the courtroom (Atkinson and Drew 1979), the dental clinic (Candlin, Bruton and Coleman 1980, Candlin, Coleman and Bruton 1983) and the family planning clinic (Candlin and Lucas 1986). Central to each of these studies is the notion of an unequal encounter constituted within the institutional setting and by ascribed role-relationships.

The 'unequal encounter' approach has also been adopted in cross-cultural discourse analysis. Referring to the importance of this newly emerging field, Gumperz et al (1979:1) claim that "there has been little recognition, either in practice or in academic work, of how cross-cultural communication difficulties can result from systemically different cultural and linguistic uses of language, and how these difficulties may in turn build and reinforce group stereotypes". A similar refrain is heard from Asante et al (1979:12-13) who assert that "although there have been some efforts to address the general question of communication in theoretical terms over the past 40 years, it is only in recent times that attention has been paid to the intricacies of the communication process. The influence of culture on communicative interaction is one of these intricacies" (loc cit).

Much of the literature on cross-cultural discourse from an inter- actional sociolinguistics perspective is within a context of concern for the socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by ethnic minorities (Jupp 1981), and amidst a climate of failed liberal expectancy concerning ethnic equality and power-sharing (Glazer and Moynihan 1975).

In his investigations of cross-cultural interviews, Erickson (1975, 1976 and Erickson and Schultz 1982) has developed the notion of "institutional gate-keeping - that is, brief encounters in which two persons meet, usually as strangers, with one of them having authority to make decisions that affect the other's future" (Erickson and Schultz op cit:xi). Taking a 'microethnographic' approach to the study of face-to-face communication in counselling interviews, Erickson and Schultz are primarily interested in how counsellor and student "make sense" in re-enacting the social order of the interview; in "the specifics of choice and organization of the communicative means the counsellor and student employ" (op cit:5); and in the threat to conversational co-operation "because of cultural

differences in their knowledge of ways of speaking and ways of listening" (op cit:8). They invoke the notion of 'co-membership', "an aspect of performed social identity that involves particularistic attributes of status shared by the counsellor and student" (op cit:17) and claim that "one of the most important findings of the study was that under conditions of high co-membership, cultural differences between the counsellor and student in ways of speaking and listening seemed to make less of a difference than they did in encounters in which the co-membership level was low" (op cit:212).

From their findings, Erickson and Schultz suggest that differences between interlocutors in communicative competence should be considered in the context of relations between situational co-membership and the politics of culture difference in communication, that is "the politics of face-to-face relations between individuals".

Gumperz (1982a, 1982b) and his associates in Britain (Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts 1979, Gumperz and Roberts 1980, Jupp 1981 and Thorp 1983) also take a microethnographic approach to discourse analysis. Gumperz (1982a:5) concentrates on "the participants' ongoing process of interpretation in conversation and on what it is that enables them to perceive and interpret constellations of cues in reacting to others and pursuing their communicative ends".

Developing a model of localised interaction, Gumperz outlines "a perspective to conversation that focuses on conversational inference and on participants' use of prosodic and phonetic perceptions as well as on interpretive performances learned through previous communicative experience to negotiate frames of interpretation" (Gumperz 1982a:172). Appealing to Erickson and Schultz's (1982 *passim*) notion of 'rhythmic coordination' which the authors claim characterises successful interviews, Gumperz (1982a:130ff) develops the concept of 'contextualisation conventions' or 'contextualisation cues': "that is, constellations of surface features of message form ... by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows".

Gumperz argues that contextualisation cues are much more sensitive to participants' ethnic background than one might expect, and that misunderstandings can arise when the relevant signalling conventions differ. However the force of his argument is somewhat weakened by the adoption of a quasi-correlational method linking micro-contextualisation cues, mainly certain prosodic features of discourse, with macro-social structures such as speech community, social class, gender and race. The question still remains of how, and the extent to which, independently produced, large scale social structures are mediated and become manifest in localised communication context through personal constructs and individual definitions of situation.

#### 1.4.6 Discourse and Communication

Underlying the dominant approach to discourse analysis is the widely held view of discourse being essentially to do with informational exchange. The following example illustrates this position:

It is apparent that there are elements of a conversation that are principally concerned with topical talk, which is a matter of ideas and information, and is thus centrally conceptual, and related to Halliday's ideational function. Other elements are concerned with maintaining the flow of the communication, ensuring that the channels of communication remain open, and with facilitating the flow of ideas ... This communication facilitating language is interpersonal and textual ...

A conversation passes through a number of stages ... In an 'unmarked' conversation, the first stage is greeting, followed by approach, used to establish a comfortable relationship with a safe topic... This phase is a bridge between the greeting and the true topical talk ... The central part of a conversation is given the name of 'centring'. Here the subject matter is cognitive and informative. The interpersonal function, though subsidiary, is still present in the form of the gambits mentioned above.

(Gardner 1984:111 - 112)

Discourse viewed within an information exchange theory tends to reduce interpersonal aspects of communication to performing subsidiary roles such as oiling the wheels of transactional discourse, "the true topical talk" that is "the central part of a conversation". However portraying discourse in a functional model of simplicity and linearity, promotes an unnecessary separation of social-symbolic features of context and communication. Put differently, an emphasis largely on discourse as the accomplishment of ideational meaning or

transactional exchange fails to capture the complex, multi-dimensional nature of communication.

In the following section I examine two descriptions of discourse which illustrate the predominant transactional nature of the analyses provided. In the first, a defendant appears before the arrears and maintenance division of an English county court.

Harris (1984a:8) describes the setting and discourse goal as follows:

Defendants in this court usually have low economic and social status and are most often present because they have failed to comply with a decision of a previous court; either they have failed altogether to pay their fines or maintenance, or, more often, they have not been paying regularly and are in arrears. Consequently the common goal-oriented task of all cases is the decision as to how much the defendant should pay each week or, exceptionally, the imposition of a prison sentence.

The analysis Harris (1984b) provides centres on the use of magisterial authority to enforce, by making explicit, institutionally constructed ground rules for discourse, thereby ensuring transactional goals are accomplished. The description is grounded in critical linguistic theory (qv section 1.4.7), in particular in the belief that social institutions and formations crucially influence discourse and in turn are reconstituted by it. It also appears to rest on an assumption that magistrate and defendant share constructions of encounter goals: "the common goal-oriented task of all cases is the decision as to how much the defendant should pay each week or, exceptionally, the imposition of a prison sentence".

However there is much textual evidence (Appendix A) to suggest that the magistrate and defendant have quite differing perceptions of the nature of the encounter, the effect of which is to produce and sustain a central opposition between transactional and interpersonal goals. Whereas the magistrate operates predominantly within an economic exchange frame, the discharge of a debt, the defendant appears to construe the encounter as essentially a social-symbolic issue, a question of justice.

The magistrate's direct questions to the defendant, "are you going to make an offer - uh - uh - to discharge this debt" (M26), and "the question is - are you prepared to make an offer to the court - to discharge - this debt" (M29), reinforce the

clerk's initial framing of the encounter as a case of non-payment of debt; and his references to other types of economic exchange in contradistinction to the present, "it's not a bargaining situation" (M31), and "now we're not having an auction" (M43), further reinforce this instrumental construction of the situation. The defendant demonstrates his commitment to a social-symbolic frame by pursuing a quest for justice for much of the encounter:

I feel that I was totally unfairly judged to be guilty ... I felt so strongly about it that I wanted to take the matter further ... and I still feel most strongly about it (KH2)

... if I do [make the court an offer] I'm condoning injustice - which I think it was in the first place (KH5)

even the prosecutor ... stated at the time that the case should never have been brought up - that he agreed entirely with my action (KH7)

so I've got to pay it - and accept injustice (KH9)

[M: I say the alternative could very well be prison]  
which says a lot for British justice (KH11)

I feel very very - bitter about the whole situation (KH13)

so I just have to accept injustice (KH21)

In responding to the defendant's social-symbolic framing of the proceedings, the magistrate reformulates the defendant's utterance, "I feel that I was totally unfairly judged", into the economic exchange frame introduced by the clerk: "you're not prepared to make the court an offer of payment". This is immediately followed by a direct threat of sanctions to the defendant's apparent refusal to engage in the transactional business of discharging the debt: "I think I should tell you that the alternative is going to prison".

When the magistrate introduces his own social-symbolic agenda, it is not to take up the question of justice raised by the defendant, but to remind the latter of the consequences of non-co-operation in effecting the economic exchange. This threat also serves to remind the defendant of the authority invested in the magistrate to impose social sanctions such as imprisonment. By continued focussing on the transactional, and by a series of minimal responses to the defendant's expressions of concern that justice has not prevailed (M6, M8, M12, M14, M16 & M20), the

magistrate repeatedly refuses to co-operate in pursuing the defendant's social-symbolic agenda, and simultaneously reinforces his authority in courtroom relationships.

From failing to engage the magistrate in a debate on issues of justice in his case, the defendant moves to a more direct interpersonal challenge ("you were actually on the Bench", KH17). The implication, it seems, is that by virtue of his participation in the earlier proceedings, the magistrate is partly responsible for the injustice the defendant is alleging. However the magistrate counters the defendant's challenge with an equally direct rebuttal ("no that's nothing to do with it ..." M18), paralleled a few exchanges later when the defendant again attempts to assert a social symbolic frame on the proceedings:

M24 - are you um - are you going to make an offer - uh - uh to discharge this debt

KH25 would you in my position

M26 I - I'm not here to answer questions - you answer my question

On this occasion, the magistrate directly imposes his authority to define the speaking rights and responsibilities pertaining to courtroom roles in order to resist the challenge. The manner in which this is accomplished leaves little room for doubting that the ground rules obtaining for communication in this instance are non-negotiable.

To summarise, magistrate and defendant appear to be engaged in a communication conflict, a tug-of-war between transactional and social symbolic boundaries respectively. Not surprisingly in a 'gate-keeping encounter' where situational frames are in conflict it is, *prima facie*, the participant backed by institutional authority and control whose frame is most likely to prevail. In this case, the result is a definition of encounter as an economic transaction rather than social interaction.

The power to authoritatively define social situations extends from the notion of linguistic disambiguation, what is said, (Heritage and Watson 1979) to pragmatic disambiguation, what is intended, (Thomas 1985); and to communicative

disambiguation, what is expressed interpersonally through the social symbolism of role-relations perceived and performed. By virtue of the relative power and control ascribed to his role, the magistrate imposes his definition of role-related speaking rights and responsibilities on the encounter.

The consequences of this for 'the negotiation of meaning' within the encounter are quite clear: in establishing and maintaining boundaries at a transactional level, the magistrate is excluding the possibility of negotiating those aspects of communication - interpersonal and social symbolic - most important to the defendant. The magistrate's transactional definition is one the defendant is finally forced to acknowledge when he abandons attempts at social-symbolic framing to engage in discussions to effect a discharge of the debt (KH30 - M45).

Analysing an interview between a British instructor and an Asian trainee on a skill centre course, Thorp (1983) focusses on the way in which the instructor manages the discourse and "conveys the messages" he wishes to give the trainee. Thorp suggests that discourse 'mismanagement' allied to a lack of shared knowledge created an unsatisfactory encounter in which "the interviewer failed to find a way of engaging the trainee in a collaborative conversation about his performance", and "the trainee was unable to find a way of taking the floor so that he could talk about his problems" (piii).

Besides a large number of topic changes and repetitions within the instructor's turns, Thorp identifies (op cit:17) a great disparity in the amount of participant talk - "the instructor talks for nearly five times as long as the trainee overall. The average length of his turns is more than four times that of the trainee's" - as amongst the most striking features of the interview. She argues (ibid) that "problems in the transfer of speakership are an important cause of the topic changes and repetitiveness".

Topic changes and recycling are seen as occurring "in an environment of inappropriate or absent response from the trainee". Turn-avoidance and "backchannel inappropriacy" are interpreted as "the trainee has not yet demonstrated understanding of the instructor's message" (p27). Such interpretations

are consistent with the transactional frame constructed for the analysis. However, though mention is made of the instructor's "gate-keeping power", the social symbolism of role-relations is not systematically related to the transactional business. Neither are role asymmetries or perceptions of discursive rights and responsibilities in the encounter integrated with the account.

Such considerations are vital, however, in studying discourse management in unequal encounters. If due weight is given to social symbolic meanings, we can arrive at understandings of language behaviour different from the information exchange explanation offered of a trainee's "displayed failure to have understood an important message".

Following Erickson (1979), Thorp links 'hyperexplanation' on the part of the instructor to the notion of inappropriate listening behaviour by the trainee: "it is primarily the inappropriacy of trainee A's backchannels as a demonstration of understanding that leads the instructor to persist at the point" (p39). Underlying this analysis is a dominant notion of language behaviour having to do with conveying ideational messages.

A transactional analysis such as this can also be understood within a 'conduit metaphor' of communication (Reddy 1979, Frawley and Lantoff 1985) according to which speakers 'package' their messages into containers and send them to listeners who demonstrate 'understanding' by using appropriate 'backchannel' responses. However if prominence is given to key interpersonal aspects of the encounter, for instance the instructor's sense of responsibility for the trainee's failure along with the fact that "this was the first trainee whom he had had to terminate", then we may arrive at different, but equally plausible, explanations for the discourse features, topic recycling and 'hyperexplanation', noted.

As regards accounting for the occurrence of 'hyperexplanation', from the background information given, we may infer that the instructor, known for "his usual good strategies for conversational co-operation" (p43), is experiencing some conflict between the transactional demands of the encounter - to inform the trainee that he cannot proceed to a desired course of training - and interpersonal concerns

that, due to "a couple of unfortunate mistakes" on the part of the centre, "he felt guilty and unhappy that the trainee could not be transferred" (p5). In other words we can link the notion of hyperexplanation to a 'cognitive dissonance' (Eiser 1980) experienced by the instructor. His feelings of guilt and sense of responsibility for the trainee's failure appear to be in direct conflict with his role as institutional representative charged with the task of informing the trainee that he cannot proceed; and in conflict with the "first and foremost" transactional objective of conveying "the bad news" to the trainee.

Whereas the interpersonal role of the instructor in helping shape the trainee's experiences at the skill centre reinforces the social imperative within the encounter, a somewhat negative kind of 'co-membership' is created by feelings of responsibility for the trainee's failure. Thus the gatekeeping role demands the protection of institutional face, a performance of the individual imperative, and avoidance of any 'leakage'. Tension created for both participants by role conflict continues throughout the encounter. It is unfortunate, however, that there is no information provided of respective role constructs vis a vis the encounter, which would offer further insights into how the conflict created by differing perceptions and expectations of participant roles influenced the communication.

As to topic changes and topic recycling, they may equally well be accounted for by appealing to interpersonal considerations. We note that the instructor's desire to "avoid causing any embarrassment or loss of face to the trainee", and presumably to protect his own face, is realised by first presenting a small piece of "good news". Thus in terms of topic ordering, the subordination of a functional objective, conveying the "bad news" to the trainee, to interpersonal considerations, may be interpreted as a resolution of tension between transactional and social-symbolic imperatives. Later on, having conveyed the bad news, the instructor offers unsolicited advice, "although he is not actually obliged to give advice" (p31). The hoped-for mitigating effect of this on the bad news, may also be construed as another example of the instructor resolving ongoing interpersonal - transactional tension.

From all of this we can see that discourse analysis which rests on allegations of strategic incompetence vis a vis message conveyance and understanding yields explanations at a transactional level: "inappropriate backchannel responses" by the trainee; "confusing communication strategies" on the part of the instructor resulting in "the unsuccessful transfer of speakership"; and failure to explicitly mark topic-reintroduction, are all explanations within an information exchange framework.

Explanations of participants' language behaviour which offer richer contextual insights, may be gained by adopting a multidimensional approach to communication. By combining a participant-centred methodology with more traditional forms of discourse analysis, we can identify individual definitions of situation and use such personal constructs to inform our understanding of language behaviour in specific contexts. Backchannel responses, for instance, interpreted here as transactionally inappropriate, can be understood in terms of a desire to converge on the lines taken by a significant other (Giles and Smith 1979). Minimal responses and gaze aversion from speaker may be tokens of deference from interlocutors who consider it more important to demonstrate an acceptance of context as defined by authority figures (cf Milgram 1974) than to pursue their own transactional goals.

This is indeed what Bourhis (1985:126) suggests of cross-cultural encounters where a speaker may converge "because he believes he should by virtue of his role positions, and also because as a subordinate group member in this particular cultural setting, he should converge towards dominant-group speakers". Minimal responses may essentially be performances of social-symbolic meaning - respect avoidance (Douglas 1975), deferential politeness (Brown and Levinson 1978) or complementary schismogenesis (Bateson 1972) - rather than inappropriate backchannel responses to transactional discourse.

Isolating and elevating a particular level of meaning above others is likely to have a distorting effect on the interpretation of communication as a whole. Douglas (op cit:117) warns against creating false assumptions, "when among all the realisations of a social situation one level is singled out to be privileged above the others".

The result of this 'front stage bias' when one view of reality is taken to be the textually enduring image is that: "we are landed with an artificially foregrounded subject matter". Douglas suggests that "the solution is to drop the transportation metaphor and to take all the expressions of a situation, at all levels, as equally contributing to it, making it actual" (ibid). Assumptions then that participants are actively competing "to find a way of taking the floor" (Thorp op cit:iii) to convey their own ideational messages are unreliable, given that a range of meaning options and realisations co-exist at various communication levels (3.3.1.4). Throughout an encounter, or at different points within it, individuals may be concerned with bringing into prominence one or more particular levels of communication, for example the interpersonal or transactional, and with expressing different meanings within the same level, for instance a concern for social justice contrasted with a desire to define rules of speaking.

With varying degrees of success, interlocutors may transpose foregrounded meanings from one level to another. Participants too may opt out of conversation should they so wish, which means that what is left unsaid "is as much a pragmatic choice as any strategic choice employed in speech act performance" (Bonikowska 1985).

Discourse analyses serviced by a classificatory bias may also result in culturally inappropriate applications of outcomes. Attempts to apply functionalist research findings to language training, for example through recommendations that teachers should help learners transfer skills and strategies from their mother tongue for "constant negotiation and renegotiation, clarifications and restatements" when speaking English (Thorp op cit:54), could perhaps more beneficially be placed in a context of language awareness in which some understanding is developed, by discourse analysts as well as participants, of the nature of different levels of communication, each associated with a range of meaning paradigms; of participant preferences as regards active engagement in meaning negotiation; and of the varying degrees of perceived threat-to-face in negotiating meaning in asymmetrical encounters.

In summary, both discourse analyses reviewed here share an emphasis on structural-functional patterns of language behaviour (Ardener 1971a:xxxv), on syntagmatic structures generated to functional ends. Such emphasis is in contradistinction to structural symbolic and paradigmatic aspects of meaning which I elaborate in chapter two.

The simplicity and linearity of a functional model is counter-evidenced by the complexity of socially situated communication. In neither discourse analysis is there a significant statement concerning paradigmatic meanings expressed in contrasting sets of personal constructs. Rather such meaningful paradigmatic 'opposition' is apprehended as 'conflict' in syntagmatic statements about the use of power.

Ardener (1971c:458) suggests it is because of the human capacity to generate great numbers of paradigmatic structures, including metaphoric constructs, that functionalists have concentrated on the field of social events:

functionalists have in fact been used to ordering this plane through rudimentary structures of another type, call them 'syntagmatic' if you like, in opposition to the 'paradigmatic' structures of the programme.

He further suggests that "functionalists did not always grasp their [ie syntagmatic structures] arbitrary nature" and concludes: "it is not surprising that those wearing syntagmatic lenses do not see paradigmatic structures" (ibid).

The undoubted value of insights gained from a syntagmatic-functionalist perspective, eg to do with structures of social control, has to be measured against the loss of potential insights from the equally valid but relatively undocumented sets of structural-symbolic meanings.

#### 1.4.7 Critical Linguistics

Much of the literature on unequal encounters in institutional settings is grounded in a 'critical discourse analysis' (Fairclough 1985), part of a more general movement towards a 'critical linguistics' (Fowler et al 1979, Kress and Hodge 1979). This itself parallels developments in other disciplines: Scholte (1974) takes as his theme the development of a 'critical anthropology', Bauman (1976) a

'critical sociology', and Quantz and O'Connor (1987) a 'critical ethnography'.

In British applied linguistics it is the 'Lancaster school' more than any other which has become associated with this 'critical' tradition. Describing 'the language of asymmetrical discourse', Thomas (1983 and 1984) shows that in interactions with people of equal or higher status, some non-native English speakers are "inadvertently employing pragmatic or discoursal strategies which for native speakers are typically associated with a person in a position of 'power'" (1984:227). She also sets out (1985:765) "to describe the systematic way in which a range of pragmatic features were employed by the dominant participant in a series of 'unequal encounters' in order to restrict severely the discoursal options of the subordinate participant". By focussing on power and status relations between interlocutors, she aims to "move towards a model of discourse organisation with greater predictive and explanatory power" (ibid).

For Candlin (1981:197-8), "the equalizing of interpretive opportunity among cross-cultural learners of English is one goal which ought to unite current work in discourse analysis, materials preparation and methodology". Fairclough (op cit:739) defines the goal of critical discourse analysis as being to 'denaturalize' 'naturalized ideologies' - the latter referring to ideological norms which become accepted as 'common sense':

denaturalization involves showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures.

The social theory underlying this approach appears to be an amalgam of Marx's views on class struggle, Foucault's (1972) notion of power, and Habermas' (1978) concept of knowledge. These amount to a powerful explanatory force for displays of institutional power and mechanisms for controlling social knowledge and behaviour. It is an approach which elevates ideological considerations as the predominant concern of discourse analysis. Given widespread acknowledgement of the subjectivity of knowledge and research within the social sciences, and a demand for critical exposure of the ideological presuppositions inherent in all research methodologies, any contribution to analyst awareness-raising should, *prima facie*, be welcomed. However two things give rise to concern in a critical

linguistics approach to language description as currently realised.

The first is in the limitations of the explanatory framework, which leaves itself open to criticisms, voiced earlier (1.4.3 and 1.4.5), of locally produced discourse features correlated with independently abstracted social structures. Though the notion of 'social action' attempts to link the immediate language situation with wider notions of 'social institution' - "a sort of 'speech community'" - and 'social formation' - a term used "to designate a particular society at a particular time and stage of development" (Fairclough 1985) - the static, and somewhat reductionist, definition of macro social structures offered is ultimately unsatisfactory.

Secondly, an approach which is concerned with "the reproduction of social structures in discourse" (Fairclough op cit:746), suggests a tendency towards sociolinguistic determinism. The twin notions of 'malleable' and 'masterful' man (Lyon 1975:57-8) are united in an uneasy combination to produce a phenomenological Marxism that fails to take adequate account of a non-deterministic perspective on intentionality. Consequently, the ideological position adopted leaves little room for individual freedom as regards social action. Paradoxically, one effect of the 'powerful' and 'powerless' labelling process is to place language users in an emasculating position by the explanatory constructs of a discourse analysis that operates in predominantly third-person, situation-external modes rather than adopting a more participant-centred methodology. The effect of rendering participants powerless is achieved by denying them a degree of existential freedom to alter their social personae - short of taking revolutionary action to escape their analytically ascribed roles!

In addition, discourse analyses that view gate-keeping 'power' largely as an instrument of control over others can underestimate the capacity of gate-keepers to set aside or decline to invoke such perceived power, and undervalue the empowering potential of gate-approachers' own constructs and behaviour as creators of meaning.

The circularity of reference implicit in a Marxist critique is challenged by Bateson et al's (1956) notion of 'metacommunicative self-reference', which refers to the

metalinguistic component of communication. Robinson (1986:665ff) goes a step further by introducing the notion of 'metalocutionary implicature', indicating a kind of strategic reflexivity or self-exploration, an act of "temporarily or partially lifting oneself outside of one's own tactical situatedness and thereby working towards strategic self-discovery ... working specifically from a more or less passive state within an ideological inscription toward an active control over my own intentions and interpretations".

In the light of claims made for the predictive force of critical linguistics, the status of its 'closed' explanatory system must be carefully examined. In that it amounts to an unfalsifiable, hence untestable (Popper 1959) account of language behaviour, it would appear to be not a genuinely scientific theory, but a metaphysical construct. Though as such it may still be meaningful, "if we have no way of testing it there can be no empirical evidence for it, and therefore it cannot be held to be scientific" (Magee 1973:48). If so, Marxist approaches to 'critical discourse analysis and 'critical linguistics' must take their place alongside other metaphysical theories, such as religious and psychoanalytic explanations of social reality.

Finally in adopting a closed explanatory framework, a theory within which all possible states of affairs fit, there is the danger that "if the conclusions are prescribed, the study is precluded" (attributed to Archbishop Frederick Temple, cited in Edwards 1963:29). In such circumstances a more 'open' approach acknowledging a degree of freedom and creativity on the part of language users to define social situations, may be replaced by the more sociologically acceptable hallmark of ideological soundness. Such a position could be summed up in the catchphrase: "never mind the research quality; feel the ideological 'truth'".

## 1.5 Centripetal Approaches to Language Description

Since, as Brumfit (1980a) has observed, different approaches to language "reflect primarily the differing interests of the practitioners of the various disciplines", the range of theories and descriptions on offer can appear somewhat bewildering to the uninitiated. For the 'experts', there is the danger of becoming "the prisoner of our

own categorisations" (ibid) or, in the case of language teaching and applied linguistics, of those categorisations within the shifting boundaries of linguistics. Hence the need to step outside the hitherto dominant conceptual framework to gain insights into context and communication from approaches to language in related disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and psychology.

As the name suggests, a centripetal approach to describing language in use begins with a consideration of contexts-of-situation and participants themselves as a way to understanding communication. In chapters two and three I investigate a range of relatively neglected features of context and communication. Such insights from language-related disciplines can be synthesised with what we know about language use from sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. The question remains however: given the range of contextual and communication features investigated within the realms of anthropology, sociology and psychology, and the need for pedagogically relevant accounts of situated language use, why has such a synthesis not already occurred? In the remaining sections of chapter one I explore this question, focussing on anthropology, a discipline in which there has always been potential for close links with linguistics, and stressing the need for stronger connections between the two.

### 1.5.1           Autonomy and Integration in Anthropology

Continuing tension between autonomy and integration has long been a hallmark of linguistics and anthropology. As newly emerging disciplines, each has struggled to achieve academic status through pursuing a path of autonomy and self-determination over the past century. The description which Henson (1971:3) provides of relations between early British anthropology (1850 - 1920) and language suggests a deliberate detachment from linguistics:

In contrast to the American or the French approach, very few British anthropologists considered that language required study in its own right within the bounds of their discipline. ... they merely used it as supplementary evidence to support and extend theories developed within anthropology. Language was indeed such a peripheral interest that very few ideas had evolved any further at the end of the period considered in this paper than at the beginning.

We find in Henson's (1974:38) explanation for this state of affairs more than a hint of the neo-colonial principle of divide and rule, of territorial boundaries established and operating between the disciplines:

One reason why early British anthropologists regarded the study of language as lying beyond their bounds was that the science of language was already a well-established and autonomous discipline at a time when anthropology was still looking for its own rules of procedure. Therefore instead of developing their own distinctive approach towards language, anthropologists assumed that the subject was already adequately developed, and in most cases where linguistics did enter anthropological discussion, its use was based on the theories and categories already established by the Indo-European linguists.

Referring to the forties and fifties as a period in which "scientific linguistics made one or two striking advances of sufficient importance to begin to bear upon thought in neighbouring disciplines", Ardener (1971a:ix) notes the irony of a situation in which "the influence of thought purportedly derived in some part from linguistics should have come to be so important in British social anthropology, when the study of linguistics had for so long lapsed".

Ardener (ibid) sees the approach to language represented by functionalist anthropology on the one hand and the newer structuralism on the other, "in great contrast to the 'cultural anthropology' of the United States, in which the study of language has never lost its place".

Comparing the development of linguistics and anthropology in America and France with that in Britain, and citing the work of Boaz, Sapir and Whorf, Henson (1974:122) observes that throughout this century:

there has been a continuous stream of books and articles from Americans, who, whether they have called themselves anthropologists, linguists or psychologists, have all been interested in the same problems of the relationship between language and culture, and of the possibilities of using the techniques of one of the two disciplines of linguistics and anthropology to explain the data of the other.

Grillo et al (1987:275) suggest that "linguistic anthropology has on the whole been much weaker in Britain, where the institutional links meant that anthropology and linguistics underwent 'separate development'", compared with the historical link

afforded by a "strong institutional relationship" between the disciplines in the United States:

This close relationship derived in part from the intellectual importance attached to the study of language. Through the research and teaching of Frank Boas, Edward Sapir, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, there developed a wide-ranging but distinct field of inquiry called anthropological linguistics, or more usually linguistic anthropology, which had a major influence on both mainstream anthropology and, until the Chomskyan revolution, mainstream linguistics.

### 1.5.2 Malinowski and Firth

Referring to a similar period in the development of anthropology in Britain, Ardener (ibid) comments:

The failure of the great middle generation of social anthropologists to respond to the challenge of language has long been one of the curiosities of the British school of the subject.

Grillo et al (1987:285) throw light on this criticism in pointing out that: "recent histories of the relationship between anthropology and linguistics in Britain ... tend to blame much of the sterility of British anthropological work on language, until the late 1960's, on Malinowski's unhelpful influence". Hailed by Hymes (1964a:4) as "the founding father of concerns with language in contemporary British anthropology", Malinowski is described by Robins (1971:36) as "an ethnographer forced into linguistics by the needs of his own subject". Kuper (1983:1) views Malinowski as having "a strong claim to being the founder of the profession of social anthropology in Britain, for he established its distinctive apprenticeship - intensive fieldwork in an exotic community".

By the rigour of his fieldwork methods, Malinowski sought to develop an accurate and detailed approach to recording data which would prove "an antidote to the excessive and unsubstantiated generalizations of Frazerian anthropology" (Henson 1974:128). Despite the innovatory claims of his ethnographic approach, Malinowski's ideas on language appear to have been conditioned by the traditions of earlier British anthropological linguistics.

Henson (op cit:89) suggests that "he owed a large proportion of his linguistic attitudes to his nineteenth century predecessors". Reviewing Malinowski's work amongst the Trobriand Islanders, Leach (1961:9), a pupil of Malinowski and "at heart still a 'functionalist'", criticises his former teacher as being "biased by his down to earth empiricism, by European prejudices and by his interest in psycho-analysis" (sic).

Paradoxically, Malinowski's enthusiasm for language, in particular for his own linguistic theories, served to obscure other major issues such as the existence of generalized structural patterns and symbolic meaning systems. His role in introducing language to social anthropology was ambiguous and, for some, disappointing. Ardener (1971a:lxx) sums up Malinowski's contribution by stating that "he bequeathed, on the one hand, a behaviouristic view of context combined, on the other, with an intellectually ethnocentric mode of analysis".

Though much maligned in recent histories of anthropology, Malinowski did succeed in forging an important link between linguistics and anthropology by introducing the concept of 'context of situation' as indispensable to the understanding of words and utterances. As early as 1920, Malinowski had predicted that "linguistics without anthropology would fare as badly as ethnography would without the light thrown on it by language" (p78). A few years later (1923:326) he presented a view of linguistics in metonymic relationship to anthropology: "linguistics must be a section, indeed the most important one of a general science of culture".

Malinowski's most famous disciple, Firth, repeated the claim (1934:19) - "language is not merely a process parallel with culture, it is an integral part of it" - and (1957 passim) developed the notion of context of situation as of vital importance to understanding language use: "the meaning of words is only appreciated when the symbols are expanded, or as I should say contextualised" (p10). Again, "the central concept of the whole of semantics considered in this way is the context of situation. In that context are the human participant, or participants, what they say, and what is going on" (p27). Though offering much scope for development, Firth's theory remained, unfortunately, a largely unelaborated notion.

### 1.5.3 Functionalist Anthropology

Henson (op cit:127) argues that for British social anthropology after Malinowski, "language and linguistics became peripheral theory, irrelevant to the main purpose of functional anthropology. As a result, even less attention was paid to the problems of language than in the early period". Besides accusations of linguistic naivety concerning the equation of language meaning with contextual function, and of a priori categorisation in its approach (Henson:op cit), two major criticisms remain of a functionalist approach to anthropological linguistics.

The first may be considered as a misplaced faith in the 'concreteness' of data.

Henson (op cit:128-9) describes this in the following manner:

At first it was thought that once sufficient reliable data had been collected, comparison would again become possible. But more recently, the realization grew that the greater the concentration on treating a society in its own terms, and the greater the emphasis on assuming nothing in advance as a common feature, the more remote became the possibility of any valid generalization. Even the language of description became suspect to the more aware.

The other major problem centres around functionalist anthropology's failure to adequately account for the nature of language as a symbolic system (Henson op cit). Grillo et al (op cit:277) claim that eventually "theoretical dissatisfaction with the functionalist model in both British and US anthropology as a whole after the Second World War led to a search for alternative perspectives on society".

### 1.5.4 Autonomy and Integration in Linguistics

A similar tension between autonomy and integration is evidenced in influential movements within linguistics. For instance, it has been largely the centrifugal energies of Bloomfieldian grammar, in contrast with the centripetal force of Sapir's work, (Robins: op cit) which have directed the course of linguistics in the United States this century.

Tracing the development of linguistics in the early part of the twentieth century, Jakobson (loc cit) referred to the First Congress of Linguists (Hague 1928) as

being, in the words of its secretary Schrijnen, an "act of emancipation", which was to herald "the autonomy of linguistics" as an intellectual discipline.

However the necessity of combining internal consolidation of the discipline with a substantial widening of its horizons was enunciated shortly after the Hague Congress by Sapir (1929:214) who argued that linguists, whether they liked it or not, "must become increasingly concerned with the many anthropological, sociological, and psychological problems which invade the field of language ... it is difficult for a modern linguist to confine himself to his traditional subject matter. Unless he is somewhat unimaginative, he cannot but share in some or all of the mutual interests which tie up linguistics with anthropology and culture, with history, with sociology, with psychology, with philosophy, and, more remotely, with physics and physiology".

Whilst accepting a degree of disciplinary independence for linguistics as necessary, Robins (1959:175) warns against any ostrich-like behaviour:

The autonomy of linguistics, however, does not imply that linguists should disinterest themselves in the world of learning outside. There is an obligation on the linguist to look both inward, as it were, on the refinement of theory and the efficiency of technique, and also outward to the connexions which his subject may have with other studies.

Meanwhile the conflict between autonomy and integration continued. That linguistics over a long period had established a reputation for disciplinary independence and made little headway in the direction of integration, is evident in Greenberg's comment (1963:v):

further substantial progress in linguistics requires the abandonment of its traditional isolationism ... in favour of a willingness to explore connections in other directions. The borderline areas most prominent in the present essays are those with logic, mathematics, anthropology and psychology, but, of course, others exist.

The tension was foregrounded yet again in the sixties and seventies in the light of the usage - use debate provoked by Chomskyan theory. This time around, a note of resignation can be detected in the explanation offered by Sinclair et al (1972:35) for the continuing phenomenon of linguistic isolationism:

The reluctance of linguistics to study the processes, the dynamic structure, of language as it is used in interaction is not surprising since modern linguistics has developed as a science by abstracting from the data of actual usage a well-defined object - a uniform and homogeneous language structure, discovered in the competence of all native speakers and therefore capable of study in the productions of any one individual, usually the linguist himself.

#### 1.5.5 Reconnecting Language and Anthropology

From an integrationist perspective, Goodenough (1957: 168-9) challenges the desire of linguistics and anthropology to resist external influences in their development: "the frequent assertion that language and culture are independent [is] an unfortunate half-truth". He states the metonymic relationship between language and anthropology quite explicitly: "a society's language is an aspect of its culture ... the relation of language to culture, then, is that of part to whole". Taking a similar position, Robins (loc cit) seeks to explain the paradox of linguistic and anthropological isolationism by suggesting that "their separation in academic organisation has its justification more in the different needs of teaching and research, personal preferences, and the general division of academic labour than in the two subjects themselves".

Jakobson (1973:26) outlines the dangers inherent in an exclusive identification with either autonomy or integration and states the need for equality and harmony in attempts to reconcile the positions:

unless these two complementary notions - autonomy and integration - are intimately linked, our endeavour becomes diverted to a wrong end: either the salutary idea of autonomy degenerates into an isolationist bias - as noxious as any parochialism, separatism, and apartheid - or one takes the opposite path and compromises the sound principle of integration by substituting a meddlesome heteronomy (alias 'colonialism') for the indispensable autonomy. In other words equal attention must be paid to the specifics in the structure and in the development of any given province of knowledge, and furthermore to their common foundations and developmental lines as well as to their mutual dependence.

However despite repeated calls from linguists and anthropologists alike for an integrated approach to language and culture, the fact remains that for substantial periods of their development the two disciplines have retained in their dominant

approaches, essentially separatist, if at times parallel, positions. Noting the move away from an interest in diachronic, diffusional studies in anthropology and linguistics to a preoccupation with synchronic, structural-functional studies, Milner (1954:172) observed that:

in the United Kingdom, at any rate, they [anthropologists and linguists] have not perhaps been over-anxious to compare methods and results, or to assess the value of their findings in relation to the parallel work carried out in other social sciences and founded on similar contemporary premises.

Henson (1974:130) concludes by suggesting that far from being a chance phenomenon, the parallel development of social anthropology and linguistics is "a regular process which can be traced over years. It seems not to matter whether both sides actively encourage the alliance, or whether, on the contrary, they ignore each other's existence: both are swept by the same tide of intellectual opinion along closely similar lines".

With the task of achieving adequate descriptions of communication in context for language teaching purposes, comes the need once more to reconnect language study with relevant insights from anthropology, sociology and psychology. In particular there is the need to integrate functionalist accounts of language use, for example from speech act theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969 and 1975) and needs analysis (van Ek 1975, Munby 1978), with descriptions of social symbolic structures and cognitive processes, along with their influence on actual behaviour.

## 1.6 Summary

At the beginning of this chapter I drew attention to the importance of developing adequate descriptions of socially situated language use for pedagogic purposes. I also discussed significant differences between analytic and experiential types of knowledge, and argued the need to incorporate user constructs in models of communication if descriptions are to be attested as 'psychologically real'. I went on to explore relations between language teaching and linguistics, suggesting a need for caution in adopting a 'linguistic approach' as traditionally conceived, to language teaching. Following this, I outlined the mediating role of applied linguistics in developing an interdisciplinary approach to language study.

In the remainder of the chapter I considered a number of 'linguistics internal' approaches to language description operating under 'centrifugal' forces, that is having language form or function at the centre of their analysis and moving outward to consider other relevant aspects of the social situation. Finally I reviewed relations between linguistics and anthropology, suggesting a need for language study to reconnect with relevant insights from anthropology and other social sciences in order to produce adequate accounts of communication in context.

In chapters two and three I describe the main features of 'linguistics external' approaches to context and communication which operate under 'centripetal' forces, that is having social symbolic structures and cognitions at the centre of the description and moving inward to consider the relevance of these to communication. In doing so, I show how an understanding of important aspects of social symbolism can help develop an 'ecology of context and communication'.

## Chapter Two            Towards an Ecology of Context

A statement spoken in real life is never detached from the situation in which it is uttered. Utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other, and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of words.

(Malinowski 1923:307)

Meaning ... is to be regarded as a complex of contextual relations ... the central concept of the whole of semantics considered in this way is the context of situation ... it can be described as a serial contextualization of our facts, context within context, each one being a function, an organ of the bigger context and all contexts finding a place in what may be called the context of culture.

(Firth 1957:19,27,32)

... this wild and new found land of context, the repression of which has been so crucial to the formation of linguistics in this century.

(Dillon et al 1985:459)

### 2.1            Approaches to Context

Given the pedagogic need for adequate descriptions of socially situated language, the notion of context of situation is a key concept in the study of language in use. With increasing interest across the social sciences in language behaviour, context, at times only a shadowy presence in discussions of language, is once more assuming major importance. However, for reasons largely historical and internal to linguistics, central questions raised by the notion of 'context of situation' have not been satisfactorily addressed. As Wallwork (1969:118) comments, "even those linguists who have accepted the general thesis [of context of situation] have done little to follow up this line of approach". It remains therefore a rather elusive concept, with wide variation in definition.

An immediate problem in investing the notion of 'context' with meaning is to do with delimiting the scope and content of the term. In setting its agenda as the analysis of language structure and constructing relatively tight boundaries around syntax, semantics and phonology, descriptive and theoretical linguistics for most of this century has succeeded in marginalising contextual issues, thus avoiding the necessity of dealing with their complexities.

In recent years however the newly emerging disciplines of pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis have advanced their own language related notions of context. Dipping a toe in muddy waters, Sperber and Wilson (1986) attempt to keep their feet clean by narrowly delimiting context to a set of logical propositions and inferences, that are added to as discourse proceeds (1.4.4.1). An alternative account of context with reference to cognition is provided by Schank and Ableson (1977) and Johnson-Laird (1983), for whom context is conceived in more general cognitive terms of scripts or frames. Frames may be thought of as stored structures of social and experiential knowledge that can be activated to process new information, and scripts as agendas for social action. As discourse proceeds and new information is processed, frames and scripts are continually repaired and updated.

Developing an interpretive sociolinguistic approach to conversational analysis, Gumperz focuses more on the process of contextualisation than on the nature of context itself, on "constellations of surface features of message form... by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is" (Gumperz 1982a:131) at any given moment in a social encounter. Thus an essentially localised notion of context ensues, with emphasis on its real time construction through participant negotiation of 'contextualisation cues'.

In its neo-Marxist approach to discourse analysis, critical linguistics (1.4.7) constructs a notion of context around relations between discourse utterances and asymmetries of social structure. Explanations for language behaviour in institutional settings are thus offered in terms of unequal distribution of relevant sets of knowledge, power and control. Notions such as 'governance' (Foucault 1972) and 'gate-keeping' (Erickson and Schultz 1982), figure prominently.

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between a number of approaches to the notion of context in language studies. To begin with there is the familiar language based perspective, which I have referred to as a centrifugal or 'linguistics internal' (1.4) approach. The central feature here is cumulative progression from a language code base to notions of context. That is, starting from the 'microlinguistics' world of syntax, semantics and phonology (Allen 1975), it builds up layers of knowledge

about language in use. Having established and consolidated its own boundaries, a linguistics internal approach to context branches out to explore a series of connections between language form and function, semantics and pragmatics, code and text. This approach to language in context also seems more concerned with connections between linear stretches of text, that is syntagmatic structures, and transactional discourse, than with contrastive sets of paradigmatic meanings and their relations to interpersonal constructs and social symbolism (qv 1.4.6). Useful though a centrifugal approach is towards evolving more descriptively adequate accounts of communication in context, it is constrained by a primary linguistic focus, particularly in its ability to satisfactorily account for contrasting interlocutor definitions of situation.

An equally valid starting point for the study of communication in social settings is to adopt a centripetal, 'linguistics external' perspective on context. In contradistinction to the serialist, cumulative procedures of a 'linguistics internal' approach, the central characteristic of this approach is its holistic orientation. That is to say it begins by trying to understand relevant aspects of social and cognitive structures developed over time, and how they influence communicative behaviour in specific circumstances.

We can also identify language descriptions shaped by 'participant external' sociological analyses, which view context as essentially a social construct, pre-existing and locally reconstituted in social encounters (Fairclough 1985). As noted earlier (1.4.7), prominence is given in the analysis to socially prescribed roles and inequalities of status and power, as interlocutors are seen more as enacting given social roles than creating their own social space (Candlin and Lucas 1986, Erickson and Schultz 1982). Such somewhat deterministic descriptions contrast markedly with a 'participant internal' psychological approach, relating patterns of communicative behaviour to the various ways in which individuals create context through their own definitions of situation and personal constructs of role-relationship. In this regard, cognitive psychology (Kelly 1955, Eiser 1980) and interpretive anthropology (Geertz 1973 and 1983) have been influential in presenting an image of individuals as creators and sustainers of their own social reality.

What is perhaps most noticeable in current accounts of communication in context is the imbalance between descriptions based on sociological theory, of which there are many, and the fewer number of those motivated by psychological principles. For instance, insights from social psychology (cf Goffman 1967 and 1969, Argyle 1969 and 1983, and Giles and St Clair 1985) which offer rich interpretations of language behaviour in context, remain relatively underrealised in language studies, as does the potential to integrate social and psychological approaches to language within a holistic framework.

A third distinction in approaches to context is between an emphasis on a synchronic or contemporary study, that is focussing on locally emerging context in the immediacy of 'real time' communication; and a diachronic or historical perspective which illuminates more general social trends and cognitive developments as these shape local forces in the construction of text and context. As noted earlier (1.4) the hallmark of twentieth century linguistics, and of a 'linguistics internal' approach to context, has been its essentially synchronic perspective.

Finally we can distinguish between an approach to context which serves a functional or transactional discourse analysis, one concerned with describing what people **do** in social situations - for instance exchange information, purchase goods or services, request action - and one which gives a central place to the social-symbolism of communication, which considers who people **are** or perceive themselves to be in terms of the identities they present and interpersonal meanings they perform in communication.

Having argued that a structural-functional or transactional perspective on discourse analysis is restricted in scope (cf 1.4.6), in the remainder of this chapter I describe some of the main features of what remains an underdeveloped area in applied linguistics, a centripetal or 'linguistics external' approach to context.

## 2.2 Towards an Ecology of Context

To speak of an 'ecology' of context is to refer to the need to develop descriptions of context which will adequately account for the role of participant internal, social-symbolic and diachronic aspects of meaning in social situations; and to reconcile language internal understandings with language external knowledge. An ecology of context thus seeks to reconnect and synthesise language study with relevant insights from anthropology, sociology and psychology; and to do so by exploring the interrelations between relevant social structures and processes, features of institutional settings and participant constructs of role-relations therein (cf Bernstein 1970, Leach 1976, Reed et al 1978) as they influence and inform communicative behaviour.

### 2.2.1 Diachronic Social Symbolism

In the context of a neo-structuralist return to the study of meaning systems, the 'new' anthropology (Ardener 1971c), derives much of its theoretical capital from the French school of social anthropology, notably Levi-Strauss. The work of leading figures in the new structuralist tradition in British anthropology, such as Edmund Leach (1961, 1973, 1976, 1982 and 1985), Mary Douglas (1966, 1970, 1973, and 1975) and Victor Turner (1967, 1969 and 1974), has developed around an interest in symbols, belief-systems and ideologies as expressions of meaning (Henson 1974:1); and in explorations of generalized structural patterns (Leach 1961).

A central feature of the new anthropology is a rediscovered interest in language (Ardener 1971c) and a search for common ground between linguistics and anthropology (Henson 1974). Offering opportunities to reappraise fundamental concepts in linguistics, the neo-structuralist movement represents one of the most important post-functionalist developments in anthropology. As an antidote to excessive concern with synchronic, structural-functional and syntagmatic language patterns, it refocusses study on diachronic, structural-symbolic and paradigmatic meaning systems. By combining a structuralist approach to meaning from anthropology with existing knowledge of functional sociolinguistics, we may arrive

at a deeper understanding of social contexts and of language behaviour therein.

As the term 'structuralist' has been variously interpreted in linguistics and anthropology, it is important to understand its use within the new anthropology. Structuralism as an interdisciplinary trend has been defined as "a method of inquiry based on the concepts of totality, self-regulation, and transformation, common not only to anthropology and linguistics, but to mathematics, physics, biology, psychology and philosophy as well" (Robey 1973:2). In this sense, structuralism refers to a general approach to disparate subject matter, "a way of looking at things" (Leach 1973:37) which involves a recognition of "language or a social system as a self-contained and structured whole" (Robins:1959: 176). From this macro perspective we can proceed to a more detailed investigation of the system's components and reciprocal relations.

Within the new anthropology the term 'structuralist' is used in the sense customarily understood in European linguistics and in the work of American linguists in the anthropological tradition of Boas and Sapir. It is more a study of relational structures - linguistic, psychological, social and economic - as parts of a whole meaning system, than the narrower Bloomfieldian practice of isolating form from meaning in a preoccupation with grammatical classification (Lyons 1973, Allen and Widdowson 1975). Speaking of general structuralism in linguistics and anthropology, Robins (*loc cit*) describes the various processes involved in structural analysis:

both disciplines involve the abstraction of patterns and regular conformities from the mass of observed human behaviour in particular fields, and the systematization and explanation of these patterns by means of appropriate categories, themes and structures.

Offering opportunities for generalization, such processes are in marked contrast to the "wide and varied range of functionalist explanations" of social behaviour. Leach (1961:23) argues that though in functionalist analysis "each type of explanation throws illumination on appropriately selected case material ... none of them are at all convincing as contributions to general theory". Ardener's (1971c:456) sporting metaphor suggests the functionalist interpreter of events is like "a goal-keeper in the fog trying to intercept footballs kicked from all direc-

tions".

The value of generalized structural patterns is at least two-fold. First they invite us to re-examine familiar material from a fresh point of view. They also suggest a certain kind of structural unity, of symmetrical or reciprocal relationships, underlying the enormous diversity of behavioural forms and functions (cf Milner 1971). Comparing the goal of the 'new' structuralist anthropology with modern structural linguistics, Leach (1973:40) explains that:

just as structural linguistics endeavours to establish that there are 'deep level' universals which lie at the back of the diversity of human languages, so also structuralist social anthropology seeks to discover 'deep level' universals which lie at the back of the diversity of human cultures.

Secondly, the 'new' anthropology offers an opportunity to reappraise some of the fundamental principles set out by Saussure, "the founding father of modern structural linguistics" (Lyons 1973:6). Though he stressed the primacy of synchronic studies at a time when diffusionist diachronic principles were predominant in European linguistics, and proposed a separation of methods for dealing with each, Saussure clearly recognised the significance of both synchronic and diachronic approaches to language. Whereas the former offers a cross-sectional view of the subject-matter, the latter affords a longitudinal or historical dimension. Indeed, one of the main strengths of the new anthropology is that it seeks to place social events within settings and processes understood in social time and space, thereby offering new insights into language behaviour (cf Leach 1961 & 1976). In the following sections I explore the relevance of such diachronic features of context as they appear to influence constructions of social situations and orientations to communication in institutional settings.

### 2.2.2 Society and the Individual: Existential Insecurity

A central feature of human communication is the ever-present tension within and between various levels of social organisation - individuals, groups and larger social structures. Opposing forces operate at all levels: towards creativity, autonomy and self-determination on the one hand; and constraint, convergence or conformity on the other (cf Williams 1965). With socioeconomic and political changes in relations

between individuals, groups and larger social organisms, it is important to increase our understanding of the nature and influence of such diachronic features of context on situated language use.

#### 2.2.2.1 Social Change

In many parts of the world, industrialisation and the rise of the modern state, developments in science, trade and technology, and changing patterns of mobility and demography, have resulted in a major shift in public social relations from primary group to predominantly secondary group relations. As a result of such profound socioeconomic change, two major types of social organisation may be distinguished. "Gemeinschaft" communities (Tonnies 1955), common to non-industrial societies, are characterised by largely face-to-face relationships in relatively small group, dense social networks wherein standards and traditions are local rather than national, assumptions of convergent world views are common, and in which the individual's primary group needs for identity and self-esteem are likely to be fulfilled through a sense of belongingness within the primary group. As the predominant form of social relations in agrarian economies, such groupings have by and large given way to more loosely organised social networks in industrialised societies, a kind of "gesellschaft" illustrative of a marked increase in individual contact with secondary groups. A form of social organisation where people are not well known to one another, secondary group relations offer less certainty as regards shared knowledge and beliefs, relationships which are more impersonal and contractual, and laws and regulations that assume major importance (Glazer and Moynihan 1975).

In and by themselves, such historical changes in the nature of public relations might not be thought to pose serious obstacles to the conduct of relations between individuals and groups who, after all, have shown remarkably adaptive capacities over thousands of years. However fundamental socioeconomic changes have important consequences for the nature and quality of interpersonal relations obtaining in the new order. In particular, a predominance of secondary group relations suggests a reduction of primary group need satisfaction in terms of feelings of security and well-being, with potentially adverse consequences for the

individual's sense of belonging, social identity and self-esteem.

Furthermore, social stratification combined with inequalities in knowledge frames and communication skills for achieving specific goals in social encounters, can generate a degree of uncertainty and anxiety amongst individuals entering into secondary group relations (cf Rumelhart 1983). From this perspective, it cannot be assumed that all participants share a similar degree of security and self-confidence in new social settings or contexts of communication.

#### 2.2.2.2 Change and the Individual

The new social order of secondary group relations has a paradoxical effect on the life of individuals: a liberation from the conforming pressures of the old order, it simultaneously constrains them in terms of the degree of certainty, confidence and security they can construct around the new.

If, as Dahrendorf (1975:5) claims, liberty "remains a response to the fact that we live in a world of uncertainty", it would also appear that uncertainty is the existential price we pay for the liberty created by the new order. For Fromm (1963) freedom means learning to tolerate the insecurity and uncertainty that is a consequence of the liberty achieved in the modern world. However, as Fromm (1942) sees it, the major difficulty in so doing is that many people have a deep-seated fear of freedom, a craving to escape or alienate themselves from the new liberty and its entailed responsibility to radically doubt, to critically question rather than take for granted prevailing orthodoxies, assumptions and institutions.

Popper (1945) associates the desire to be released from a fear of assuming responsibility and accompanying fear of the unknown, to our strongest instinct for survival and need for security - hence the appeal of religious and political ideologies which offer certainties and assurances in an uncertain and insecure world. The potential disruption to society and disorientation for the individual faced with a new liberty is summarised by Magee (1973:88-9):

with the emergence of man from tribalism and the beginnings of the critical tradition, new and frightening demands began to be made: that the individual should question authority, question what he had always taken for

granted, and assume responsibility for himself and others. By contrast with the old certainties, this threatened society with disruption and the individual with disorientation. As a result there was from the beginning a reaction against it, both in society at large and within each individual. We purchase freedom at the cost of security, equality at the cost of our self-esteem, and critical self-awareness at the cost of our peace of mind. The price is steep: none of us pays it happily, and many do not want to pay it at all.

At the heart of the educational experience too, is a necessary uncertainty and existential insecurity that derives from the imperative to critically question. However, educational processes also take place in social contexts wherein, as we shall see, opposing forces of deference toward and dependence on figures of authority operate in order to successfully complete the social rituals embarked on.

### 2.2.2.3 Change and Social Institutions

Concerned with the effects of social change on relations between individuals and society, Ginsberg (1968:56-7) describes the paradox of increased independence and decreased power for the modern individual, in the following manner:

Everywhere in the modern world there is to be traced a double movement - on the one hand, a breakdown of the older social structure and with it a liberation of the individual; on the other, an enormous increase in collective powers and a process in which the community takes on functions previously left to the individual, the family or some other body. The movement may be described in another way as consisting in a transition from the conception of personal rights inhering in individuals and limiting the law, to a conception of rights as defining social relations and of law as based on rights so defined.

Glazer and Moynihan (op cit:14) note the rise of the modern state as "a crucial and direct arbiter of economic well-being, as well as of political status and whatever flows from that". The concomitant rise of social institutions has led to a take-over of many of the social functions, such as the provision of health, housing, education and employment, formerly associated with primary group networks.

It is increasingly within institutions charged with responsibility for enhancing life opportunities for the individual, that many decisions are taken that have a lasting effect on the life and socioeconomic opportunities available to individuals and their dependants. Our educational institutions, for example, represent important public

arenas wherein future life chances are crucially determined. Herein lies the importance of the 'gate-keeping' function of social institutions (Erickson 1975 and 1976), and with it the need to become more aware of individual and group differences in social background as preparation for the selection processes engaged. For those whose sociocultural values and experiences generate markedly different attitudes and expectations to those espoused by the educational institution, there is the need to examine how feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in gate-keeping situations interrelate with communication processes - for instance in producing high levels of stress and anxiety in language performance.

### 2.2.3 'Rites of Passage'

Further insights into language behaviour and diachronic features of context can be gained from an anthropological framework, thus affording fresh answers to "the question of how to link thickly described discourse to the larger patterns of action and interaction which constitute their world" (Dillon et al, op cit:458). Describing dyadic communication in educational settings by relating it to personal constructs within social institutions and processes, we can appeal to the notion of 'rites of passage' (Van Gennep 1909), specifically to the metaphor of education as a 'rite of transition' (Reed et al 1978).

The rite of transition metaphor offers a unifying force for developing models of social context since it captures something of the nature of social time and space and of individuals' progress through it. Throughout the totality of their socially recognised existence, individuals move from one status to another, the occupancy of each constituting a time period of social duration (Leach 1976). At the level of concept this change of status is effected relatively simply by a switch of category, for instance child to adult, single person to married, undergraduate to graduate, but at the level of action, change calls for a crossing of social boundaries. Given that "throughout history and throughout the world, human societies of all kinds have attached enormous ritual importance to thresholds and gateways" (Leach op cit), it is not surprising that the crossing of thresholds is hedged about with rituals marking the transition from one social status to another: "rites which accompany

every change of place, state, social position and age" (Van Gennep op cit).

Rites of passage are marked by three main phases: separation, margin (or 'limen' signifying threshold), and aggregation. The initial separation phase signifies the public presentation of candidates for initiation. This may be marked by cultural displacement as well as geographic isolation from previous social contexts, as, for instance, in the case of overseas students arriving in Britain. The effect of separation is to remove initiation candidates from normal existence and prepare them for entry to the next phase, margin.

In the context of the second phase, initiates temporarily exist in a state of social timelessness in which former roles and statuses may be perceived as having little relevance or value and new ones are yet to be acquired. For initiates, whether as adolescent, bridegroom or student, this phase marks the longest and most important rite of transition, during which they occupy an ambiguous 'liminal' area or no man's land outside the framework of 'normal' social time and space.

Amongst the various rites of transition which take place within this interval of social timelessness are acts of submission and symbolic sacrifice to more powerful others. Translating the metaphor into educational terms, students are expected to follow the directions of their teachers who occupy positions invested with social and institutional authority, and to periodically submit their work, ultimately themselves as students, for appraisal.

Pending their satisfactory fulfilment of duties and obligations within the rites of margin, initiates proceed to the third and final phase of transition rites, aggregation. This marks both the public recognition of successful completion of the rites and reentry into 'normal' social time and space in which individuals hope to occupy positions commensurate with their newly conferred status. In educational settings the rite of aggregation is manifested in the graduation ceremony which marks both the conferment of new qualifications and the re-emergence of initiates into society with a new social status. Turner (1974:80) summarises these three stages as follows:

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from

both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more...

### 2.2.3.1 Separation: 'Us' and 'Them'

Certain features of the rite of transition have profound implications for the ways in which individuals define their situation and create role constructs that influence their communication performances. Firstly in the process of separating from normal social time and space - in the case of overseas students entering new educational settings and processes, separation from family, professional position, colleagues and sociocultural milieu - there is reinforced what Leach (1982:168) refers to as "one of the really basic features of human thinking as it affects social action ... the polarization of 'we' versus 'they'".

For some students, metaphysical boundary setting emphasises the asymmetry of the institutional relationships they experience, along with the distance perceived between 'us', as overseas students, and 'them', as British teachers. Perceived inequalities of position and status in academic or professional relationships may also be expressed at the interpersonal level:

the teacher traditionally is seen as a higher person than the student, that concept is in each and everyone of us... no matter how brainy students may be... you know there is always a gap no matter how hard we try to close it (Interview 1.8)

[see Appendix B for further information on interviews]

of educational systems:

we are truly behind the British system of education... definitely most of us come here because there is something better, something has succeeded, something that we will try to remodel into our own cultural background to see whether it will work (Interview 1.7)

or cultural processes:

I want to know people from other cultures; some cultures are more advanced than others and you will learn ... I think it will

be a good experience to meet others and find out about their  
cultures (Interview 1.7)

A profound social consequence of boundary making is the qualitative distinctions attached to the divisions created. Thus a role classification of individuals engaged in educational processes can be indexically associated with another series of "fundamental metaphoric equivalences" (Leach op cit) to include teacher attributes of, for instance, being 'knowledgeable', 'experienced', 'open', and 'mature':

[E.U.'s view of his Somali teachers]

they were not highly educated nor well qualified.. they had no training in education or psychology.. they taught through fear and corporal punishment.. they didn't try to solve students' learning problems.. they didn't like many or difficult questions from students.. they were very young and not far from us [students] educationally

[E.U.'s view of his British teachers]

they are well educated and highly qualified.. they try to use psychology in teaching methods.. they explain what they are doing to students.. they are more open and promote a good classroom atmosphere.. they are experienced teachers and use the latest teaching methods (Interview 1.4)

Likewise negative comparisons can be made, in this case by invoking a nineteenth-century view of social progress, between the education system in one's own country and Britain's:

our education system is a carbon copy of Britain's of maybe before the sixties... we are very much behind Britain there is no doubt about that... [if] we say we are to catch up with Britain... it's not possible because when the education system started in Britain we had not started; we can only meet Britain if we tell Britain to close down all your schools, no further research until we have reached this level, then let us all start, then equality comes, it is only then (Interview 1.8)

Such sets of evaluatory indices can have profound implications for definitions of situation, constructs of role-relations and associated rights and responsibilities; for evaluation of own and others' levels of knowledge, expertise and self-esteem; and for communication performances within rites of transition in educational settings.

They will be further discussed in chapters three and four.

#### 2.2.3.2 Marginality: 'Betwixt and Between'

As individuals engaged in ritual processes, novitiates exist then in an ambiguous liminal world (Turner op cit) within a period of social timelessness (Leach 1976). In terms of educational processes, the liminal period corresponds to the length of time between "persons joining the educational establishment to obtain a qualification" and "persons leaving the educational establishment with (or without) a qualification" (Reed et al op cit:60).

Certain characteristics are generally associated with novitiates in the rite of marginality:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial... their behaviour is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly

(Turner op cit:80)

One consequence of existing in an ambiguous boundary state is experiencing a degree of confusion surrounding opposing social and educational processes, and of uncertainty as to position, status and novitiate rights. There is considerable evidence from the personal constructs of teachers and students alike to suggest the experience of ritual subjects in educational settings may be characterised by tension between social and educational forces, a tendency to passivity and deference in relation to figures of authority, and to egalitarianism amongst novitiates themselves.

#### 2.2.3.3 Social Processes

Students undertaking formal, qualifying courses in education may also be considered as engaged in "rituals of status elevation in which the ritual subject or novice is being conveyed irreversibly from a lower to a higher position in an

institutionalized system of such positions" (Turner op cit:156):

the teacher is the Mecca towards which the student voyages  
(Japanese student quoted in Higher Education Group 1980:6)

(In Somalia) teachers are respected, they have high status and  
students are trying to reach that place (Interview 1.4)

gradually they (teachers) will bring you up to the standard  
expected ... I envy them because no concept can't be taught by  
reaching down to the lower consciousness of students and  
pulling them up to the higher level of consciousness they want  
us to experience (Interview 1.8)

The anticipated goal of a higher social position is attractive in so far as it is seen to confer desirable attributes - enhanced social position and status, inter alia - on those who successfully complete the rites of transition. Re-emergence into normal social time and space is welcomed too as removing the ambiguities and feelings of uncertainty and insecurity associated with transition processes themselves.

Paradoxically, the process of social elevation demands of the 'students', who in normal social time and space may be senior teachers, school inspectors or educational administrators, that in adopting student roles they experience a temporary reversal of status. As novitiates conscious of the reciprocity of relations entered into within a rite of transition, there appears to be a disposition or need to accept such a reversal of status for the purposes of achieving a new social position:

[I see myself] primarily as a student because I am ready to learn, because skills are not acquired when you measure shoulders with the person from whom you learn the skill... primarily I am a student; if I see myself as an inspector who am I going to inspect, but as a student I am prepared to now learn certain skills that are necessary for an inspector especially when I get back home (Interview 1.8)

And as students wishing to fulfil the educational tasks required of them to successfully accomplish the rites, individuals acknowledge the necessity of participating in this levelling exercise, "as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with their new

station in life" (Turner op cit:80):

I hope I will get adjusted to be a good student here... I mean I have to forget all other things; I have been an administrator, a teacher, a curriculum developer and all these and so many interactions with other people, and I was always giving directions to some other people, do this thing, and orders to do the work and supervise if the work was done and all this; now I have to be a student very humble, take whatever I am told to say and just take the benefit out of it (Interview 1.6)

#### 2.2.3.4 Educational Processes

The educational system is probably the most influential of all institutions - outranking the family, the church, the police and the government - in shaping the interpersonal politics of the growing person ... The teacher is the possessor of knowledge, the student the recipient. There is a great difference in status between instructor and student.

(Carl Rogers 1978)

Crucial to attaining social goals is the fulfilment of educational tasks perceived, in part, as the acquisition of knowledge and skills which it is assumed will validate or make credible claims to the new social position and status. Hence the numerous expressions of student desire to learn from teachers, and expectations that the latter will supply the knowledge and skills vital to the student's future:

I want to try and learn as much as I can from my lecturers... I expect them to help me as much as they can

(Interview 1.13)

I think I have more to learn from them than they have to learn from me and a learner is basically someone who knows less than the person he's receiving from and I see myself as having something less, I want to get more from them

(Interview 1.7)

I have to be a student and learn from my professors and follow the guideline they give me

(Interview 1.6)

Just as the social goal of status elevation carries with it the uncomfortable process of temporary status reversal, so too underlying educational tasks within the rite of marginality present another disturbing process which must be undertaken if students are to fulfil the academic requirements for completing the rites of transition. This educational process may be seen in two interrelated parts: first is

the, culturally relative, requirement that students assume a large measure of responsibility for their own learning rather than becoming overdependent on teachers for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Second is the, equally culturally relative, notion that students will develop and display creative and/or critical faculties in their academic work.

#### 2.2.3.5 Social and Educational Processes

In undergoing a rite of transition, individuals experience various tensions within and between the social and educational processes involved. Firstly as regards the role-relations obtaining in the simultaneous processes undertaken, student experiences of reciprocal relations between rite-of-transition novices on the one hand and instructors on the other, may be reinforced by teacher constructs of novitiate position and status:

I see them as students because they clearly are students and they're here to learn and I think they would acknowledge that (Interview 1.11)

However not all teachers accord with this view: a notion of equality rather than complementarity between teachers and students may be promoted by some staff:

I refer to them as friends or colleagues or whatever and try not to refer to them as students... and for example we usually have a party for them sometime this term we say to welcome our overseas friends and at my home in the summer I usually have a party for them before they go home and again you know we talk about them as our overseas friends (Interview 1.10)

Where there is a mismatch between teacher statements about participant equality and students' own experiences of structural asymmetry, students may sense more acutely the ambiguity of their position and status within the educational institution. Finding expressions of equality incompatible with their own constructs or experience, some students may interpret them as unauthentic, in effect constituting a hidden form of alienation (Habermas 1976).

A second set of tensions can be seen in the procedural dynamic underlying educational tasks, between an initial position of dependence on teachers for the

acquisition of knowledge and skills, and a move towards self-responsibility for carrying out essential tasks. Novice dependence may manifest itself in the imitation of authoritative others:

I think there are two problems at the moment... one is the language... and I think the other thing is something perhaps we need to think a bit more about... it relates back to the English doesn't it, of you finding it very difficult to put things in your own words because somebody else has expressed it; exactly the same came up in your second assignment... I mean in the first one suddenly I got this big stretch of American stuff that was patently not J.E. speaking but the author of a book

(Interview 2.8)

you also find it difficult to put other people's wording in your own words still at this stage to a certain extent, and in this last assignment there was a little bit in one of yours where you obviously were taking it from somewhere; it says we something something something, you know it was obvious that it wasn't E.U. talking, it was the book (Interview 2.9,)

Dependence may also be displayed in turning guidelines for writing into set formulae:

the handout I gave you was really meant to be a guide, it was never meant to be sort of headings that you followed and wrote exactly under each heading, and that really was a big constraint on you because that stopped you being fluent and at the end of it- this was not only a criticism of you there was one or two others as well that after reading some people's account I felt I knew a lot about the project... but in your case at the end of it I still hadn't got a feel for it... because it was staccato, it was little bits (Interview 2.11)

Students' classroom interaction may also be perceived at times as designed to please or appease teachers:

I'm always aware that there is a subscript for these students which is about their waiting to pick up the clues that will give me what I want, and I strenuously try to avoid doing that; I strenuously try to get them to be clear about what they want for themselves but it isn't always easy and I'm sure I sometimes give in and give them recipe book stuff that they want to hear, that will make them feel happier (Interview 1.11)

Perceptions of student deference to figures of authority extend beyond teachers to the written word. In both cases submissive behaviour may be viewed as hindering the development of critical faculties:

you do have to get used to the idea that when you're writing something you are expected to pass an opinion on it... you know you are expected to make a statement about it; it's not just a matter that because so-and-so said it that must be the best way, you need to say something like "but other evidence has shown that" (Interview 2.11)

they often have considerable difficulties writing and understanding our expectations of students writing at this level, often have great difficulties in using texts critically... they actually have as much problem with the authority of the text as they do with the authority of the teacher or course organiser and can't let go of notions about all books containing, you know, truth; and working with students in that area and remaining sensitive to the fact that obviously this is a function of their socialisation and background, that kind of experience, but actually something they must overcome if they are to operate effectively on a masters course is, I think, the trickiest bit (Interview 1.11)

The demands of developing critical faculties by taking risks in oral discussion and academic writing can present serious problems for students unaccustomed to value placed on such ways of learning. Students themselves account for the difficulty in developing critical capacities in a variety of ways. One refers to his lack of knowledge, indeed fear, of the critical process:

about the courses really... I'm just like a person... a man who just jumped into a pool of water or something like that, I was just like that kind of situation (you mean you were frightened of drowning) yes exactly, really what I mean is that all things were strange to me, how to begin writing, how to read, after you collect information how to put it together... I didn't have idea about writing critically, I used to ask even J.E. many times what do they mean by writing critically (Interview 2.9)

Another student, replying to the course director's view that this didn't appear to be a major problem for the student, "because you're always a critical lot", refers to the constraining influence of structural asymmetries on the expression of criticism:

you know Nigeria is a conglomeration of societies... even in the north we have many tribes and we have different cultures so criticism is not part of- you only criticise your colleague freely, so like your age-mate or somebody you know that you are the same (Interview 2.10)

A third student relates his own painful experience of how as a teacher he received criticism in return for being critical of the mathematics curriculum in his own school:

just now you mention about not being critical and I agree one hundred per cent about it because you know that is the way we are brought up D.A. it's our weakness in Nepal, you know it is there; if we start picking out bad points, once I did... but when I was critical there was a lot of criticism (you shouldn't have been critical) headmaster even said don't do that because those books were written by my colleague, and they were furious, they started instigating boys and I had a lot of difficulties coming out from the boys... oh painful stuff (Interview 2.11)

Despite students' reservations and concerns, a willingness and ability on their part to engage in 'the critical process' is seen by teachers as essential to the fulfilment of educational tasks:

I think actually a criticism that I had of most people on this particular assignment, the one that was a critique... is that the word critique actually means criticism not just a description; that is a problem, and I was just having a long chat with J.E. actually about the problems that people find of being critical (Interview 2.10)

I think if I have to pick out one problem which I think I've identified with you, it is that you do find it very difficult to be critical; your writing that you've done for me is descriptive, you are describing things and you're not actually tearing them to pieces, you're not arguing about them, and that's really why your marks you know were not- they were alright but they would have been higher had it been critical

(Interview 2.11)

Besides ambiguity and tension within social and educational processes, we can identify a further set of tensions between them. In co-existing as novitiates in a rite of transition and students within a new educational setting, individuals may experience a tension between a sense of dependence, novitiates on their instructors,

that is part of the rite of transition process, and the need to assume responsibility for one's own learning to ensure educational tasks are fulfilled. However in encouraging self-reliance to meet the demands of the educational agenda, teachers may face the problem of students unwilling to acknowledge the personal resources they bring to the process:

most Asians... practically deny the expertise and resources  
which they bring themselves (Interview 1.11)

For individuals who assume a degree of responsibility for learning, pursuing the critical process as part of their educational agenda means, of necessity, experiencing a degree of existential doubt and insecurity previously referred to (2.2.2.2). Such uncomfortable feelings may be offset by developing a sense of trust and confidence in the ability of teachers as counsellors to guide them through the gatekeeping rites of the social process. For some students this may be a crucial factor in being willing to tolerate the necessary insecurity and risk-taking demanded by the educational agenda.

It is by no means clear, however, that teachers are aware of these complexities of student dependence, particularly that aspect which indicates novice need for empathy and guidance throughout the rites of transition. Where educational tasks are foregrounded, the significance of dependence within social process may remain hidden.

Teachers who wish to protect themselves from the unwelcome effects of overdependent students, may locate the tension between dependence and responsibility primarily within the educational arena and interpret it as student desire to avoid or abdicate an acceptable measure of responsibility for learning, which in turn poses a threat to teacher autonomy. In other words the dilemma may be construed as essentially to do with student difficulties in coming to terms with educational processes per se rather than an inevitable tension between social and educational forces:

I suppose it's true that all of the students, and it's as much  
true of overseas as of home based people, that they are in my  
view overdependent; they begin the course expecting that we'll

tell them what they've got to know and how to do it... for example we've been talking about their selecting areas in which to work for their dissertation and the follow up to that process is talking to a lot of members of staff about what the possibilities would be... and I think some of them feel quite paralysed by having to go off and knock at people's doors and say hey, you know, would you spare me a quarter of an hour because there's no procedure that they know that will make sure that happens comfortably for them and the member of staff; now, I mean, no way am I actually going to hold their hands and do it for them but I do acknowledge that it's problem  
(Interview 1.11)

Where the significance of interpersonal relations between novitiates and guides/gatekeepers remains hidden or subordinate to the business of getting on with educational tasks, there may be insufficient awareness of the tensions between social dependence and educational responsibility, and the difficulties students experience in resolving them. Where these recurring tensions throughout the rites of transition are construed as a problem for students in adopting responsible roles vis a vis educational tasks, resolutions offered by teachers may fail to address underlying social processes and be formulated instead as attempts to move students along a dependence - self-reliance axis:

they (Asian students) are very difficult to shift into positions where they take full responsibility for their own learning and my firm belief is that students at this level must take responsibility for their own learning; I mean they must be enabled to do that effectively so that they'll be in touch with appropriate resources, but ultimately all choices are theirs and the choice includes how much they work and what way they work and so on and I found therefore with Asians that that's sometimes very difficult; if they've been through D.A.'s [diploma] course it's sometimes easier although it's not by any means necessarily the case even after a year at the centre that they shift very far  
(Interview 1.11)

#### 2.2.3.6 Economic Forces

Pursuing social goals by undertaking educational processes is further complicated by the pressures exerted on both by an economic imperative. This imperative is realised in any or all of a number of ways: for instance, in vigorous pursuit of the metaphor of education as an economic activity such that educational institutions are

framed as part of 'the knowledge industry'; or where the professional relationship is expressed more in terms of a commercial one, with pressure on teachers to become 'manufacturers' of knowledge and skills and give 'value for money' to their 'customers'.

Commensurate with the increasing importance of this metaphor is the need to address its alienating effect on individuals and on relationships between 'producers' and 'consumers'. By so doing, novitiate feelings of uncertainty and insecurity might be alleviated and energy released for valuable educational tasks. In reality, however, the effect of the economic imperative to do things and get things done, to teach what is directly useful or applicable, is to put further pressure on teachers to set as their goal a task agenda which leaves little opportunity for a corresponding process agenda which would enable students to reflect on some of the problems and difficulties in taking up studentship roles.

something that I'm very conscious of and I think it's having a disappointing effect on a lot of our teaching and this is the pressure on people is now so considerable ... and we're now into a banking economy where our teaching hours our research hours and everything else have to be accounted for  
(Interview 3.8)

Two interrelated areas of tension between economic forces on the one hand and social and educational goals on the other give particular cause for concern. The first is in connection with the social process and the student's position as a novice within the rite of transition. As part of the socialisation experience, novices need to work through problems of separation and marginalisation, in order to develop a satisfactory sense of belonging and self-esteem. As part of the educational process, a positive identity and self-confidence are crucial to developing a capacity for economic production, that is producing quality work to fulfil educational tasks set.

Though research suggests that "staff with academic status are the appropriate people to initiate them into the student role and to provide on-going support during their course of study" (Reed et al p85), there does not appear to be adequate provision for this due to economic pressures on staff:

our interpretation is that the student is looking for someone in authority in relation to his student role who can work with him about his problems of being a member of his college or

university... we recognise, however, that this can place an intolerable burden upon lecturers who would like to be co-operative but who are forced to defend themselves against extensive consultation (Reed et al p83)

A second area of need is in relation to facilitating the development of critical faculties and greater self-responsibility for learning. Again in this crucial area there may be a lack of adequate academic provision:

I've often thought that actually we are doing these people a disservice to take them on a course that expects that they'll be able to be independent and critical, because we don't make any provision to train them how to do it; we assume people are that and can do that (Interview 1.11)

Ironically, where help is given it may go to those who least need it:

lots of people need to come for help and sometimes the people who are- ask for most help are actually the best students; I think if I looked at you know the record of time spent talking to students, a very large part of it would have been spent talking to good students because they you know like you understand how important it is to be clear, to sort out your puzzles, to get the best advice about reading or to- best advice about choosing when there's a question of alternatives

(Interview 2.6)

The importance of all students receiving adequate support from teachers in order to develop a sense of belonging and self-confidence as novices, and to become empowered as critics to carry out educational tasks, is highlighted in the Grubb Report:

the student role is not just an intellectual notion but a strong base which the overseas student is looking for... many overseas students wished to glamorise the English institution as some form of caring body along the lines of their school experience... the teacher was often surrounded by fantasies of someone who would care for them and look after them... this relationship has profound importance for the overseas student because it affects the way he can take up the student role, that is experience the feeling that he has authority and competence to tackle his studies and to cope with the stress of being a foreigner...

(Reed et al pp80-2)

Again, however, the reality is that pressures on staff time and other institutional resources mean that adequate support may not be available:

for most students these expectations remain unfulfilled... a considerable proportion of students are not helped to come to terms with these disappointments and have great difficulty in working through these experiences to the point of being able fully to take up the student role (ibid)

The problem of students' painful socialisation experiences not being addressed and educational demands made with inadequate provision to meet them, highlights the insufficient training and support within educational institutions in these two crucial areas.

Economic pressures on academic staff to pursue a task agenda can also be negatively perceived by students who feel frustrated and resentful at being let down at a crucial time when they need care and support:

You are responding commercially at the moment to a commercial arrangement, and I am not sure whether that is the same thing as the British view of education.

(University undergraduate cited in Reed et al p105)

This country was once known as one of the best places in the world for education, but now she is just like a businessman dealing with very rich customers.

(FE College student ibid)

The university's literature raised my expectations of experiencing student interaction and a shared voyage of discovery, an international community, a counselling system in the first year whereby you can confide in your counsellor (academic) about academic problems. But it doesn't happen... I am disenchanted with university.

(Malaysian Chinese undergraduate op cit:75)

To summarise, the importance of accounting for diachronic features of context in communication can be seen from this brief review of social change and social processes. Social change towards individual freedom counterbalanced by existential insecurity and the prevalence of secondary group relations in institutional settings forms the backdrop of many professional encounters.

Educational and social processes are complex in nature and interrelations, creating seemingly conflicting demands and exerting economic constraints on participant action. Educational contexts themselves can be understood as embedded in wider

rites of transition in which the paradox of social elevation by temporary status reversal is realised. This, together with a degree of unfamiliarity and uncertainty within the new socialisation context, can lead to a passivity and deference towards authoritative others for guidance through the rites.

This, in turn, conflicts with teachers' perceptions of educational processes as being to help develop in students creative and critical faculties as well as responsibility and self-reliance for learning. These then represent some of the subtle and complex features of the contextual eco-system operating in educational settings over social time and space.

#### 2.2.4 Paradigmatic Meaning in Context

Since I regard the significance of a thing as more important than its tangibility, I shall say that minds and problems are more real than cobblestones. (Polanyi 1967:33)

What men define as real is real in its consequences. (Thomas 1928)

A social situation is whatever it is defined to be by the participants. (Kephart 1976:20)

To understand the notion of paradigmatic meaning in context, and appreciate something of its richness and complexity, we can begin once more from the neo-structuralist anthropological position and its reinterpretation of another of Saussure's famous dichotomies, that of 'paradigmatic' and 'syntagmatic' structures. Using the Hallidayan notion of 'rank', Allen (1975:22) offers a traditional linguistic interpretation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations as follows:

A linguistic element enters into syntagmatic relations with other elements at the same rank with which it forms a serial structure related to linear stretches of writing or the temporal flow of speech. At the same time it enters into paradigmatic relations with other elements which may appear in a given context and which are mutually exclusive in that context. Syntagmatic relations are relations of co-occurrence; paradigmatic relations are relations of substitutability.

It is interesting to compare this description with the following anthropological interpretation of the notion (Ardener 1971c:465-6):

Socially apprehended events are generated in a multi-dimensional space. If we see them as merely generated in ordinary space, this conceptual field I call the 'syntagmatic plane'... The same events are, however generated paradigmatically. Every event in a syntagmatic structure is also an event in a paradigmatic structure ... In normal linguistic usage the syntagmatic chain is seen as linear (in one dimension) and the paradigmatic has to be represented through a model in two dimensions. Yet any reality to which it corresponds must be conceived of as operating in four dimensional space-time: the one dimensional linear-chain representing an output generated in three space dimensions over one dimension of time.

For social anthropology alike, the value of syntagmatic meaning chains is determined by their place in paradigmatic structure. An equally important claim Ardener makes is to do with the "richly programmatic power" of the paradigmatic. Whereas the traditional linguistic interpretation of paradigmatic structures emphasises their mutual exclusivity in surface realisation, the new structuralist interpretation focuses on the creative power of human cognition and on the richness of symbolic expression:

establish one level of categorisation and human beings build a metaphorical level upon it, then upon this level, yet another. The number of possible structures nested inside the other is thus bewilderingly great. (Ardener 1971c:458)

Acknowledging the fact that individuals in part construct the contexts and roles they engage in communication, we can extend this traditional linguistic notion to the crucial area of cognitive psychology. By paying attention to the nature and conception of social time and space in which communication takes place, we can widen the terms 'paradigmatic' and 'syntagmatic' to include the range and diversity of cognitive constructs we create to help understand social situations and processes. In so doing we can restore a balanced view of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures and relations between them.

Reinstating paradigmatic meaning as a central area of anthropological study, Ardener (ibid) claims a primacy for paradigmatic structures as "the source of any ascription of meaning or 'value'" to syntagmatic transactions. Using a computing analogy, he likens paradigmatic structures to the meaning of the 'programme', and syntagmatic structures to that of programme 'output'. Thus if the meaning of any 'programme' item changes, so too does the value of any 'output' generated by

programme categories. Research methodologies which rely heavily on analyses of syntagmatic structures, for example functional linguistics and anthropology, are highly vulnerable then to shifts in paradigmatic meaning.

From another perspective, since relations of substitutability can be contrastive as well as synonymous, participants may interact according to essentially different 'mind sets' or definitions of situation (cf the two discourse analyses reviewed in 1.4.6). This, in turn, can produce quite different performances and understandings of language behaviour. In other words, in order to appraise the significance of communication choices and interpretations, we need to build a degree of validity and reliability into our analyses by taking into account the respective paradigms of meaning which each participant constructs and takes bearings on in social encounters. The degree of confidence we can place in our discourse analyses will thus depend to a large extent on the quality of understanding we can derive from the context itself, notably from those who participate in the event we are seeking to explain.

In the remainder of this chapter I describe something of the range and complexity of contrasting perceptions of social setting, particularly of participant position, status and role-relationship. I suggest that the plurality and ambiguity of the social symbolic paradigmatic structures perceived by individuals, generates an on-going tension for participants to resolve in communication. Furthermore, as illustrated in sections 4.2.2 and 4.7.1 - 3, where contrasting paradigms of meaning are evidenced in social encounters, the danger exists of misunderstanding and negative outcome both in terms of the evaluation of the encounter itself and of interlocutor's part therein.

### 2.2.5 Structural Symbolic Relations

Recognising that we are social beings as much as creatures who engage in economic activity, Malinowski referred to reciprocity as a principle pervading all social behaviour. As a dimension of communication, reciprocity has as much to do with the social significance of situated talk and the division of communicative labour in getting things done, as the transactional import of discourse. Through expressions of the relative position, status and authority of participants, for

example, our language behaviour informs us about the structural symbolism we construe in contexts of communication. Descriptions of language use which exclude indicators of social symbolism are likely, therefore, to yield only partial accounts of communication.

The notion of reciprocity has also been used to delineate aspects of social symbolism in asymmetrical encounters. Bateson (1972), for instance, suggests two basic dimensions, 'dominance - submission' and 'exhibitionism - spectatorship', for understanding the patterns of relationship within and between groups of people. Argyle (1983) constructs a matrix to show interrelations between dominant and affiliative styles of behaviour.

Since acts of communication express social symbolic relationships between individuals or groups as well as performing economic exchanges, it is in participants' contextual schemata or strategic patterns of expectation that perceptions of reciprocity or complementary differentiation can be glimpsed. In the following section I illustrate several aspects of social symbolism and discuss their significance within educational processes.

#### 2.2.5.1 Status and Deference

On entering the social setting wherein their rites of transition take place, students become conscious of the university's symbolic importance as an institution of 'higher education'. By virtue of their privileged position, university teachers tend to be accorded something of the status and prestige attached to the institution itself, at the apex of the educational system. This is a matter of some import for the ways in which relations between teachers and students are construed:

Although a university, like most institutions, is organized in a series of authority relationships, it is not the imposition of its authority that matters so much as the deference which it expects and gains. The prestige of the university and its position at the apex of the educational system ensures a high degree of compliance... The university teacher gains the students' respect because of his position rather than by what he teaches and how he teaches it... The deferential atmosphere... tends to radiate paternalism rather than inspire intellectual exchange.

(Benewick 1970:195 and 197)

On finally crossing the aggregation threshold into a new social status, symbolically present throughout the rite of transition in the gate-keeper's position, novitiates may then reconstruct the relationship between their former institution, teachers and themselves, more along the lines of affiliation than of dominance:

a lecturer may see me you know as a foreigner who has come here to learn through him... so by the end of the course on getting back you will be proud to be associated with the college and the lecturer in particular (Interview 1.9)

However during the liminal period, student-teacher relations tend to be characterised by novitiates as reciprocal, in the sense of complementarily different, rather than equal. Perceived inequalities of position and status are signalled through notions of respect and deference towards figures of authority:

a teacher is- there's an Arab proverb you see which- I can't translate it, you have to respect the teacher or lecturer unlike anything (Interview 1.1)

one has already conceived an idea that this is a lecturer, and once you have that in your mind this is a lecturer this is a student, so definitely there is a difference between the two... now even if you are not teaching or lecturing I may have a feeling that you are above me academically, so that feeling is there entrenched in my mind and therefore there should be a sort of respect towards you either outwardly or inwardly (Interview 1.9)

Such personal constructs on the part of students are reinforced by teacher accounts of experiencing students as respectful and deferential:

my experience is that most Asians come with very traditional respect for the authority of staff and are in my opinion overly deferential, embarrassingly deferential... I suppose they've come from systems where staff are really rather remote and probably unduly respected for being, not necessarily for being experts, for being the sort of people who are rather unapproachable (Interview 1.11)

#### 2.2.5.2 Authority and Dependence

Complementing the asymmetry of an expert - novice relationship, and by virtue of their gatekeeping role within the educational institution, teachers are viewed by

novitiates as figures of authority:

the teacher has authority within the institution, thus a teacher may see himself as the boss of students and I feel strongly that many students see teachers as their superiors even though teachers may want to reduce that feeling... most students see teachers as not on the same level as them which really is quite true... in class an individual should see himself as a student and be ready to learn, that is acquire knowledge from teacher, see teacher as his better (Interview 1.8)

The fact that teachers are believed to possess knowledge and expertise relevant to the educational progress and social advancement of students is a key link in the chain of dominance and dependency:

you see the student's- always he's the one who needs something, to be helped, to be guided and what we are expect- my lecturer is to try their best to see me as a student... just try to help me as a student (Interview 1.1)

really they try to show us the correct way of learning things (Interview 1.4)

Previous educational experiences of dominance and dependency appear to play a vital role in the formation of current expectations of teacher-student relations:

we expected them [VA's undergraduate teachers] to teach us so we could pass, we didn't expect them to leave learning to us, but for them to teach us and let us learn (Interview 1.2)

The back-home experience of these students causes them to have a picture of an educational institution which is centred upon someone who will teach them and take responsibility for them. Nigerian students consistently showed a strong sense of dependence upon those whom they considered to be in authority; Iraqis felt that they had entered into some contract which meant that they would be properly taught; and Malaysians were all the time looking for knowledge and wisdom from their teachers. Generally they complained that they were often unable to adapt to the British assumptions about education, which implied that students had to be responsible for their own progress. (Reed et al op cit:81)

For at least one student the experience of dependency was felt to be akin to that between child and parent:

now as a student I feel I'm going back to childhood again; the prophet Mohammed in the Hadith says you must study from the time you're born to the time you die, so we have to do it... I mean coming to class at a certain time, leaving at a fixed time, referring to books because teachers expect you to, because you have assignments... that's the way students have to be, they ought to do it, listen to instructors, take ideas from them, what they think important, because you have to learn and take examinations

(Interview 1.6)

Though it is a moot point as to how open discussions are between students and teachers on respective attitudes to educational processes, some teachers show an awareness of the dangers of students denying or abdicating a necessary measure of responsibility for learning:

from their point of view it seems to me a damaging assumption that we know best, which I don't think they ought to feel we do

(Interview 1.11)

#### 2.2.5.3 Subject Position and Subordination

Novitiates within a rite of transition show themselves to be well aware of their 'betwixt and between' position and, in general, appear disposed to resolve the ambiguity of their being senior teachers, inspectors or educational administrators taking up student roles, by construing a relational reciprocity between themselves and their lecturers in which they occupy a subordinate position both in terms of academic knowledge and institutional position, status and authority:

I see myself as a student; though they want us to feel we have our own ideas too which they can learn from, but basically I see myself as a student...

(Interview 1.7)

although we are students they try to show that we are just teachers like them but still we are students anyhow

(Interview 1.4)

#### 2.2.5.4 Insiders and Outsiders

Lacking the insider knowledge of teachers in the institution in which they operate as students, and seeking to develop a positive identity within and sense of belonging to a new educational environment, novitiate experiences of the central

rite of marginality are classically those of the outsider. The accompanying feelings of uncertainty and insecurity can have profound implications for communicative behaviour:

you know when something's new you'll definitely look- what's going on but you don't understand the thing very- the way you have to... because I don't have the concept of seminar to participate, give another idea, it's not our system you see, and for the last three months I was keeping quiet, I was just looking and watching and I understand later that I have to contribute something... it takes me a long time to adjust with the system (Interview 1.1)

Territorial behaviour or boundary maintenance may be signalled by defensive communication strategies of the kind mentioned above, or by the following offensive strategy designed to divert attention away from the experience of insecurity by shifting the conversational focus onto relatively minor topics:

I think they to start with often feel quite sort of insecure and unsure of what is expected... they're not at all clear what it is I'm asking them to do when I'm asking them to sort of sit down and talk about something or to describe it or to prepare a little bit of material on it or whatever... they tend to start with anyway wanting to know the precise details, how many words do I want, you know, double spaced or you know this kind of thing and so on (Interview 1.10)

#### 2.2.5.5 Indebtedness and Contamination

Besides the status and prestige accorded to university teachers, other aspects of the unequal relationship between novices and experts are crucial to understanding acts of communication within a rite of transition. Amongst these is a feeling shared by initiates of indebtedness (Leach 1982) to those who, presumed to have greater familiarity and knowledge of the necessary rituals, act as their guides to ensure successful accomplishment of the rites:

the teacher is supposed to guide the student; if they were equal there would be no need to guide students but this is not the case... they guide us to what they think is correct... they serve as guides to enable me discover for myself things that I'm supposed to really discover (Interview 1.8)

he should not see himself as parallel to the learner... but rather he should see himself as somebody who has explored first and come back trying to lead somebody through... so he's a guide  
(Interview 1.7)

Setting and maintaining boundaries between students as initiates and teachers as guides has symbolic significance for individuals in transition from one social category to another and who find themselves in an ambiguous boundary zone, contaminated both by the 'dirt' which they bring with them from category A and the 'cleanliness' associated with category non-A to which they aspire (Douglas 1972, Leach 1976).

Observing an appropriate or acceptable degree of distance between initiates (contaminated) and guides (clean), reminds participants of existing inequalities concerning social position and associated attributes, and reinforces a sense of novices' indebtedness throughout the rites of transition. Boundary setting also reflects a deep-rooted psychological desire for the preservation of confidence in one's category system by keeping metaphysical boundaries clean, something which may be expressed through perceptions of a relative distance or formality in student-teacher relations:

lecturers from the beginning keep the students at arms length so you get the message fairly early on that you are not meant to take initiatives to come closer  
(Nigerian students cited in Reed et al op cit:74)

the lecturer is someone you have to handle very carefully and be a bit distant from them or you care what you say, don't say anything... I felt that they were sort of a special group, had their own sort of community you know which had certain ways and procedures in order to get in touch with them

(Interview 1.3)

Student feelings of distance between themselves as novitiates and teachers as guides/gatekeepers can be contrasted with teacher perceptions of comradeship amongst novices going through the rites together:

they are interested in each other, you know, they often- they do always form a quite cohesive sort of friendship group you know and will often do things together and so on

(Interview 1.10)

I suspect they're a very solid group [overseas MA students] I mean the three who were here last year obviously know each other well and have a good support network between them and I notice that they're embracing the other African students too in the group (Interview 1.11)

This perception reinforces the view that "among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism" (Turner op cit).

### 2.2.6 Role Relationships

Within social settings individuals take up a number of different roles in relation to each other. Each role- relationship forms part of a set of roles: "this role-set is the total complex of roles with which a particular role is characteristically connected" (Wilson 1983:45). The meaning of each role and role-relationship is derived in large part by its place in the paradigmatic structure, that is by contrast with the other roles and relationships in the total role-set. Role-set for students and teachers, for instance, can be divided into a series of major role- relations: gatekeeper - gateapproacher; instructor - novice; facilitator - creator/critic; counsellor - client. Becoming a student, or teacher, involves, inter alia, learning to recognise and understand the significance of the many role-relations engaged, and to balance and integrate the various role demands.

As part of an investigation of discourse in public life, Candlin and Lucas (1986) identify three main roles connected with the general role of counsellor in a family planning clinic: the role of interviewer, which necessitates asking questions and recording answers, monitoring and evaluating the encounter; the role of educator, providing information to augment client knowledge; and the role of counsellor, expressing concern and offering advice. Candlin and Lucas show how during any FPC encounter, the counsellor moves within and between these different roles.

Analysing "the socialization of the young in the family", Bernstein (1970) distinguishes four contexts which, taken together, constitute "a set of inter-related contexts":

1. The regulative context - these are authority relationships where the child is made aware of the rules of the moral order and their various backings.
2. The instructional context, where the child learns about the objective nature of objects and persons, and acquires skills of various kinds.
3. The imaginative or innovative contexts, where the child is encouraged to experiment and re-create his world on his own terms, and in his own way.
4. The interpersonal context, where the child is made aware of affective states - his own, and others.

Bernstein suggests "that the critical orderings of a culture or sub-culture are made substantive through the linguistic realization of these four contexts." In each context we can distinguish a predominant parental role: authority figure; instructor; facilitator; and counsellor. These role-relations also provide insights into the social symbolism of educational settings and communication.

#### 2.2.6.1 Gatekeeper - Gateapproacher

As far as the regulative context of social and educational processes is concerned, we can distinguish several authority relationships. First there is the authority connected with the position and status of teachers within the educational institution, and which confers on them the right to monitor and regulate novitiate progress through the rites of transition:

really the most important thing is just for me to check up  
where you're at (Interview 2.1)

basically all I want to do is to sort of have a check up in terms of how  
things are going

(Interview 2.9)

In addition to authority subsumed within the role of monitoring students' progress, there is authority associated with the teaching function, of prescribing various tasks and activities for students to perform in relation to educational goals and processes:

what I suggest with this is that you go put together a slightly  
more expanded version of this outline and then come back to me  
again (okay) perhaps on Monday and we'll talk about it in more

detail (thank you very much)

(Interview 2.8)

well it's time I think to start coming in you know you've got the broad base now so we've got to start homing in a bit

(Interview 2.13)

Most importantly with regard to rites of transition, there is authority invested in teachers to assess novitiate work and behaviour. Teacher authority to appraise student performance of educational tasks is interrelated with a socially sanctioned authority to keep the gate, that is to restrict access to the rite of aggregation, and hence to higher social positions, to those individuals who satisfy them as to their suitability to proceed:

you know we mustn't take it for granted that the MA automatically follows on after this because it does depend on the grades... the examination is more of a burden obviously for people than the assignments but we have to have it I'm afraid, it's part of the requirements

(Interview 2.8)

the point I'm trying to get at is we won't know until fairly late on when we've got all the exam results whether you're able to go onto an MA... at this point it's difficult to know how things will go

(Interview 2.9)

Given the interrelationships between social goals and educational tasks (2.2.3.5), this is a powerfully informing frame of reference for many students, and may lead to some expressing concern about failure to accomplish the rites of transition:

what I'm getting out are very useful definitely but there's only one thing that sort of demoralised me about the course... that is the fact that attending this course does not mean going in for Masters... it really demoralised me a bit because I started thinking okay that means that if I don't meet the standard I'm going back home because it will mean many things to me it will mean it will affect my promotion, I will not get another opportunity to go for a course until all the others have gone, then it means- and also I am getting older

(Interview 2.10)

The regulative context then involves teachers in a set of authority roles with students which may be summarised as a gatekeeping relationship wherein students

become aware of their subordinate position within the university, the rules of the institutional order and their sanctions.

#### 2.2.6.2 Instructor - Novice

Analogous to the authority ascribed to them as gatekeepers in a regulative context of social and educational processes, is the authority imputed to teachers in their role as instructors. In the instructional paradigm, teachers are held to possess certain kinds of valuable knowledge and skills to be imparted to students who, in their reciprocal role of novices, are expected to listen and learn:

you can think too about you know what are the really big issues in teacher education and to what extent they can be overcome- let me just give you one example, one of the problems that has concerned me over the years is how teacher trainers and science teacher trainers in particular don't get any training themselves... and a number of good friends write to me and say do I have any suggestions for ways they can deal with particular problems

(Interview 2.8)

I think what you can do there is to take that chapter as a whole and talk about the whole area of... then you can put something in here, yes there's something here about the special problems of- the training of science teachers and again I would do this in relation to both UK and Somalia

(Interview 2.8)

Reciprocal attributes and functions of the twin role-sets of gatekeeper-gateapproacher and instructor-novice within socialisation contexts and educational processes may be summarised as follows:

Gatekeeper/Instructor	[ + D ]	Gateapproacher/Novice
[ + P ]		[ - P ]
<b>RECIPROCAL ATTRIBUTES</b>		
centred	-----	marginalised
high status	-----	deferential
knowledgeable	-----	dependent
dominant	-----	submissive
independent	-----	obligated
clean	-----	contaminated
<b>RECIPROCAL FUNCTIONS</b>		
directs	-----	follows
instructs	-----	learns
regulates	-----	adjusts
judges	-----	submits

[ Figure 1 ]

### 2.2.6.3 Facilitator - Creator/Critic

In marked contrast to the attributes and functions of gatekeeping and instructing are those associated with the other two major role-relationships invoked in Bernstein's set of inter-related socialisation contexts, *facilitating* and *counselling*. Instead of the structural asymmetry of the instructor-novice relationship is the implied equality, or power neutrality, of the teacher's role as *facilitator*, promoting students' creative

and critical capacities. Enabling the acquisition of knowledge and skills in pursuit of educational tasks can take a variety of forms, from helping students gain access to necessary materials:

if it's something that is a general part of the course then we can make references, we can try and get more [material] from the library here (Interview 2.11)

I have a book I will lend you about the proceedings of the last ICME, the International Conference of Mathematics Educators... I've got a book I brought back from Japan which has lots of papers in it (Interview 2.12)

to ensuring they have access to teachers with relevant knowledge and expertise:

I mean if you want to follow that up one of my colleagues, B.F. has done quite a lot of reading on streaming and mixed ability, going back a few years now but he might have some suggestions (Interview 2.11)

I will try to arrange for you to talk to more people about mathematics curriculum development... later not now I will arrange for you to talk to one of my colleagues here who is involved in a new mathematics programme, this is Dr. K.H. have you met her (no I haven't) no well I will arrange for you to talk with her (Interview 2.12)

to encouraging them to take an initiative in the learning process by utilising available resources:

if you talk to J. in the full time student group and I mean all you have to do is to find where the materials are... and you know choose a number of evenings or afternoons whenever it's convenient and actually review some of these... so I would see whether there's any more of you who would be interested in doing that and either do it as a group or do it individually, that would be really worthwhile it's one of the ways of using the resources of this place and giving yourself just something extra to take home (Interview 2.1)

The facilitator-creator/critic relationship is the predominant role-set of the imaginative or innovative context wherein, as part of the educational process, students are encouraged to explore, recreate and contribute to the academic world in which they operate.

#### 2.2.6.4 Counsellor - Client

A fourth major role-relationship between students and teachers is that of counsellor - client within the interpersonal context of educational institutions. As in the process of facilitating the development of creative and critical faculties, so for counselling purposes teachers seek to voluntarily divest themselves of some of the power and authority associated with gatekeeping and instruction to offer a listening ear to experiences of studentship, and offer advice, encouragement and support.

Crucial to effectively establishing the counsellor-client role-relationship, is an ability on the part of teachers to convince students they are willing to lend a listening ear to their accounts of the pains and pleasures of studentship:

so there are bits [of the course] that you feel less happy about than others are there (yeh) do you want to tell me a bit about which bits  
(Interview 2.1)

is there anything else I can help you on... nothing else you've got saved up to tell me about  
(Interview 2.5)

Counselling may take the form of providing a stimulus for students to engage in self-reflection, for instance by inviting them to compare the present with their previous educational experiences:

do you have any general feelings about the difference between the diploma and this... I mean does it feel different being a student on the diploma compared to being on the masters?  
(Interview 2.3)

or to confront strong feelings about particular studentship events and experiences:

I got the feeling you wanted to steer clear of it altogether, that you were a bit 'pissed off' as we say hahah in English and cross even, as you were, you were cross weren't you that this had happened  
(Interview 2.6)

Besides encouraging students to talk about the feelings underlying their experiences, another important aspect of counselling is to offer students general feedback on their progress to date through the rites of transition and give encouraging 'strokes' where appropriate:

well I've only heard very good things V.A., everybody says what a nice cheerful un- you know willing to participate person you've been in their groups so I think you've had a really good term  
(Interview 2.2)

or allay any unnecessary fears or anxieties:

I can understand your concern but no, I think that all of the staff are very sensitive to the problem of covering the whole range of students' backgrounds, we've talked about it frequently as a whole staff and people are very concerned... we'd be more than happy to give advice, guidance on reading  
(Interview 2.6)

to encourage students to overcome a bad experience and reassure them they are making adequate progress:

the other assignment I've said is more a review than a critical appraisal of an issue... I mean don't feel too badly about it because it is difficult for people to get down to writing in a critical way

(Interview 2.10)

to justify teacher action, or non-action:

I steered clear of it because I felt that was what you wanted at that point  
(Interview 2.6)

to repair damage done through misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication; and to apologise for shortcomings, self-confessed or attributed to other staff:

so you feel let down by that... right I'm sorry that I didn't pick up how crucial that whole exchange had been for you... I'm sorry because I'm so used to doing that in relation to all sorts of students, home-based students, PGCE students, we do it all the time, but we do it with the best possible intentions which are to help; I'm sorry however that B. actually didn't go any further with you and I'm sorry I didn't realise that and I hadn't taken it up

(Interview 2.6)

Counselling may also involve showing empathy with students who find it difficult to demonstrate particular qualities seen as important to achieving educational goals, for example being assertive:

so you really- I mean anybody would need to be very assertive... and in order to get heard you'd you know you'd really have to be quite pushy wouldn't you

(Interview 2.1)

or who are struggling with difficult subject matter:

you have all of you now gone past that stage where you were really struggling very hard... everybody goes through that point you know it's an uphill struggle and then it suddenly becomes easier, not easy but certainly it isn't quite the big struggle

(Interview 2.9)

Besides expressing empathy and understanding, counselling involves encouraging students to move towards initiating forms of behaviour, for instance by approaching other members of staff for help:

make use of those people and make sure you get what you want out of it

(Interview 2.6)

or to develop self-confidence in expressing their own opinions:

a lot of people are very guarded at putting forward their own opinions because they think they haven't got an opinion that's worth expressing but that is not true; everybody's got an opinion and the point of this course is that everybody can express their opinion and realise that no one is correct, they're just different opinions

(Interview 2.8)

Beyond addressing the major difficulties experienced in taking up student roles, counselling means showing concern for the individual as a 'whole' person, for example in health issues, in wellbeing outside the institution, in problems associated with separation from home and family, and in difficulties with accommodation.

Another major area of counselling centres around the fulfillment of educational tasks and relates to previously mentioned roles of instructing and facilitating. Various duties may be identified here, such as the need to alert students to perceived areas of weakness in their work:

your English has come on in leaps and bounds over the past three months as it always does with everybody but I think it still is holding you back a bit

(Interview 2.8)

to enable students prepare themselves for constructive teacher comments on their work, to attempt to explain or justify teacher criticism of student work, to offer practical advice on what needs to be done in order to fulfill educational tasks satisfactorily, to advise students on course options and thus help them make informed choices, and to offer suggestions as to how extra-curricular time can be usefully spent in relation to educational goals.

In addition, counselling may relate closely to the gatekeeping role, for instance at moments where teachers explain institutional rules to novices:

the University of London has very strict entry requirements and most people from overseas find it almost impossible to go straight into Masters programmes; if you'd wanted to do an MPhil it would probably take you three years, you'd have to do the Diploma first and then two years for MPhil; people doing an MA have to do the Diploma first and then one year MA  
(Interview 2.7)

or seek to justify that order:

there are a few places where you could go for a one year Masters programme, the trouble with that is that you are working on a course that is exactly the same for everybody... so people from overseas are at a disadvantage; there's a lot of pressure because of course it's a one year programme not two years and so I believe that the two year programme is much better

(Interview 2.10)

The counselling role then reflects a broad concern for student well-being and co-exists with the other main teacher functions of gatekeeping, instructing and facilitating.

Whereas the social symbolic effect of gatekeeping and instructing is to reinforce a sense of distance and inequality between teachers and students, the major roles of facilitating and counselling imply a reduction of distance and a desire to empower students both as critical learners and clients of educational services.

Thus we can identify a set of reciprocal attributes and functions associated with facilitating and counselling in contrast to those of gatekeeping and instructing:

Facilitator/Counsellor

[ - D ]

Creator/critic/Client

[ - P ]

[ + P ]

## RECIPROCAL ATTRIBUTES

enabling	-----	imaginative
supportive	-----	centred
encouraging	-----	self-reliant
preparative	-----	risk-taking
responsive	-----	valued experience

## RECIPROCAL FUNCTIONS

facilitates	-----	creates
suggests/advises	-----	initiates
empathises	-----	shares experience
repairs	-----	criticises

[ Figure 2 ]

We may summarise the structural differences between these major teacher-student role-sets as follows:

## R O L E - R E L A T I O N S H I P S

S O C I A L	GATEKEEPER	+P	COUNSELLOR	-P
	[ + D ]		[ - D ]	
E D U C A T I O N A L	GATEAPPROACHER	-P	CLIENT	+P
	INSTRUCTOR	+P	FACILITATOR	-P
	[ + D ]		[ - D ]	
	NOVICE	-P	CREATOR/CRITIC	+P

[ Figure 3 ]

To summarise the position so far: the contrasting role-relationships students and teachers engage signal different social symbolic configurations. Thus, whereas performances of gatekeeping and instruction show inequalities of power and authority, expressions of facilitating and counselling indicate a reduction of distance and power inequality between interlocutors, promoting a sense of consultation and involvement in educational processes. For some, the most enduring memories of studentship are of teachers as gate-keepers and instructors. However, in so far as the aim of counselling and facilitating is to empower students as clients and creators/critics, empathic performances by teachers in these role relations may go some way towards reversing the effects of structural asymmetry experienced in others.

As such, it is unhelpful to attribute power exclusively to certain institutionally 'privileged' individuals or to conceive it as unidirectional in flow, from 'master' to 'apprentice'. Rather power is a more complex phenomenon, paradoxical both in nature and operationalisation. Commonly experienced on the part of teachers is a sense of relative powerlessness to adequately address two central aspects of studentship: firstly, the sense of uncertainty about belonging to the educational institution occasioned by the ambiguities of position and status as novitiates in a

rite of transition; and secondly the quality of the learning experience, in particular the difficulties faced in being called on to display critical faculties in educational tasks. By contrast, teachers as personal counsellors and facilitators of learning voluntarily divest themselves of power to actively participate in an enabling process the aim of which is to empower students to become more secure in their identity and confident creators of meaning.

Conversely there is a sense of the potential power of students as 'clients', 'customers' or 'consumers' of educational services to negotiate structures and procedures that are open and responsive to their needs; and also, in the empowering process, of becoming creators of meaning, critical commentators on academic and professional issues. The challenge to all then in negotiating role meanings is to shift away from fixed constructs, such as the 'powerful' and the 'powerless', to more pluralistic, flexible schema which reflect the complexities and ambiguities of the role-relations and educational processes engaged.

### 2.3 Conclusion

From this discussion of reciprocal role-relationships, we see something of the range and complexity of social symbolic meaning paradigmatically expressed in educational settings. Individuals taking up a novitiate position within the rite of marginality are faced with role sets which generate opposing forces. In terms of affecting the ability to recognise and negotiate the scope and boundaries of each, there is much tension and ambiguity as regards the relative emphasis or foregrounding of any one relationship at various stages of the educational process.

A reflexive capacity to deal with such tension and ambiguity, to balance and integrate the various demands of role-relationships, seems likely to effect the quality of individual studentship experienced. Taking up the notion of an ecology of communication in chapter three, I consider further the nature of social symbolism, in particular its effects on interaction.

we are trying to apply the concepts of an outdated world view - the mechanistic world view of Cartesian-Newtonian science - to a reality that can no longer be understood in terms of these concepts. We live today in a globally interconnected world, in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent. To describe this world appropriately we need an ecological perspective which the Cartesian world view does not offer. What we need, then, is a new 'paradigm' - a new vision of reality; a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions, and values. The beginnings of this change, of the shift from the mechanistic to the holistic conception of reality, are already visible in all fields and are likely to dominate the present decade.

(Capra 1983:xvii-xviii)

[Applied linguistics] has within it the seeds of an integrated view of language applied to the world which should underlie the work of all applied linguists ... If applied linguistics is to be perceived as a fundamentally important discipline, this will only be when it produces ideas of sufficient generality to affect any language-using situation - when it performs the task of integrating all the various attitudes to language of researchers in other fields, and produces an account of language in use which is both convincing and readily comprehensible ... an account which is dynamic, fluid, and increasingly motivated by reference to interaction, to active learning and using strategies associated with learners' responses to social demands ... an account, in short, of users' application of language to the problems of the world and being in it ... (an account) concerned with a level of generality somewhat higher than the immediate concern of many who call themselves applied linguists.

(Brumfit 1980a:162-3)

### 3.1 Introduction

I began my thesis by suggesting that we can distinguish two broad approaches to developing descriptively adequate accounts of socially situated language use. The first, a linguistics-internal, centrifugal approach, takes units of language - structures, notions, functions etc - as its starting point and moves outward to embrace aspects of text and context. The second, a linguistics-external, centripetal approach, begins with a broader framework of social time and space, and moves inwards to examine the interplay of social symbolism and economic activity in communication.

In chapter one I discussed the limitations of a linguistics-internal approach to context and communication, and suggested that in order to redress the imbalance created by a predominant 'worm's eye' view of language use, it is necessary to develop complementary 'bird's eye' accounts of context and communication. In chapter two I described certain key diachronic features of context embracing both social symbolic and educational processes. I also discussed the significance of particular structural symbolic relations, such as position, status and their reciprocal nature, in rites of transition within educational settings. Finally I explored four important sets of role relations between teachers and students which affect both the likelihood of educational tasks and rites of transition being successfully completed and the quality of experiences whilst so engaged.

Besides expanding our notion of context to account for diachronic, paradigmatic and structural symbolic features therein, a similar need exists to increase our understanding of the concept of communication to adequately account for its many interpersonal and social symbolic dimensions which are as central to language use as the more familiar transactional features.

In this chapter I make use of the common anthropological distinction between economic endeavour and social symbolism (qv Leach 1976), and elaborate on various aspects of the latter - identity, belongingness, the tension between co-operative and territorial imperatives and the issue of risk. I illustrate each from student and teacher first person constructs in educational processes, to develop an ecological metaphor of communication.

### 3.2 Metaphors of Communication

A useful way into developing the notion of an ecology of communication is to look at some of the metaphors which frame our understanding of communication. In this section I focus on two communication 'gestalts' and proceed from there to develop the notion further. The first, a metaphor of economic activity, views human beings as engaged essentially in matters of economic substance, for example, the efficient production of goods and services which may then be exchanged for other forms of wealth.

The second, a social symbolic metaphor, is more concerned with the idea of human beings as social creatures and, correspondingly, with the nature and quality of social relations. With each gestalt, we can detect important relationships between the metaphor adduced and patterns of language behaviour observed.

### 3.2.1 Discourse and Economic Activity

The linguists, whom one meets everywhere these days, explain that every transaction in our culture is a language; this, of course, is why one meets so many linguists these days. And languages, too, are simply invented systems of exchange, attempts to turn the word into the world, sign into value, script into currency, code into reality. (M. Bradbury 1984:8)

Tawney (1938:272) refers to how our "conception of the place to be assigned to economic interests in the life of society" has comprehensively changed over the centuries:

The isolation of economic aims as a specialized object of concentrated and systematic effort, the erection of economic criteria into an independent and authoritative standard of social expediency, are phenomena which, though familiar enough in classical antiquity, appear, at least on a grand scale, only at a comparatively recent date in the history of later civilisations

Tracing the coterminous rise of capitalism and decline of religion in England, Tawney (op cit:276) speaks of "a sense of exhilaration [surrounding] the splendid achievements of practical energy and technical skill, which, from the latter part of the seventeenth century, were transforming the face of material civilisation, and of which England was the daring, if not too scrupulous pioneer". By elevating economic interests and criteria, capitalism was to have profound consequences for the organisation of life: "from a spiritual being, who, in order to survive, must devote a reasonable attention to economic interests, man seems sometimes to have become an economic animal" (ibid). However, if economic ambitions may be considered good servants, they can also become bad masters. Fromm (1963:355) traces the process by which this reversal came about:

In building the new industrial machine, man became so absorbed in the new task that it became the paramount goal of his life. His energies, which were once devoted to the search for God and salvation, were now directed toward the domination of nature and ever-increasing material comfort. He ceased to use production as a means for a better life, but hypostatized it instead to an end in itself, an end to which life was subordinated. In the process of an

ever-increasing division of labour, ever-increasing mechanization of work, and an ever-increasing size of social agglomerations, man himself became a part of the machine, rather than its master.

As with Marx, so for Fromm (1957:105) the theme of alienation as an outcome of capitalist society is one of the abiding modern issues:

Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. ... His main aim is profitable exchange of his skills, knowledge, and of himself, his "personality package" with others who are equally intent on a fair and profitable exchange.

As agents of socialisation, modern social institutions play an important role in creating and transmitting predominant socioeconomic values. They reflect and present the tension between the competing claims of economic criteria and human or social values. Reed et al (1978:94) highlight the dilemma for educational institutions:

while altruistic and educational motives for taking overseas students are still strong, often they are not articulated at the policy level and a desire to maintain or increase income is now the powerful motivating force behind recruitment objectives.

They argue (op cit:147) that the raising of overseas students' tuition fees has altered the conditions of the client - institutional relationship in such a way as to devalue the client "by treating the professional relationship as if it were a commercial one - in the same way as a shopkeeper puts up his prices without consulting the customer". The report concludes that a predominance of economic values, a "hard sell approach" to education along with a full cost fees policy for overseas students, has a detrimental effect on social relations, in tarnishing Britain's image abroad and giving the impression that overseas students are unwelcome here.

The metaphor of economic activity is also invoked to account for much language behaviour. Discourse within social institutions is often appraised using economic criteria such as efficiency and achievement. Samovar et al (1981:70) note that "efficient is a word of high praise in this [U.S.] society that has long emphasised

adaptability, technological innovation, economic expansion, mass production, standardization, up-to-dateness, practicality, expediency, and 'getting things done'. Multiple extensions of efficiency are used as a standard against which activity, including communication, is judged: "we tend to apply an 'efficiency-practicality' frame of reference in perceiving, interpreting and evaluating communication experiences".

Efficiency of discourse may be assessed in terms of the ease and facility with which participants exchange transactional meaning (cf Sperber and Wilson 1986), how efficiently they convey and interpret language functions and notions. This view seems akin to a 'conduit' metaphor of communication (Reddy 1979), with its assumption that speakers package messages in containers to send to listeners who unpack them to understand their meaning. Challenging this machine-like view of language use, Rutherford (1987:37) suggests that:

organism is a better general metaphor than machine for what we know about language as a medium of developing interaction among humans. Machines are constructed, whereas organisms grow. Machines have precision; organisms have plasticity. Machines have linear interconnections; organisms have cyclical interconnections. And, perhaps most important of all, machines are sterile, whereas organisms are fecund.

Functional linguistics, discourse analysis and communicative language teaching as defined by the Council of Europe's functional-notional approach (qv van Ek 1975), follow a well-trodden empiricist tradition which concerns itself primarily with economic transactions (Leach 1976). Rather than emphasising the social symbolism of communication, a pre-occupation with doing or getting things done - and being seen to get things done - characterises this transactional bias towards the production and exchange of language functions and notions. Halliday (1973:35) notes that in the course of maturation the informative function of language "is increasingly emphasized until eventually it comes to dominate, if not the adult's use of language, at least his conception of the use of language".

From a Freirean perspective of grounding language education in the development of dialogue, learning contexts in which knowledge is reflected on and understandings shared as the basis for joint teacher - student problem-solving, Baynham (1988:2) argues that "ESL and communicative language teaching in

general have suffered from an activist tendency, in that it has concentrated too much on "doing things with words" and has not bothered to ground this interactional work in critical dialogue".

Of particular importance for accomplishing transactional exchange, is the co-operative principle (Grice 1975). As regards appraising the efficiency of interlocutor contributions, this includes the ground-rules of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Motivated by this need for productive and efficient discourse, comes the temptation to assume from the outset of social encounters that participants share some or all of the following: similar sets of background knowledge and definitions of situation, convergent frames of reference and rules of interpretation.

Using a powerful socioeconomic metaphor, Bourdieu (1973) suggests that communicative resources be considered an 'economic asset' forming an integral part of an individual's social and symbolic capital, as essential as real property resources were once considered to be. As noted earlier (1.4.6), an economic metaphor often characterises current approaches to language description. Within the "speech economy" (Hymes 1977 *passim*, 1983:209) the development of linguistic or communicative competence has also become an important teaching and learning goal.

How essential communicative resources as an 'economic asset' are seen as, can be measured from the importance attached to discourse performance in gate-keeping encounters where decisions are taken which crucially affect the life chances of individuals and their dependents. The development of a communicative competence for equalising interpretive opportunities (Candlin 1981) and enhancing socioeconomic ones, means possessing knowledge and ability to control language and metalinguistic forms, meanings and functions. These operate as a vital socioeconomic resource, a repertoire which "provides the weapons of everyday communication." (Gumperz 1964:138). Such are the predominant conceptions underlying a notion of discourse and communicative language teaching as economic endeavour.

### 3.2.2 Communication and Social Symbolism

Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts, through relationships, like those of parent and child, or teacher and pupil, or classmates, that are defined in the value systems and ideology of the culture. And the words that are exchanged in these contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals.

(Halliday and Hasan 1989:5)

It is unfortunate that the empiricist-functionalist tradition in social anthropology has bequeathed a notion of the social symbolism of language use having essentially to do with creating and maintaining solidarity in practical activities. Covering only "the analysis of narrative and idle chatter, which Malinowski discussed in terms of 'phatic communion': the binding of people together" (Grillo et al 1987:277), the notion of interpersonal meaning has been reduced to that of establishing interlocutor rapport for the smooth running of economic transactions (cf Aston 1988 for a critical discussion of this).

Combined with a commonly held assumption of the supremacy of the co-operative principle in communication, this definition has tended to oversimplify the complex social symbolism of communication and subordinate the role of interpersonal behaviour to the transactional demands of social encounters.

Whereas language use within an economic paradigm focusses on transactional substance and procedures for accomplishing discourse tasks, the social symbolism of communication centres around personal constructs, interpersonal relations and social structures within communication processes. Communication as social symbolism is centrally concerned with the social nature of experience and the processes by which human beings construct, negotiate and revise their apprehensions of social experience (cf Christie 1989). As such it can be considered a vital resource for expressing identity and interpersonal meaning: it may indicate, for instance, definitions of situation in terms of social processes (eg rites of passage or socialization routines) and interpersonal relations (eg superior-subordinate; dominant - dependent; distant - affiliative); interlocutor rights and responsibilities regarding the negotiation of meaning (eg through topic initiation and change, questioning for clarification, reformulating or challenging another's statements); and beliefs and attitudes towards interlocutor and topic.

There is then an important relationship between personal constructs of situation and communication performances. Individuals define situations in part by selecting various aspects of social symbolism to attend to, for instance role-relations and interrelated notions of position, status, rights and responsibilities, and use these constructs in choosing language forms and communication strategies.

Simultaneously, through presentations of self and interpretations of others, interlocutors express individual and social identities which form a central part of the overall meaning of their communication.

Firth (1957:27) reminds us of "the contexts of experience of the participants. Every man carries his culture and much of his social reality about with him wherever he goes". Scotton (1983) highlights the social purpose of conversation as being to negotiate a set of rights and obligations between speaker and addressee, and (1985:103) distinguishes between a relational and referential function of language. According to the former, "speakers use linguistic choices to index the social situation and to encode their attitudes about their relations to it". Stubbs (1986:1) too suggests that speakers invest a substantial part of themselves in their communication:

language is used in communication to express personal beliefs and adopt positions, to express agreement and disagreement with others, to make personal and social allegiances, contracts and commitments, or alternatively to disassociate the speaker from points of view, and to remain vague or uncommitted.

To focus largely then on discourse as economic activity, is to neglect profound social symbolic aspects of communication such that the resulting descriptions of language use are reduced in scope and may systematically distort actual experiences of context and communication.

### 3.3 Towards an Ecology of Communication

All activities may be thought of as either functional in the immediate sense, or as symbolic ... that is they are not of importance to us because of the work they immediately do, but because they serve as mediating signs of other more important acts ... In ordinary life the basic symbolisms of behaviour are densely overlaid by cross-functional patterns of a bewildering variety ... every isolated act in human behaviour is the melting point of many distinct configurations.

(Sapir 1949:71-3)

The discipline of general linguistics ... is ultimately directed towards making multiple statements of the meaning of language. The basic principle ... is a dispersion of meaning at a series of congruent levels of analysis, at each one of which statements of meaning are made ... to make statements of meaning in terms of linguistics we may accept the language event as a whole and then deal with it at various levels, sometimes in descending order, beginning with social context and proceeding through syntax and vocabulary to phonology and even phonetics, and at other times in the opposite order.

(Firth 1957:xi and 192)

If we begin from the whole texture, we can go on to study particular activities, and their bearings on other kinds. Yet we begin, normally, from the categories themselves, and this has led again and again to a very damaging suppression of relationships. Each kind of activity in fact suffers if it is wholly abstracted and separated.

(Williams 1965:55-6)

Taking a central goal of applied linguistics to be the development of descriptively adequate and pedagogically relevant accounts of communication in context, a holistic approach to understanding socially situated language behaviour seeks to produce accounts which are comprehensive, coherent and accountable to language users as well as to academic and professional communities.

### 3.3.1 Comprehensive Descriptions of Communication

By comprehensive understanding of socially situated language behaviour is meant firstly an approach to context which recognises the interrelations between social-institutional, participant-internal and local- interactional structures and processes in creating and sustaining communication. Embracing relevant aspects of social, psychological, economic and situational constructs, an ecology of context seeks to develop accounts of language behaviour in social time and space, and promote opportunities for applied linguistics to connect with relevant insights from other social sciences.

In so far as social structures and personal constructs constitute contextual schemata which symbolically define language situations and shape communication performances, there is a need for applied linguistics to account for how such constructs are formed, used and adapted over time.

In dealing with the notion of communication, it is helpful to distinguish three interdependent levels of meaning: code-systemic, economic-transactional and social-symbolic. Corresponding with each level is a language related process - reference, discourse and communication - and a set of schematic resources - grammatical, textual and contextual - to enable these processes to operate. Also associated with each level are specific interlocutor roles and role-related criteria which are invoked in appraising language use, discourse and communication respectively.

### 3.3.1.1 Grammar and Reference

A comprehensive understanding of language use recognises co-existing levels of communication, each of which is constituted by a range of referential, discursal and communicative phenomena. Recognizing the centrality of the code-systemic metaphor to creating meaning in communication, we can use the term grammar to refer not only to the patterning of lexico- syntactic choices, but to the range of forms from paralinguistic codes - gaze, proxemics, kinesics etc - used simultaneously with verbal language to signal speaker intent in face to face communication. Thus grammars of communication can be considered comprehensive only when the complex syntactic and semantic patterns produced by selecting and combining tokens from each of these verbal and non-verbal codes are adequately described.

Though useful descriptions of non-verbal communication have been developed in social psychology and anthropology (cf early studies onwards such as Argyle and Dean 1965, Birdwhistell 1968, Hall 1959), we are still a long way from integrating these insights into descriptions of discourse. By seeking to include important aspects of all relevant grammars, an ecology of communication would offer a holistic framework for developing comprehensive descriptions of the intricate networks of relations between parts and the systemic whole of the multi- channel, multi-purpose process known as 'communication'.

Grammatical knowledge exists, in part, as a systemic resource for assigning reference, that is the process whereby language users signify relationships between their chosen language forms - spoken words, non-verbal gestures, written symbols

etc - and their intended referents, as well as for effecting transactional exchanges and performing interpersonal actions. Related to this grammatical focus is the expectation that as communicators we strive to be interlocutor-friendly code users in making our language as accessible as possible. This notion of accessibility is further discussed in 4.4.1.

### 3.3.1.2 Text and Discourse

Recognizing the significance of the economic-exchange metaphor of communication, we can use the term discourse to refer to the structures and processes whereby text is produced by combining items from various language codes with particular economic agendas. Text then refers to the product resulting from the application of discourse structures and processes on systemic language tokens used in pursuit of transactional goals.

Viewing language behaviour at the level of discourse as predominantly economic in nature, 'getting on' with the 'business' at hand, provides a plausible explanation for a central concern of discourse analysis with the efficient production and interpretation of text with essentially transactional intent. Amidst the economic imperative and constraints to produce fluent discourse, the ease with which exchanges are conducted and interlocutors considered to be efficient transactional performers is adjudged, in part, by the notion of appropriacy in discourse. I return to this notion in 4.4.2.

### 3.3.1.3 Context and Communication

Recognizing the centrality of the social-symbolic metaphor to communication, we can use the term context to refer to relations within and between the various sets of knowledge schemata and interpretive frames that operate as structures of expectation in language situations. Besides having their own internal sense relations, personal constructs are paradigmatically selected from a range of contextual schemata (cf 2.2.4) to express social symbolic meanings such as identity, belonging, position, status and role-relations. Thus we can distinguish referential and discourse functions of language on the one hand, and expressions of interpersonal meaning on the other. In presenting perceptions of obtaining social

symbolism, participants strive to be responsible creators of meaning both as participants accountable to each other and in the interests of performing acceptable communication. I return to the notion of acceptability in section 4.4.3.

By seeking to be inclusive in its frame of reference, an ecology of communication would promote the integration of social symbolism in communication with more familiar structural-functional analyses. That is, besides taking into account relevant features of transactional discourse, it would recognise our existence as interdependent social creatures by affording a central place in its descriptions to such things as the performance of interpersonal meaning through presentations of self, expressions of role-relationships and procedural preferences as regards negotiating meaning.

Social symbolism in this sense, therefore, means much more than Malinowski's notion of phatic communion, the establishment of rapport for engaging in the 'business' of economic transactions. Rather, it refers to the role of individual and social identities in context and to the various ways these are expressed in definitions of situation, role constructs and expectations of interlocutor rights and responsibilities in communication.

#### 3.3.1.4 Multi-levelled Meaning

To summarise the position so far: communication taken as a whole is a process whereby context, in addition to being externally shaped and individually construed, is locally created by participants in social encounters. It refers to the use of grammatical items along with textual structures and contextual schemata to perform interpersonal meaning as well as realise propositions and illocutions.

Communication, therefore, embraces social-symbolic meaning as well as economic activity, and refers to the complex interrelations within and between interpersonal, transactional and referential levels of language use.

As attention shifts from one meaning level to another, from grammar to discourse to communication, so, as noted above, the paradigmatic schemas foregrounded at each level alter from grammatical to textual to contextual structures. This corresponds to the changing value of language items as grammatical structures

realised in language use as indexical tokens; to economic currency for transacting propositions and illocutions in discourse; to social-symbolic resource for performing interpersonal acts of communication.

As the predominant metaphor varies at each level - systemic where code use is concerned, economic as regards transactional exchanges, and social in interpersonal acts of communication - so participant role varies from being accessible code users, to efficient producers of text, to social beings the acceptability of whose contextual constructs are crucial in assessing the quality of communication produced.

Thus the criteria relevant to appraising language use vary with the predominant metaphor at each level (cf Ivanic 1988:3). What seems most important in terms of assessing the quality of grammatical choices is their accessibility, or intelligibility, in relation to intended referents. Here we may anticipate variations in the accessibility of language according to the degree to which systemic and referential knowledge is shared and made use of.

Language behaviour as textual discourse tends to be evaluated in terms of the appropriacy with which code items and textual structures are selected and combined for transactional purposes, and in terms of the efficiency with which economic exchanges are conducted.

By contrast, it is the notion of acceptability that is the yardstick for measuring participant response to acts of communication, that is language behaviour seen centrally as expression of social symbolic meaning. The acceptability of contextual constructs and accountability for interpersonal acts of communication is significant both for individuals present in social encounters, and wider social formations. These various performance criteria parallel the plurality of participant roles outlined above. We can summarise many of these features thus:

## Levels of Communication

Metaphor	Code-Systemic	Economic-Activity	Social-Symbolic
Process	Reference	Discourse	Communication
Cognitive Resources	Grammatical Schemata	Textual Schemata	Contextual Schemata
Code Use	Systemic Tokens	Economic Currency	Social Resource
Language Behaviour	Referential	Transactional	Interpersonal
Participant Role	Code User	Text Producer	Interpersonal Performer
Associated Criteria	Accessibility	Appropriacy	Acceptability

[ Figure 4 ]

## 3.3.2 Coherent Descriptions of Communication

Distinguishing between discourse which focusses on economic activity and communication foregrounded in significant aspects of social-symbolism, enables us to draw attention to the dualist tendency in applied linguistics toward favouring an economic metaphor for language use. Resulting transactional analyses tend to diminish the importance attached to the interpersonal dimension of communication. To portray communication as a complex interrelated system (Bateson 1972), entails seeking to avoid binary thought traps such as those associated with a predominant economic metaphor or with a strong version of either social determinism or individual autonomy in social encounters. In terms of achieving 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), it would seem more appropriate to construct dialectical relationships rather than reductive, exclusive categories in order to express interrelations within

and between levels of communication, styles of performance and interpretations of language behaviour.

In seeking to achieve coherence in its descriptions, an ecology of context and communication would seek to uncover important interrelations between contextual structures and locally emerging communication by studying, for instance, ways in which tensions between social, educational and economic forces are resolved at each level of meaning. In other words it aims to relate individuals' procedures for negotiating meaning to contextual structures and situational constraints; to report on the distribution of meaning negotiation between the parties concerned; and, where such work is performed unequally, to comment on the effects of asymmetrical control of meaning negotiations.

Recognising that interlocutors may wish to foreground particular communication levels at specific moments within, or indeed throughout, an encounter, an ecology of communication would also seek to show how this is achieved. By comparing the degree of foregrounding of economic activity and social symbolism between interlocutors, one might arrive at a sense of individual preference in orientation towards performing transactional discourse and interpersonal communication.

Additionally, by examining the range of communication strategies used by interlocutors to perform meaning, one might develop plausible hypotheses of how interrelations between social identity, risk taking and presentations of self contribute to preferred styles of communication.

In seeking to develop descriptions which embrace the richness and complexity of language use, an ecology of communication recognises that each item of language, unit of discourse and aspect of an individual has its rightful place in communication systems and contextual schemata. When the significance of a particular aspect or level of communication is not sufficiently realised or related to the whole, or conversely when it is isolated and emphasised at the expense of another, our ability to understand meaning globally (Williams 1965) can be seriously diminished. For example, Widdowson (1984b:87) suggests that a predominant concern for the acceptability of an utterance to the hearer can create problems of accessibility:

The speaker may be so preoccupied in making sure that what he has to say is not too disturbing an intrusion into the hearer's privacy that the point of his utterance may be lost.

Alternatively, problems can arise when pragmatic considerations are pursued further than seems necessary. In relation to a task which he set his students to seek greater accuracy, clarity and distinctiveness in their written reports, Garfinkel (1972:317) reports that "the progressive imposition of accuracy, clarity and literalness made it increasingly difficult and finally impossible". Ashby (1945, cited in Bateson 1972) points out the dangers to the eco-system as a whole if and when a particular variable is unduly promoted:

the steady state and continued existence of complex interactive systems depend upon preventing the maximization of any variable, and any continued increase in any variable will inevitably result in, and be limited by, irreversible changes in the system.

If, then, accounts of language use and users are to be comprehensive and coherent, an integration of economic- transactional and social-symbolic aspects of communication is called for. Indeed a holistic perspective seems essential in order to illustrate the complexity and interrelatedness of the communication process as a single interacting whole (Leach 1976), an 'interactional eco- system' (Erickson and Schultz 1982).

As a first step to furnishing descriptions which seek to balance and reconcile referential, transactional and interpersonal meaning, it seems essential to establish the importance of the relatively neglected social symbolism of communication in language descriptions, both by challenging predominant economic-transactional approaches to discourse which offer inadequate accounts of personal constructs and interpersonal meaning, and by purposefully foregrounding social-symbolic uses of language. In section 3.4 I explore a number of major social symbolic themes along with their significance for performances of communication.

### 3.3.3 Accountability in Communication Descriptions

Since an ecology of context and communication seeks to embrace first person constructs and interpretations in its frames of understanding, the principle of accountability is an important one in formulating its methodologies and appraising

their outcomes. For instance in carrying out descriptive work the researcher is accountable to language users with whom, as subjects or informants, the researcher forms an interdependent relationship. With regard to this, accountability expresses itself in a willingness on the part of the researcher to pay due attention to language users' experiential knowledge; to accurately present their structures of expectation and frames of interpretation in descriptions of situated language; and to integrate first person contextual constructs and communication procedures with researcher analysis of language behaviour in social, economic and educational structures and processes.

Though attempts to incorporate user constructs into language descriptions are likely to require a substantial investment of time and energy on the part of researchers, and an active participation of language users in the research process, such dialogue is vital in furthering our understanding of communication in contexts-of-use, as it is users' definitions of situation and interpretations of language that centrally influence the behaviour observed.

If researchers are to take the criterion of descriptive adequacy seriously, then the need to assess the psychological reality of language descriptions by reference to language users' own constructs and procedures, itself provides a sound reason for researcher accountability to this group. Where language descriptions are embedded in a rational-empirical paradigm, it becomes all the more important for researchers to establish whether their units of analysis do actually correspond to 'member categories' (Sacks 1972a and 1972b), or whether the logico-deductive forms of reasoning imputed to language users in comprehension processing can be understood as more commonly used ethno-logic reasoning procedures.

As ecologists of context and communication, applied linguists are also accountable to their academic and professional peers to abide by the holistic approach avowed. In particular, there is a research imperative to resist dualistic conceptions of language, created for instance by a primary focus on synchronic, syntagmatic and structural-functional aspects of language, which lead to a distorted account of relationships within the complex, finely tuned communication and context eco-system. In other words, there is a need to develop descriptions of language behaviour which give due emphasis to diachronic, paradigmatic and

social-symbolic aspects of context and communication, as discussed in chapter two, so that a sense of balance and ordering of parts to the whole might be restored.

### 3.4 Social Symbolism in Communication

In this section I develop an account of several aspects of social symbolism that have an important bearing on how we perform and understand interpersonal communication.

#### 3.4.1 Social Identity and Communication

Isaacs (1975:32-3) describes the shaping of primary group identity via ascribed attributes and affinities individuals share with other group members, together with their influence on personal identity:

The baby acquires a name, an individual name, a family name, a group name. He acquires the history and origins of the group into which he is born. The group's culture-past automatically endows him, among other things, with his nationality or other condition of national, regional or tribal affiliation, his language, religion and value system - the inherited clusters of mores, ethics, aesthetics, and the attributes that come out of the geography or topography of his birthplace itself, all shaping the outlook and way of life upon which the new individual enters from his first day.

Besides this, the new member of the group inherits the position and status conditions that come with these historical legacies. Isaacs (ibid) stresses the crucial importance of prevailing political, social and economic relations within and between salient social groups in shaping individual personality and behaviour:

most decisive are the political conditions in which the group identity is held, the measure of power and powerlessness that is attached to it. How dominant or dominated is the group to which this individual belongs? How static or how changing is this condition, and how, then, is he going to be able to see and bear himself in relation to others? This is the cardinal question and it is essentially the question of the governing politics, the push and pull of power among the groups who share the scene.

Das Gupta (1975) claims that it is the individual members themselves who hold the key to group identity and loyalty:

the intensity of commitment existing within the group can be considered from the perspective of the members' sense of affinity to each other, their degree of affiliation to its presumed norms, and their degree of investment in the maintenance or expansion of the group.

Le Page (1980) refers to an interactive process of projection, focussing and diffusion by which individuals shape their social identity and world view with reference to salient groups in their environment. A sense of belongingness and self-esteem are interdependent aspects of personality developed through social identity. Uncertainty of belonging obtains over a wide range of situations, not least in educational processes that are extended rites of passage, and felt acutely in encounters with members of more powerful or privileged groups.

Self-esteem, the supporting measure of self-acceptance and self-respect that every individual must have to live a tolerable existence, may pose few problems where an individual has developed a sound, integrated personality or where group identity is highly valued. However difficulties can arise in mixed societies where individual and group competition for a controlling share of political power is marked by unequal access to and distribution of socioeconomic resources, and where such discriminations reflexively influence personal identity.

Dahrendorf (1969) provides a clear account of the nature and origins of social inequality, and points to its dynamic in keeping social structures alive:

inequality always implies the gain of one group at the expense of others; thus every system of social stratification generates protests against its principles and bears the seeds of its own suppression.

The practice of selecting particular sets of political and economic views as predominant social values entails that in "a situation of mixed ethnic groups where one group is dominant ... there follows an almost automatic consignment of other groups to inferior status" (Glazer and Moynihan op cit:14). Such discrimination can have grave consequences for the identity and self-esteem of minority groups.

Lack of a positive social identity or commensurate level of self-esteem can also influence communicative behaviour within asymmetrical social encounters. Turner (1974:85) claims homology between displays of weakness and passivity in liminal boundary states within a rite of transition and the structural inferiority of certain

personae or groups in broader social systems. My own research suggests this to be the case for initiates in educational rites of passage who perceive their position and status as students structurally inferior to their teachers.

Within a rite of transition, novitiates experience fundamental inequalities between themselves and their guides cum gatekeepers, a complementary differentiation which has relevance for the formation of attitudes towards the negotiation of meaning (explored further in chapter four). Uppermost in the minds of some students as they reflect on previous communication experiences in educational settings is a construct of the teacher as a figure of authority, a gatekeeper to be appeased. It is hardly surprising then that within this frame students should wish to protect themselves against failure by adopting defensive communication strategies such as avoiding the expression of any contentious matter:

you didn't have the confidence to say it, you fear to say it and it's wrong... these are some of the things you fear in primary and secondary school, you fear to mention a point which you feel will give offence, you think that if you argue with him [the teacher] it means in the end I will be a marked person and I will fail  
(Interview 1.2)

you'll fear that there is something really- because I really could suffer, and you don't want to say because it is no more beautiful to tell him that that is wrong, you know you will just keep quiet...  
(Interview 1.13)

Fears of the gatekeeping power of teachers (2.2.6.1) to negatively appraise students may be carried over into present educational settings:

to question anything might appear aggressive, that is the sort of behaviour to be avoided, because otherwise something bad might happen to you  
(Nigerian undergraduate cited in Reed et al op cit)

the teacher should be having that respect always by any student no matter what student's social background... you should accord him respect because if you have a negative feeling about him it will generate a negative one in return that will be disastrous to your progress (Interview 1.8)

A sense of indebtedness to members of the institution (2.2.5.5) in which a student has been awarded one of a limited number of places or scholarships can play a part

too in informing expectations of appropriate communicative behaviour on entering the institution as a novice:

acceptance at university gives you the right to a seat, and because you have the seat, it is important that you take it without clarifying terms  
(Nigerian undergraduate cited in Reed et al op cit)

Notions of the unequal status of teachers and students (2.2.5.1) which are associated with respectful, deferential behaviour towards the former, also affect orientation towards communication:

a student should always be polite to his teacher; where a student sees himself as an equal, he may use foul or rude language... where a student sees the teacher as his superior, communication is always a polite one; where the teacher sees this and that the student is willing to learn, he will reciprocate; if you are rude to the teacher, automatically there will be a reaction from the teacher also; who is to blame? the student has failed to recognise he has to accord due respect to his teacher  
(Interview 1.8)

The belief that one occupies a subordinate position and status within a social setting (2.2.5.3), and that one has, therefore, few rights to negotiate meaning with more 'powerful' others, can have profound implications for the ways in which individuals approach communication:

I don't feel I have any rights to question what is happening to me, I just have to take it on sufferance  
(Nigerian undergraduate cited in Reed et al op cit)

as long as I'm here I have to accept everything I'm wanted to do because it fits into my programme... I have to learn what is in the programme... if it's part of the programme I have either to bear it or to leave, withdraw from the whole place; those are the only two choices, I don't have any other choice; it's there in the programme so what are we going to do?  
(Interview 1.6)

For one student at least, the sense of dependency on figures of authority to determine educational processes and outcomes, of powerlessness to effect change, can be gauged in the response to the following question: "do you think you have a right to explain to a teacher when some classroom work you are asked to do is something that you've already learned or that is not relevant to your situation?"

no I don't think this is reasonable, because it's part of the programme and he's your teacher so you have to bear with it or leave, there's no other choice; to me it's childish to tell him I've done it... the teacher is transmitting the programme to us so whatever he says must be in the programme, that's what I expect... everything's there, the programme, assessment etcetera, it's difficult to change

(Interview 1.6)

Predominant constructs of teachers as gatekeepers, with accompanying fear of their power to adversely affect one's educational ambitions, notions of unequal position and status, a sense of indebtedness and dependency, all these have profound implications for students shaping their social identity in educational institutions, and can result in a defensive style of communication marked by a tendency to remain silent or offer minimal responses.

### 3.4.2 Personal Identity and Communication

Speech, both oral and written, is the outcome ... of personality and language... Personality and language are 'multi-dimensional'... Language, like personality, is a binder of time, of the past and future in 'the present'. On the one hand there is habit, custom, tradition, and, on the other innovation, creation. Every time you speak you create anew, and what you create is a function of your language and of your personality.

(Firth 1957:141-2)

Besides the effects of structural inequalities on individual orientation toward communication in educational settings, other important forces are evidenced in personal characteristics, self-attributed or internalised, and influential sociocultural values. For instance from the autobiography of one student, we learn of a perception of self as "fairly quiet" in oral communication:

I'm learning to talk louder, you know that's something I told you that my mother was worried why I chose to be a teacher because I just can't- my uncle who actually brought me up in my primary school stages was also worried because each time I talked you know he'd say why is he mumbling, we can't hear you, talk louder... people now look at me as a quiet person, very soft-spoken; I have a friend of mine we'd been together at university... soon after I came back from a short course the first sentence he produced was "oh here is the quiet Q.C. again, sitting in a corner"... this is the way people were reading me even when we were at university... even now my people can't tell when I'm actually feeling happy and when I'm not feeling happy because I sort of tend to be fairly quiet; sometimes I don't want to say things even if they really are burning issues that are keeping me worried, I don't want to talk about them

(Interview 3.4)

Another student speaks of a similar disposition towards silence as a schoolchild:

there's some sort of people whether they know the discussion or whether they don't know they usually just keep quiet, silent... and I was a pupil of that kind

(Interview 1.1)

He accounts for this by reference to his own nature and to the value placed on silence within his own culture:

by nature I am not talkative... I don't like actually to communicate with people in fact, unless if it's necessary or compulsory to do... it's a cultural background you see, suppose you may be- might effect the way of- the kind of system you grow up; my father as you know is a sheik, he's one of the religious leaders and he believes that if you talk- if you are talking, talk sense, otherwise keep quiet... therefore traditionally at home, as my own background, you can't talk, only when you are trying to be- unless it's very very essential

(Interview 1.1)

A third student recollects the value he placed on the relationship between silence, hard work and educational achievement:

I used to admire fellow students who stayed silent in class and worked hard... they were academically successful at school

(Interview 1.6)

Whereas for some talk is construed primarily as a desirable social activity, for others communication may be framed in terms of an intrusion into others' privacy:

I don't really hurry to make communication with people... I don't like to go into the people quickly... personally I'm not the type of person who talks much and who interferes with people much

(Interview 1.4)

Links between silence in class and academical success are reinforced by some students who associate listening, rather than speaking, with learning:

I like listening to people; at times I do talk especially if assigned to do whatever, but I mainly like listening... I can say I'm a good listener, I think I enjoy that part, I enjoy listening, that's when I get to know people... I've found that it works with me... I will tend in this particular instance [on this course] to do more listening because it's more of learning

(Interview 1.7)

Teacher reports of classroom interaction testify not to homogeneity of student participation, for example all persons actively competing for turns, but to a range of orientations towards communication:

there are always one or two in the group who find it easier to take on a more positive extrovert kind of role with usually one or two maybe for linguistic or other reasons sit back and don't really say very much  
(Interview 1.10)

Teacher explanations for overseas students' tendency to remain silent in class, include attributing to them perceptions of teachers as authority figures and of their own minority status vis a vis British students:

what I've noticed in the fulltime student group is that the black students are rather like women in mixed classrooms, they let other people do the talking and this is not however because they can't talk, because if I actually put my finger on them I find that they're perfectly capable... I suppose what I'm saying is that they have a lack of confidence in being able to communicate effectively orally and because so many other people have so much to say it's a space problem, you know, it's the woman in a man's world problem that they're not sufficiently assertive... I think the whole authority thing informs that set of attitudes, that it's not perhaps within their experience that they challenge or appear to vie for the attention of the group with me or more forceful people (Interview 1.11)

From these comments we can glimpse something of the diversity present in individuals' general orientation to communication. Rather than a uniformity of outlook, we find a wide range of attitudes expressed toward talk and silence, and a variety of positions adopted by individuals on the listening - speaking continuum in educational settings. It follows from this that as individuals involved in language education, we cannot presuppose homogeneity of attitude or shared expectation about interlocutor behaviour. Instead, an awareness of diversity in approach to communication, sensitivity in responding to it and a readiness to explore with students the implications of communication preferences for educational processes, seems essential.

In chapter two I described a major contrast between the need for active participation in educational processes and a weakness or passivity characteristic of novitiates in socialisation rituals. The range of individual orientations towards communication further marks this dilemma and reflects the diversity of solutions to

the tension between co-operative and territorial imperatives underlying communication. I examine in more detail this aspect of social symbolism in communication in the following sections.

### 3.4.3 Involvement and Independence: Social Symbolic Conflict

If the contrasting demands of social and educational processes present a double-edged communicative sword to those in a rite of transition, so too does a central paradox of the human condition: the double bind of our nature as individual beings as well as social creatures.

Recognising our social nature, a co-operative imperative (Widdowson 1984b:84) impels us towards involvement with other human beings. The strength and depth of this social principle is elaborated on by Fromm (1957:8):

[Man's] awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span ... of his hopelessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate disunited existence an unbearable prison. He would become insane could he not liberate himself from this prison and reach out, unite himself in some form or other with men, with the world outside. The experience of separateness arouses anxiety ... to be separate means to be helpless, unable to grasp the world - things and people - actively; it means that the world can invade me without my ability to react. Thus separateness is the source of intense anxiety. Beyond that, it arouses shame and the feeling of guilt.

If, in our state of uniqueness and individuality, our awareness of being cut off from other human beings is a source of anxiety and pain, so too is our experience of being social creatures, whose lives are interdependent on, inextricably linked with fellow human beings.

There are, however, equally powerful territorial forces operating on each of us: for instance through our sense of private territory, physical and metaphysical; evolutionary instincts for survival and self-preservation; our desire for security from the threat of uncertainty, for defence and protection from the fear of attack. The territorial imperative is one which acknowledges the risks to self of social contact and the tension inherent in lowering the barriers of private space to allow public entry. There is too the stress which may be induced by giving others access

to ideas, values and beliefs in which we find our essential security; anxiety lest an expressed proposition or opinion be adjudged 'wrong' (Rumelhart 1983); threats to self-esteem and self-identity from unfavourable personal comments (Goffman 1967); fear of sanctions imposed on those who 'fail' to live up to the expectations of more powerful others. These and other risks attend individuals in social contact. Tannen (1987:14-15) summarises the dilemma between social involvement and independence as follows:

We need to get close to each other to have a sense of community, to feel we're not alone in the world. But we need to keep our distance from each other to preserve our independence, so others don't impose on or engulf us. ... Another way to look at this duality is that we are all the same - and all different. There is comfort in being understood and pain in the impossibility of being understood completely. But there is also the comfort in being different - special and unique - and pain in being the same as everyone else, just another cog in the wheel.

Far from any simple or lasting solution to this continuing tension, as complex creatures with changing needs and dispositions, we vary our preference for attending to each imperative. At certain moments, or in certain moods, we may gravitate towards the individual imperative with its promise of freedom from invasion of personal space by others and autonomy in action; at other times we may be more disposed towards involvement and responsibility prescribed by the co-operative imperative. Tannen (*loc cit*), illustrates how this process operates and discusses the problems inherent in continually regulating one's position vis a vis the social and individual imperatives. She uses an analogy to porcupines to account for this aspect of social symbolism:

[In winter] They huddle together for warmth, but their sharp quills prick each other, so they pull away. But then they get cold. They have to keep adjusting their closeness and distance to keep from freezing and from getting pricked by their fellow porcupines - the source of both comfort and pain.

The continual restlessness of this Sisyphus-like dilemma is further complicated by variations in nurturing conditions. A Nigerian post-graduate student, at ease with the social imperative, expresses his experience of discomfort at what he perceives as an individual imperative in British society:

Society here makes people more individualistic. This is because the UK society is very individualised, but I believe that this leads to very many

problems for the Nigerian student who is not used to living in an individualised environment. We have a more corporate view of life. This individualisation leaves the African student very isolated socially, which makes it difficult for him to feel comfortable or at home here.

(Reed et al 1978:124)

In so far then as individuals or social groups place differential value on the twin imperatives, any working towards a dynamic equilibrium between them may be difficult to achieve or sustain. The co-operative - territorial dilemma, here expressed at an abstract social level, is also a central characteristic of interpersonal communication between individuals in everyday situations. As Widdowson (*loc cit*) points out, "on every occasion of language use the co-operative imperative acting in the interests of social contact has to be reconciled with the territorial imperative acting in the interests of individual security".

#### 3.4.4 The Co-operative Principle in Communication

Itself a quasi-contractual form of the social imperative, Grice's (1975:48) co-operative principle states that in 'talk exchanges' or 'co-operative transactions':

participants have some common immediate aim ... the contributions of the participants should be dovetailed, mutually dependent ... [and] the transaction should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate.

Ignoring deliberate floutings of conversational maxims for misleading purposes (cf Goffman 1967), it is generally assumed that interlocutors abide by the co-operative principle in attempting to make their contributions informative, truthful, relevant and clear. The notion of participants sharing a common aim, agreeing to proceed in a co-operative manner and dovetailing their contributions, suggests a degree of discursal harmony that may not in reality be matched by perceptions of position and status within social encounters, by individual disposition towards communication or by mastery and strategic deployment of communicative resources. The co-operative principle might be reinterpreted as another expression of the great liberal expectancy of accommodation to a particular view of discourse.

Yet, for some at least, non-conformity to authoritative world views, indeed non-acceptance of dominant ground rules for social interaction, is an important expression of individual and social identity, as demonstrated by Pryce's (1979:21)

description of black youths non-participation in the white working culture of an English city:

The hustler dreads having to work as a menial; abhors having to take orders from a 'cheeky white man', indifferent to him as an individual; and resents the fact that these experiences hurt his pride as 'a man'. The terms, 'slave labour' and 'shit work', are used interchangeably to mean monotonous work which the hustlers say they can never put up with. The attitude they adopt is: 'Who wants to do de white man's work anyway? Let them keep it! I will die before I stoop to any white man!

Even on agreeing to participate in social interaction, individuals may be unwilling to suffer the excesses of a co-operative imperative towards individual conformity as distinct from mutual convergence. Indeed, as may be inferred from Robinson's (1986: 667) position, the transformational potential of divergent thinking presents a sound educational reason for encouraging an element of territorial non-conformity in communication:

Communal goals of co-operative communication are important of course - but not solely important. Individuals chafe at communal pressures toward conformity, and by strategically transforming chafing into idiosyncrasy, malaise into manoeuvring, they work to change both the language and themselves, themselves through the language: to reconstitute themselves as subjects by revising the discourse that subjects them.

#### 3.4.5 The Territorial Principle in Communication

Some thirty inches from my nose  
 The frontier of my Person goes  
 And all the untilled air between  
 Is private 'pagus' or demesne  
 Stranger, unless with bedroom eyes  
 I beckon you to fraternize  
 Beware of rudely crossing it  
 I have no gun but I can spit  
 (W.H. Auden Prologue: The Birth of Architecture)

Whilst the co-operative principle may represent a set of social ground rules for regulating communication, its effect in pragmatics and discourse analysis has been to underestimate the importance of the territorial principle.

Rumelhart (1983) presents evidence to suggest that when participants doubt their understanding of either the context or content of interaction, they use a series of defensive and offensive strategies. Though at first sight seemingly opposite in

nature, both types of behaviour can be characterised as an essentially territorial response to interactional uncertainty.

Rumelhart (op cit: 380-1) explains offensive and defensive territorial strategies as participant responses to the conversational dilemma of contextual uncertainty whilst feeling compelled to continue in the discourse:

The offensive strategies are attempts to transform the current interaction into one in which the individual feels competent to participate. The defensive strategies are a kind of linguistic conservatism in which the person says only enough to maintain his or her position as a viable participant in the interaction.

In effect, taking the defensive approach means relying on the other participants to interpret one's minimal contributions in a way which makes sense to them ... the more insecure an individual feels about his or her understanding of the context, the more conservative a strategy he or she will select. On the other hand taking the offensive approach involves an active attempt to force the other participants to accept (at least temporarily) a focus for the interaction which is less problematic for oneself.

Defensive strategies such as remaining silent, offering minimal answers, pleading ignorance when actually knowledgeable, failing to volunteer relevant comments, not seeking clarification or providing literal responses, appear to be direct reversals of the Gricean maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Offensive strategies of saying a lot by securing topic maintenance, changing the subject, saying something that sounds right, elaborating or becoming aggressive, likewise offend the co-operative code in pursuing the same goal as defensive strategies, namely to survive, to get through the encounter rather than to promote it.

Rumelhart (op cit: 400) summarises her findings as follows:

Being unsure about the context of the interaction tended to make people very conservative in their responses even if they knew a great deal about the subject under discussion. When they could not remain silent, they took a turn at speaking, but their responses were virtually devoid of content (ie yes/no, vague phrases, or platitudes). In order to avoid revealing how problematic the situation was for them, they failed to clarify it. Even when they had information apparently relevant to the discussion, they failed to volunteer it and even pleaded ignorance when asked directly about things they, in fact, knew.

From this, Rumelhart concludes that, "attempts at real cooperation in an interaction evidently seem too risky when one is unsure of what is going on". Alternatively, she continues:

The interactional strategies which I have identified as offensive involved controlling the interaction by saying a lot. They tended to be used by participants who felt fairly confident about the context but were experiencing doubt about their perceptions of the subject matter under discussion. These individuals seized opportunities to keep the discussion on a secure topic for them; and when necessary changed the subject.

Territorial maxims appear to stem not only from a cognitive uncertainty as to the precise nature of the context of situation or communication at hand, but also from social psychological factors such as the desire to avoid the risk of saying something 'wrong', to minimise feelings of insecurity about the adequacy of a discourse interpretation and, particularly in asymmetrical relationships within institutions, to avoid repeated experiences of failure.

'Power semantic' differentials in 'gatekeeping' encounters (Erickson 1975, 1976 and Erickson and Schultz 1982) may reinforce contextual uncertainty and insecurity, and create higher levels of stress and anxiety at the fear of failure. The solidarity - intimacy dimension (Brown and Gilman 1960, Brown and Ford 1964) is thus complicated by a dominance - dependency axis involving notions of position and status. Strategic communication choices between co-operation and territoriality are likely therefore to express participant perceptions of solidarity, power, confidence and security obtaining between them.

#### 3.4.6 Integrating Co-operative and Territorial Principles

With differences in contextual frames and schemata suggesting a need for co-operation in negotiating meaning, set against role-relation asymmetry, resolving co-operative and territorial tension in social institutions is no easy matter. However, there are a number of things to consider in deciding how best to approach this complex issue. Firstly, if, as is now generally believed, it can no longer be assumed that individuals in secondary group relations share contextual structures or communicative dispositions, our starting point as participants and communication analysts should be one of preparedness to encounter diversity in personal constructs and orientations towards communication rather than presupposing convergent participant frames.

A precedence has already been set for this approach: Hymes (1972) suggests diversity as a governing principle for language study; Bolinger (1976:11) refers to "the kinds of indeterminacy and heterogeneity that are found everywhere in language"; and Bourne (1988:92) argues that "rather than taking situations of flux, change and heterogeneity as exceptions, there may be value in taking them as the norm".

From this starting point we can proceed to recognising those unifying aspects of thought and behaviour which underlie diversity. Furthermore, an acknowledgment of differentiation does not exclude acceptance of unanimity, 'una anima', in what is most fundamental as regards social behaviour, our shared nature as human beings. Despite diversity of communicative forms and purposes, participating in interaction as co-equal human beings willing to cross the boundaries of role-related constructs, can engender a sense of unanimity in problem solving and decision making which can, in turn, empower people towards creating alternative constructs to transform existing ways of seeing.

Increasing awareness of diversity of contextual constructs, communicative styles and interpretations in secondary group relations, should lead us to question the acceptability of negatively appraising individuals on the basis of their cognitive structures or patterns of communication being different from our own.

Neither can there be any a priori justification for assuming individuals locate themselves on similar positions along social psychological dimensions of communication. Rather we must be prepared to countenance a wider range of positions on the co-operative - territorial communication continuum than hitherto; to develop awareness of the various social factors which contribute to individuals moving between positions of conformity, convergence, divergence and anarchy, along this continuum; and awareness too of the interrelationships between the positions taken up and communication strategies performed.

In short, there is a need to work towards frames of understanding which adequately account for the complexity and interdependence of pluralist styles of thought and communication, and simultaneously offer opportunities to develop more flexible responses to their somewhat paradoxical co-existence.

### 3.4.7 Risk in Communication

Douglas (1986) refers to a general safety-first principle of human behaviour in dealing with uncertainty, and links caution or risk-aversion in communication to a system of social organisation which prioritises group solidarity and cohesion above expressions of individuality. Extending Popper's (1945) notion of the open society, Maley (1982: 132) makes a broad distinction at five interrelated levels - psychological, linguistic, methodological, pedagogical and social - between open and closed systems:

On the one hand are systems which encourage certainty, dogma, authority, systematic control and security. Closed systems which do not need to develop because they are internally self-sufficient. On the other hand are systems which induce risk-taking, doubt, freedom, initiative and experimentation, and existential insecurity. Open systems which must develop or perish.

Douglas shows how the issue of risk may be used as a technique of coercion to ensure conformity to prescribed values of risk-taking or risk-aversion: "institutions use the risk issue to control uncertainty about human behaviour, to reinforce norms, and to facilitate coordination" (op cit:92). Preferred risk orientation is often made salient through public moral judgments: "the fortunes of the community around them vividly display in the lives of their friends consequences of too much risk-taking here or too much risk-aversion there".

Douglas (op cit) argues that a cultural model is compatible with a psychological model of risk-taking and risk-averse personalities:

A risk-sharing strategy and a pessimistic world view that justifies the strategy go with a collective, communitarian social context with expectations that gains will be shared as well as losses. A risk-narrowing strategy ("Spot on he wins, way out he loses"), justified by an optimistic world view works in a society of individuals who are not expected to share gains or losses.

When confronted with the issue of risk, individuals, in addition to noting the force of prevailing cultural values attached to risk-taking and risk-aversion, are likely to weigh up the economic benefits and costs of such behaviour. We may also assume they take account of any sanctions that might be invoked against them should their risk-taking be unsuccessful or socially unacceptable.

The basis on which we make decisions in regard to risk are therefore a complex amalgam of social, political, economic and psychological forces. In an educational setting, for instance, institutional values on achievement through individual effort and risk-taking may be counteracted by regulatory forces towards conformity, by formative experiences in risk-aversion oriented settings, or by negative social-psychological forces such as fear of academic failure and, thereby, lack of access to increased work opportunities and financial resources.

Furthermore, the habitual use of compliance-seeking devices to maintain systems of norms and rules has the effect of operating a filter on risk that can, in turn, impose a distortion on communication in institutional settings. Stress and anxiety created by such dilemmas may translate into communication reduction or avoidance strategies following a safety-first principle of "nothing ventured, nothing lost".

At the very least, the whole issue of risk provides another co-operative - territorial frame of reference for individuals to take bearings on when making decisions to negotiate meaning in social encounters.

#### 3.4.7.1 Risk and Communication Strategies

The notion of 'communication strategies' in applied linguistics derives essentially from the Second Language Acquisition perspective on error analysis and interlanguage (Corder 1981). Here appeals are made to a notion of communicative competence which presumes an ideal native speaker target, to a deficit theory on the part of second language learners (cf Tarone et al 1976, Tarone 1981), and to taxonomies of communication avoidance and compensation as ways in which learners attempt to deal with their linguistic limitations (Corder op cit, Tarone op cit, Faerch and Kasper 1983). This has resulted in a narrow definition of the term, to refer to second language learner tactics in matching 'imperfect' language resources to discourse ends:

Strategies of communication are essentially to do with the relationship between ends and means. .. The learner will sometimes wish to convey messages which his linguistic resources do not permit him to express successfully. ... He can either tailor his message to the resources he has available, that is adjust his ends to his means. ... Or he can attempt to increase his resources by one means or another in order to realize his

communicative intentions.

(Corder op cit:104-5)

Communication strategies ... may be seen as attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations. Approximation, mime, and circumlocution may be used to bridge the gap. Message abandonment and avoidance may be used where the gap is perceived as unbridgeable.

(Tarone op cit:288)

There are however a number of problems in a predominantly norm-referenced approach to communication strategies. Firstly, it is questionable to assume the native speaker possesses perfect linguistic competence or "always has the linguistic means to express the messages he wishes to communicate" (Corder loc cit). Additionally, one must question the usefulness of assuming the primary research focus should be competence rather than performance. Memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors in linguistic performance (cf Fromkin 1971, 1973 and 1980) may in some sense be grammatically irrelevant (Chomsky 1965), but such phenomena have a great deal of relevance for communicative behaviour.

Since it is not only second language learners who experience difficulty in reconciling the various needs of code accessibility, transactional appropriacy and interpersonal acceptability (4.4), or who find themselves tongue-tied, error prone or disposed to message reduction in speech, there seems little justification for discriminating against them on occasions of communication 'failure'. Native speakers appear to be as capable of not achieving their communicative intent.

Rather than running the grave risk of consigning all language users to perpetual 'failure', we may view communication itself as an ambiguous and imperfect creation, in terms of conveying or understanding interlocutor intent. An alternative approach which seeks to avoid the negative labelling effect of norm-referenced language use, is one in which 'communication strategies' are defined in terms of a continuous response to the task of creating and sustaining communication. Here the notion is widened to encompass the general processes involved in selecting and combining language tokens for each act of communication. Tarone (1983) moves

tentatively towards such an approach which stresses the universality of communication strategies as a naturally occurring series of decisions in all situations of language use.

If definitions of communication strategies are to be widened, so too must our notion of communication itself, to include not only available language resources in relation to 'message' purpose, but also social and situational features of context salient for communication. Thus, as the courtroom extract shows (Appendix 1), a perceived inequality in role-relations or discourse rights and responsibilities may inform choice of communication strategy, rather than any imperfect knowledge of language.

Where the defendant remarks, "there is a lot could be said but obviously I would be had for contempt of court if I said it", we may infer that his choice of a 'message avoidance' strategy is occasioned not by any language deficiency, but an acute perception of the social structure of the courtroom, and an awareness of powerful sanctions available to the magistrate should he find the defendant's contribution unacceptable.

Pedagogic evaluations of communication strategy tend to define communicative intent as economic-transactional in nature along with a fairly simple relationship between means and ends. However, bearing in mind the distinction between social symbolism and economic endeavour, it becomes difficult to retain an isomorphism of this kind between intent and strategy. Silence, lengthy pauses or minimal responses interpreted as inappropriate responses with reference to transactional meaning, may be reinterpreted as acceptable signals of interpersonal meaning. And speakers wishing to foreground social symbolic meaning, may choose to do so just as effectively by message adjustment or speech reduction strategies as through discourse elaborations.

Clearly if we are to move towards holistic understandings of why particular communication strategies are chosen in specific circumstances, we need to pay closer attention to the complexity of contextually created meaning and to the tensions and ambiguities between language forms, transactional exchanges and social symbolic communication. As Berger (1966:34) points out: "Social reality

turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole".

We can relate the two macro communication strategies - resource expansion, which signals achievement-oriented behaviour, and message reduction, indicating avoidance - to the co-operative principle of involvement or solidarity in the case of achievement behaviour, and the territorial imperative of preserving independence through distance or low affiliation in message reduction.

Examining the strategies successful language learners employ, Rubin (1975) describes the 'good' language learner as someone who feels comfortable with uncertainty, has a strong drive to communicate, is generally uninhibited, actively participates in the process of language use and learning, and is willing to do many things to get his message across. Stern (1980:63) takes a similar view:

The good learner actively initiates the learning process and throughout adopts an attitude of personal responsibility for his own learning. He selects learning objectives for himself or adopts the purposes of the program. He takes deliberate steps to involve himself in the language and to adapt the language learning activities to his own life ... The poor learner often leans too heavily on the teacher. His attitude may appear passive, detached, or resistant to the learning of the language.

From this we may infer that if language learners can learn to feel comfortable with contextual doubt and uncertainty, can arouse a strong desire to communicate and take risks in language use, they will place themselves well en route to linguistic success. However all is not as simple as it seems. Uncertainty and insecurity seem to be basic features of the human condition (Popper 1959), and in contexts where individuals experience unfamiliar social settings, asymmetrical role-relations and divergent schematas, these forces may be difficult to overcome. Indeed, for "people whose ordinary experience of the world has been interrupted for a significant period of time" (Rumelhart op cit:400), for example students as novices in educational institutions, the imperative to be actively involved in negotiating meaning can generate high levels of stress and anxiety.

Thus, a broader definition of "success" in language use is needed, entailing not only appropriate ways of conveying transactional meaning, but acceptable strategies

of communication for individuals whose language use is deeply embedded in the complexities of contextual structures.

Le Page (1980) and Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) argue that with every speech act chosen, individuals perform an 'act of identity'; that is, through our personal use of language we reveal our social identities and values. In making these choices, "the form, the meaning and the subject who speaks are no longer separate. The social position the speaker takes up marks the form and adds to the meaning" (Bourne 1986). Notions of "success" in communication then will have to pay more attention to role-relation constructs, particularly along the axes of power and solidarity; to styles of teaching in classrooms, some of which may promote a passivity, detachment from or resistance to learner participation; and to cultural values and personal preferences for risk-taking and risk-avoidance in communication.

### 3.5 Communication as Protective Performance

The demands of converging on acceptable interpersonal meaning and effecting transactional exchanges with ease and efficiency in contexts where socioeconomic pressures are exerted to 'get things done', suggest that constraints operate on prolonged negotiation of meaning. From this perspective, communication that is to a large extent predictable offers participants direct ways of achieving encounter goals and of resolving any tension or ambiguity therein.

Ritualistic elements of communication include cognitive constructs, routine formulae and rehearsed strategies. Short-hand mental categories provide participants with a familiar way of construing the micro-world of social encounters, "saving the individual the trouble of figuring things out anew all the time" Tannen (1979:144). Just as importantly, they offer means of reducing doubt and insecurity in unfamiliar, stressful situations.

Recognising that prefabricated patterns account for a substantial part of language use, Coulmas (1979) describes how routine formulae are frequently deployed to ease difficult moments in complex social encounters and ensure the smooth course

of communication. And Keller (1979) demonstrates the use of gambits to express politeness.

Participants in social encounters then systematically invoke familiar contextual frames and language routines to service transactional exchanges and express social symbolic meaning. However, as socioeconomic ritual, communication has in-built tendencies towards prototypicality and fossilization. Together with a desire to accommodate to the views of more powerful others (cf Giles 1984), the ready availability of prefabricated cognitions and language forms can lead individuals towards protective communication performances of a 'safety-first', risk-avoiding nature.

Ritualistic aspects of language are also something of a double-edged communicative sword. Where structural asymmetry is a central feature of an encounter, communication may be threatened by **complementary schismogenesis** (Bateson 1972): "a process by which two people exhibit more and more extreme forms of the behaviour that triggers in the other increasing manifestations of an incongruent behaviour, in an ever-increasing spiral" (Tannen 1987:104). Scollon and Scollon (1983) discuss the issue of gate-keeper imposed solidarity. Here, from a position of power and privilege, a gate-keeper employs symmetrical politeness strategies signalling solidarity, thus creating a **classical double bind**. If interlocutors respond with asymmetrical politeness strategies signalling deference, they may be negatively evaluated as being silent, withdrawn, or even hostile. If they respond with solidarity politeness markers they may be negatively evaluated as being 'uppity', disrespectful of the gate-keeper's position and authority.

### 3.6 Interaction as Transformational Process

One of the greatest challenges to communication in social institutions is to provide opportunities for satisfactory resolutions of conflict between individual freedom in the new social order and the uncertainty and insecurity underlying secondary group relations (2.2.2). Though such tension may be resolved by resorting to relatively safe, stable performances of **communication**, in themselves they offer little opportunity for growth and renewal. Ways must also be found of allowing the "individual, in his freedom to make the most of his capacities and opportunities

according to his own lights" (Friedman 1962:34, cited in Dahrendorf 1975:6)

In seeking ways of understanding unfamiliar social situations, interaction challenges individuals to reappraise the value attached to stereotypical ways of seeing and communicating. Interaction calls for engagement in **radical doubt** (Fromm 1973), by which is meant a critical questioning of ideas, assumptions and institutions from the standpoint of whether they have a capacity for promoting greater awareness and understanding by leading us out of sterile routines.

Acknowledging a need to lower protective communicative devices which stifle the growth of interaction, suggests a corresponding need to develop more open systems of thought and behaviour which encourage initiative, experimentation and risk-taking. For many people with deep-seated fears of the demands to assume responsibility so as to achieve liberty in the new social order, this is not an easy task.

In contradistinction to efficient and fluent performances of communication, interaction is characterised to a large degree by experiential criteria such as unpredictability and discomfort. Furthermore, because of the need to create new understandings by radically altering old ways of seeing, interaction is likely to be inefficient under socioeconomic pressure, disjointed, asynchronous. Given its relative independence of role-relations and the degree of transitional insecurity it can engender, interaction may threaten to disrupt the prevailing norms of socially acceptable meaning.

The risks involved then in engaging in role-independent, non-conformist interaction, combined with the discomfiting experience of the instability of the process itself, make the performance of defensive communication rituals an attractive alternative. However, without cultivating a willingness and ability to engage in interaction, there can be little possibility for growth or transformation of existing constructs. Herein lies the nub of the dilemma.

<b>Communication as Protective Performance</b>	<b>Interaction as Transformational Process</b>
Knowledge based	Experience oriented
Familiar Constructs	Uncertain Schemata
Rehearsed Routines	Spontaneous Utterances
Fluent, Synchronous Performance	Disjointed, Asynchronous Creativeness
Predictable, Controlled Outcomes	Unpredictable, Uncontrolled Outcomes
Efficient under economic pressure	Inefficient under economic pressure
Acceptable according to social constraints	Unacceptable according to social constraints
Closed: Safe, Secure, Stable	Open: Unsafe, Vulnerable, Unstable
Dependent on Role- relationships	Independent of Role- relationships
Risk-avoiding	Risk-taking

[ Figure 5 ]

As a dynamic, creative force towards achieving synthesis between analytic and experiential knowledge, interaction rejects the duality of subject and object, striving to bring them together in one integrated whole; what Coleridge spoke of as **substantial knowledge**, "the intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves as one with the whole". Williams (1965:39) describes this capacity as the highest form of human organisation and warns that because much of our thinking is based on separation and abstraction, "to grasp the substantial unity, the sense of a whole process, is to begin a long and difficult revolution in the mind". The development of such capacity is vital however if we are to describe the whole texture of our experience of reality rather than from isolated categories which lead to a damaging suppression of relationships.

For such a dynamic process to work, however, necessitates the development of a rational faith in interaction and a readiness to open ourselves to its transformational potential. **Creativity**, a vital aspect of interaction, implies a freedom from the bonds of communication to pursue constructive alternativism and thereby renew both personal constructs and communication systems. **Coherence**, another vital dimension, implies a recognition of 'fraternity' or basic humanity, and willingness to suppress role-related conflicts and contradictions in the joint pursuit of understanding. Through a commitment to interactional **continuity**, we may chart our progress along the path of dialogue.

The work of conflict resolution through constructive alternativism and the creation of new forms of understandings is not to achieve some end in itself nor to reach a point in human enquiry where the quest for 'truth' or understanding finds its 'goal'. According to Kelly (1978) "from the moment we assume that truth is a stationary achievement, rather than a stage in a lively quest, it is only a matter of time until things start spinning round and round". Rather than setting out to reach a final position, it is in the dynamics of the process itself that opportunities for learning and growth are present. The tensions produced by opposing forces within individuals in social encounters, the constant flux of contextual variables and of resolutions to such conflicts and contradictions, and the restlessness of continuous movement in the process of enquiry after meaning, all testify to the energy and vitality of interaction.

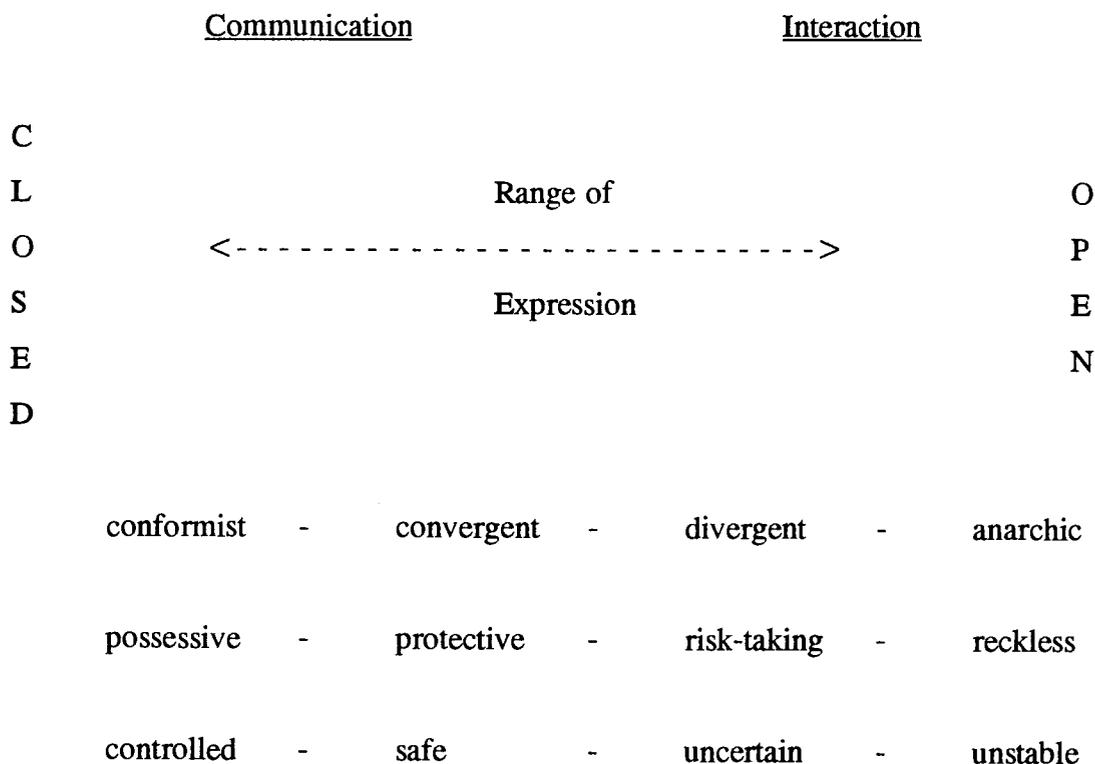
### 3.7 Communication and Interaction

The distinction I wish to make between communication and interaction is akin to that of 'conventional' and 'deviant' language use Widdowson (1984a). Whereas conventional language use values the performance of well-rehearsed routines, 'deviant' or creative language use reveals new structures and collocations offering fresh insights and richer interpretations of our world.

The creative process is a paradoxical one: for renewal to begin, there must be a readiness to suspend belief in the adequacy of familiar constructs, a willingness to dispense with ways of seeing or communicating which hinder an understanding of new contexts and experiences. Yet the curse of death through gradual assimilation

of the deviant into the conventional is also voiced at the birth of the new. As Widdowson (op cit) points out, the process of the new becoming old through extended use and assimilation into the conventional repertoire is that of fossilisation. Hence renewal and transformation may be seen as a dynamic and cyclical process, the phenomenon of energy in continuous movement from birth through life to death and rebirth.

Communication and interaction co-exist therefore in an interdependent, each vital to the other's being. This 'eco-system' has a fragility which is easily upset. Where the organism is healthy there is an alternating rhythm, a 'toing' and 'froing' between performances of communication and experiences of interaction (figure 6), both in language use and language learning. A minimum degree of safety and security in social contexts appears desirable for communication of any kind to take place. However an over-reliance on such conditions can stifle the growth of interaction.



[ Figure 6 ]

Relying wholly or predominantly on either communication performance or interaction experience can threaten the life of the organism. For instance where prototypical cognitive structures or language formulae are continually invoked, the threat of interaction atrophy is present.

Again, though some degree of existential insecurity seems a necessary precondition for interaction, constant exposure to interactional chaos or confusion can endanger the organism with disintegration. What appears vital then is to achieve a balance and integration, a dynamic equilibrium between the two states of being in contexts of language use and learning.

Just as opportunities for the growth and transformation of language depend in large part on creativity undermining the principle of conventionality, so enabling conditions for language education (5.1) depend in great measure on the principle of interaction undermining communication as here defined. Conditions for breakthrough to interaction may best occur when people's ordinary experience of the world has been interrupted for a significant period of time, for instance in educational institutions where students experience feelings of dislocation and discomfort in new contexts and experiences. However the fact that individuals tend to fall back on protective communication devices when faced with uncertainty and risk, is evidence that interaction is not guaranteed to occur.

In facilitating dialogue between communication and interaction then, we may expect to find some resistance to the idea of personal constructs being exposed to the possibility of radical change, that is a pressure towards preserving dominant world views through risk-avoidance communication strategies.

Dispositions towards and choices between communication and interaction in social institutions can be seen as provisional resolutions of a series of contextual conflicts (2.2.3.5 - 6). Resolutions are likely to be influenced by personal identity factors (3.4.2), by perception of structural asymmetry and role-relational reciprocity, and of distance and weight of imposition on interlocutor. One result may be a decision to avoid communication:

I avoid that you know interfering of people's- it's a bit  
inconveniencing actually when you keep ringing people at home

(Interview 2.3)

When unfamiliar with the educational setting or topic, students may be concerned lest their participation in classroom discussions provoke expressions of boredom or disapproval from other students. Such anxiety can lead to decisions not to contribute:

immediately you try to contribute you're always going to be threatened with this "oh no in fact we did it", "oh I see sorry" you know you see the way I look at it because you have to have that sound foundation of the beginnings of the whole thing and you can only get that if there is a pattern of interaction between you and the students over and over... you'll be always sort of interfering I mean you'd be boring them because you're almost going backwards towards the thing... some people are not interested in you showing that kind of ignorance all the time... you know because they may say "oh look at him again, he's just interested in getting out of it what he should have read", they might think oh he should have read that or he should have heard about it that sort of thing so they get bored you know sort of being thrown backwards and they think the issues that they know they look obvious to them... I always tell myself "no don't bother them otherwise they will feel bored with your silly questions" so I just tend to stay back you know

(Interview 3.4)

Just how much silence of self-censorship is engendered by concern over negative evaluation by teacher or peers is difficult to quantify, though it does appear to be a fairly common practice. As a sensitive interpersonal area, it seems difficult too for students and teachers to talk about this, in peer groups or with one another. A skilled counsellor however may perceive such conflicts, for instance between approaching teachers for assistance or avoiding contact so as not to 'interfere' with their privacy:

you can also talk to them- and that again is like talking to A.L. about the curriculum studies, something people are very willing to do; it feels to me as if that's quite hard for you to make that step, to ask staff because you're not quite sure whether that's okay

(Interview 2.6)

As a communicative phenomenon that inhibits engagement in interaction, this is an area which requires further investigation.

### 3.8 Summary of Chapters One, Two and Three

It may be helpful at this stage to recap the ground covered so far. In chapter one I argued that our conceptions of context and communication have been constrained by the predominant focus of 20th century linguistics on synchronic, syntagmatic features of language, and on the structural-functional concerns of discourse.

I suggested that we can arrive at more holistic understandings by incorporating important diachronic, paradigmatic and structural-symbolic features of context and communication into our descriptions.

Having outlined the restricted scope of 'centrifugal' approaches to language description, I turned my attention to the task of extending our conceptions of context, in chapter two, and communication, in chapter three. In chapter two I described certain key features of context that extend over time and space and embrace both social symbolic and educational processes. I used the anthropological metaphor of 'rites of transition,' to yield a historical frame for the educational settings explored and to explain how consequent states of being may be understood as a corollary to the structural relations individuals assume within transitional processes. I have also argued that whilst such features receive systematic description in a number of language-related disciplines, they are often underestimated or neglected in linguistics-internal approaches to context and communication; and that, since they underlie and inform communication in social encounters, we can gain valuable insights into socially-situated language use by paying more attention to them.

I also sought to illustrate the importance of sociological concepts of roles and role-relations in social settings; in particular how the macro roles of teacher and student can be sub-divided into a set of role-relations distinguished by various social symbolic configurations attributed to each. I argued that integral with each cluster of social symbolic attributions are expectations regarding role rights and responsibilities, which include assumptions and evaluatory criteria concerning communication. I further argued that teachers and students may variously construe the social symbolism of these role-relations, and that the resulting networks of personal constructs amount to a rich resource for understanding different styles of communication and informing interpretations of teachers' and students' behaviour.

Differences in role perceptions then may have important implications not only for individual styles of interaction, but more widely, for orientations towards, experiences of and responses to self-presentations of autonomy and dependence, assertion and submission in classroom encounters.

In this chapter I have made use of another common anthropological concept, the distinction between economic endeavour and social symbolism to develop an ecological metaphor of communication. In elaborating a model of communication that affords a central place to social symbolism, I have suggested a number of key criteria - comprehensiveness, coherence and accountability - by which any model of context and communication can be examined for psychological validity and explanatory usefulness, and to which an ecology of communication aspires.

In moving towards an ecology of communication, I have included important social symbolic features such as identity, belongingness and the conflict between involvement and independence. I have argued that individuals' expectations, performances and evaluations of communicative behaviour are likely influenced by universal social-psychological forces, such as the co-operative and territorial principles, and by previous experiences in dominant - dependent modes of interaction. I have sought to integrate with these features the notion of 'risk' and 'risk-taking' as a central explanatory device for distinguishing performances of communication from interactional processes. In short, I have proposed that these various existential phenomena act concurrently as an aid to and constraint on definitions of situation which, in turn, centrally influence behaviour therein.

In chapter four I seek to extend these notions further with particular reference to the central process of **meaning negotiation**, and 'ground' them in an analysis of data obtained from a series of teacher - student interviews (see appendix B for further information).

## Chapter Four            The Negotiation of Meaning

Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. [J.F. Kennedy - inaugural address]

### 4.1            Introduction

Having outlined various aspects of an ecology of context and communication in chapters two and three, in chapter four I develop the notion by exploring processes central to the negotiation of meaning.

In the first half of the chapter I set out a framework and rationale for the study of meaning negotiation. I also illustrate the social symbolic significance of meaning negotiations, showing how they can be understood as resolutions of role-construct conflict and confusion.

In the second half of the chapter, I examine specific procedures for negotiating meaning evidenced in transcripts of teacher-student interviews, together with their differentiated use amongst participants.

### 4.2            The Need for Meaning Negotiation

**Hugh** [a hedgerow schoolmaster]  
Yes I will teach you English, Maire Chatach

**Maire** [an Irish girl in love with an English soldier]  
Will you Master? I must learn it. I need to learn it.

**Hugh**  
But don't expect too much. I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar. But will that help you to interpret between privacies?  
I have no idea.

[Brian Friel Translations - Act 3]

Given that communication evolves from a complex of contextual relations, multifariously perceived, and that by its very nature it is partial and ambiguous, the negotiation of meaning in social encounters constitutes a vital process towards converging on shared definitions of situation and understandings of communication

in relation to participants' transactional and interpersonal intents. Broadly speaking we can distinguish two major kinds of meaning to be negotiated. From a macro perspective, there is sense to be made of the manifold temporal and spatial features of situation and their socio-psychological significance. A communicative event may be entered into as a 'one-off' occurrence with little or no significance attached thereto by the various participants, or engaged as part of a sequence of encounters forming an important transitional process from one social status to another.

From an anthropological viewpoint, the unfamiliarity of a new social setting together with the liminal area occupied during a rite of transition creates uncertainty and anxiety which can be alleviated by 'expert' and 'novice' engaging in meaning negotiations of the context and processes engaged. In spatial terms, particular physical objects or their arrangement may trigger off memories and associations, a source of potential cognitive dissonance for participants to resolve.

From a sociological perspective, the ambiguity of role relations entered into along with diverse anticipations of role behaviour, suggest a need for such meanings to be negotiated in context of use. It cannot be assumed that expectations of interlocutor rights and responsibilities will be shared - unless roles are uniformly perceived or taken by all to be 'given'. In other words, in so far as there are differences in definition of situation likely to impair communication, there is need for negotiation of the meanings invested in the social contexts themselves.

From an educational perspective, engaging new subject matter or embarking on cognitively demanding learning tasks creates a further agenda for meaning negotiation between students and teachers.

In linguistic terms, there is a need for the negotiation of meaning as regards the accessibility, appropriacy and acceptability of relationships construed and performed in educational settings, to allow individuals time and space to work through the communication dilemmas created by the conflicting demands of social processes and educational tasks. To what extent such negotiation actually proceeds, will be examined in sections 4.6ff.

#### 4.2.1 Negotiating Meaning in Social Symbolism

In seeking resolutions to ambiguities between co-operative and territorial forces in communication (3.3.4 - 6), negotiating meaning requires both finely-tuned interpersonal skills and strategic competence. It includes the ability to grasp subtle distinctions between teacher acknowledgments of students' right to approach for consultation, and the desire to protect self and others from taking too much time or responsibility for ensuring students fulfil educational tasks:

we'd be more than happy to give advice, guidance on reading, I mean the only problem is as you must have discovered people are quite busy and what they expect therefore is that... anybody wanting help is clear about what they want help on; you need to make an appointment to see people and given that they'll do whatever they can

(Interview 2.6)

Whether students interpret such mixed messages as a genuine, though qualified, invitation to approach teachers for support, or a polite yet effective distancing mechanism, is most likely influenced by personality factors seen, for example, in disposition and preference for active involvement in the negotiation of meaning; by previous social and institutional experiences of interpersonal communication; and by considerations of position, status and weight of imposition on interlocutor, set against own educational and socioeconomic goals.

Despite the complex dilemma, for some acute tension, occasioned by mixed messages, little attention has been paid to how we overtly negotiate or internally resolve their ambiguities; or on what effect they have on student perceptions of the quality of teachers' statements.

If ways are to be found of releasing energies for the fulfilment of educational goals, much work remains to be done in terms of understanding how such social symbolic meaning is negotiated, which particular interpretations or resolutions are preferred, and for what reasons.

In analysing the 'critical ordering of the institutional culture' and seeking to fulfil the applied linguistics' task of producing adequate descriptions of communication, it is important to recognise a general sense of confusion around the ambiguities of social and educational processes experienced, suggesting a need for negotiating

meaning as regards realistic expectations of behaviour therein.

In addition, from the description of plural role-sets in educational settings (2.2.6), we note an on-going state of tension between the multiple role-sets invoked in student-teacher relationships, and various options for resolving tensions in personal constructs and language behaviour.

Individuals may, for instance, be uncertain as to which role-relation is foregrounded at a given moment within a social encounter and, amidst the plurality of role-relations, confused as to its overall social symbolism:

I didn't know what exactly- how it was in this particular recording... I mean she could be getting feedback as a counsellor, she could be looking for feedback as a course director, she could be looking for feedback as an assessor you know, she could have on all these hats at one- within one period of time, so there's a difficulty in telling which one of these she's wearing at any one time (Interview 3.4)

Furthermore, though it is assumed that the four major role-relations (2.2.6) are present in all social institutions, their respective emphases may differ between persons and social groups. It is likely that not all role-relations have been experienced to the same degree by individuals of diverse cultures who become members of an educational institution; and that the unfamiliarity of any particular role-relation encountered in this setting may be a source of tension and anxiety for them, in turn affecting capacity to negotiate meaning. Specific ways in which teachers go about facilitating and counselling, for example, or indeed the roles themselves, may be relatively new to novices from educational systems where gatekeeping and instruction are more highly valued. It cannot be taken for granted then that when teachers offer counselling or facilitating services students feel comfortable with or certain about responding positively.

Besides a sense of **confusion** as to which roles are being foregrounded at a particular moment, **role conflict** may be experienced by interlocutors as another source of tension in communication requiring meaning negotiation. Conflict may be felt, for instance, between gatekeeping and counselling role relationships:

I think that you know however much I get involved in settling people down and then being available to talk about almost any problems, their awareness that I have an assessment role immediately makes them hesitant to talk about certain things, unless obviously they have to, I mean they need my permission or whatever (Interview 1.11)

or between gatekeeping and facilitating:

for me the biggest area of difficulty I have with these students where my role as kind of course organiser comes into conflict with my role as teacher is where they have writing difficulties and where I'm aware that I have really to be both as helpful as I can but also quite, well I say damagingly critical but that's I'm sure what they feel it is, damagingly critical (Interview 1.11)

Juxtaposing various sets of seemingly contradictory role-relation demands on students and teachers can create a disturbing experience. Related to the difficulty of holding together these tensions in an attempt to arrive at coherent interpretations of communication, is the danger of individuals construing encounters primarily in terms of one or other role-relation so as to reduce the discomfort entailed in handling complex social symbolisms. The effect of this on processing communication can be to reduce the degree of openness to plural interpretations, to constrain language performances to reciprocal strategies associated with particular role-relations construed, with attendant consequences for participant evaluation of communication.

#### 4.2.2 Illustrating the Need for Negotiating Meaning in Social Symbolism

These points may be illustrated with reference to two students' contrasting definitions of a similar situation. Towards the end of the first term of a one year MA programme in Maths/Science Education, the course director arranged to interview each of her fulltime students to discuss their progress on the course to date: "the interview is an opportunity for them to talk about their progress this term and raise any work issues".

Interviews with five of the six overseas MA students, including Adam and Charles whose role constructs are considered here, were held on the same afternoon and covered a range of work-related topics (see Appendix B for further details). The

social, educational and professional backgrounds of the two men in question have much in common: both are from south-east Africa, their educational path taking them from rural primary school to mission secondary school and thence to national university. In each case English was their medium of instruction from secondary school onwards, with many of their teachers native speakers of the language. Each has over ten years' experience of secondary school teaching and teacher training or educational administration. For several years prior to arrival in Britain for postgraduate study each held a senior science inspectorate post at the ministry of education in his home country. Since arriving in England, both men had completed a one year post-graduate diploma course as a pre-requisite for entry onto the MA programme.

Despite these similarities, Adam and Charles show striking differences in their respective definitions of the interview situation, particularly in their construction of salient role-relations between teacher and student. The predominant teacher image which Adam retains throughout the interview is of someone holding a more senior position than himself, a course director rather than an equal, which means for him that communication is not easy:

she's not only an ordinary person to me, you know the difference is she's also you must remember a course director you know so that has some communication complications... you tend to talk to that particular person in terms of the position they hold and communication is rather different unlike if a colleague comes in

(Interview 3.4)

Related to this is Adam's belief that the main purpose of the interview is teacher assessment of students:

there were no general issues, they were all to do with the course, and once somebody keeps on asking about your course you're sure it's all- continually you're being- essentially it's- everything is assessed, so you're here to be assessed and therefore you're trying to look at it from that point of view; if there were other issues that were unrelated from the course which were brought in then you'd see the difference you know but if it is per se the course and you know the course is assessed which is the thing that it's on I think you begin to sort of change your position

(Interview 3.4)

Though Adam recounts that initially he anticipated a less unequal encounter, he explains how just before his interview he changed his perception of it to one similar to traditional patterns of teacher-student exchange:

I was expecting a different sort of interview... I thought it was going to be I ask her she talks then she'll ask me I talk and that type of dialogue between ourselves... and then the first person who came out he said oh no it's straightforward question answer question answer (Interview 3.4)

Adam construes the interview as having a fairly tight structure, largely predetermined by the course director, which takes priority over any agenda of his own:

I think she had a set of questions, they were just all there, and then that was almost- well it was going to take another ten, fifteen, twenty minutes to think of if I had all that set of questions that I was interested to talk about, so it was a bit difficult in terms of time; although I thought at the end I could have got it in, when I looked at the time it was insufficient you know (Interview 3.4)

The situation which Adam finds himself in is one in which he exercises little or no control over the proceedings or perceives himself to have many rights as regards negotiating meaning. The underlying attitude seems related to a 'learned helplessness' (Seligman 1968), a pattern of experience which leads one to predict negative outcomes with little sense of control over events: "the motivation to respond is sapped, the ability to perceive success is undermined, and emotionality is heightened" (Seligman 1975, cited in Robinson 1986:87). Connected with an unhealthy dependency on others for definitions of situation, 'learned helplessness' suggests a submissive orientation towards communication, a preference for risk-avoidance strategies rather than a willingness to engage in interaction.

Charles' definition of the situation is quite different from Adam's in the following respects. Firstly Charles construes the teacher's role in this interview more as a counsellor than gatekeeper:

I think I saw her more as a counsellor... perhaps because most of the time I have been there and I have gone to her office it was a sort of a counselling job... so I think I looked at her as a counsellor (Interview 3.5)

Consistent with this role construct is Charles' perception of the interview's structure as relatively open:

there were certain areas where I could come in and she gave me time to ask her questions actually so it

was not very much controlled by the questions... of course her questions gave it a certain structure but within that structure it was flexible...

(Interview 3.5)

This perception allows him to feel there is an opportunity to present his own agenda:

I came with one question which I asked and one main information which I said... my question is the criteria... they used to allocate students to supervisors... and I was just informing her that I haven't got much background in psychology

(Interview 3.5)

We may summarise these differences in participant definitions of situation as follows:

	Adam	Charles
Interview Purpose	Gatekeeping	Counselling
Interview Structure	Controlled/Closed	Flexible/Open
Interviewer's Role	Regulatory	Advisory
Interviewee's Role	Submissive/ Conformist	Assertive/ Creative
Perceived Register	Formal	Informal
Own Agenda Status	Low/Unimportant	High/Imp'tant

[ Figure 7 ]

The course director's comments on viewing the recording of her interviews reinforce the importance of Adam's and Charles' social symbolic constructs on teacher evaluation of communication and interlocutor:

there's not much difference in my behaviour I think [between interviews with Adam and Charles]... I'm sure the difference is in their conception of the purpose of the event and then of their role and their confidence in taking up that role

(Interview 3.6)

I feel about Adam that he's quite a rigid person who needs clear frameworks, sticks and carrots... and I suppose I'm still adjusting to the surprise that it should be so, that in spite of that year [on the diploma course] he shouldn't have shifted to a more almost opportunistic sense of how to make the most of the year and the course and so on; it seems to me he's waiting for people to give him recipes and rules and comfortable when they're there and they're defined and they're clear

(Interview 3.6)

Whereas the course director perceives Charles as someone reasonably relaxed and open in his interview, she sees Adam as an anxious student, keenly aware of the gatekeeping relationship:

I think of all the students I talked to he's the one who projected most the feeling of being in some sense on trial... I think he's an anxious person, I think there's a lot at stake for him and I think that background that we've already talked about of last year's performance will only have increased any anxiety

(Interview 3.6)

In seeking to account for Adam's fixedness on the gatekeeping role, the course director offers the following biographical information:

last year on the diploma he failed one of the first written pieces of work that was to have been formally assessed and he was deeply ashamed by that as an inspector and clearly he didn't understand why he failed... I think it was obviously a very important event in his life... and I think he must have felt he got through the diploma having failed that first thing by the skin of his teeth and he's very anxious to survive this and if he was hearing from J.H. noises that were at all judgmental... it would have sounded warning bells that probably were uncomfortable... anyway whatever happened last year... it must have been very uncomfortable and he may still feel the threat

(Interview 3.6)

What this leaves us with is a sense of how the unfamiliarity of a new social environment and the plurality of role-relations and processes engaged, create a set of tensions in language use. The various communication strategies adopted show how these tensions are differentially resolved in terms of a willingness or capacity to engage in meaning negotiation.

### 4.3 Levels of Meaning Negotiation

From a micro perspective, there is a need for negotiating the meaning of language tokens as they occur in real time communication. With each instance of language use there is much procedural work to be done if communicative intent, in its various guises, is to be clearly understood, or linguistic ambiguity successfully exploited.

Relations of indexicality between items from verbal and non-verbal language codes and their referents have to be worked out; the transactional import of interlocutor talk deduced; and the social symbolism of communication inferred. The negotiation of meaning cuts across these three major levels of language use, and is essential given the polysemy of systemic tokens and their non-isomorphism to referential, transactional and interpersonal intent.

Though some clues as to how communication is processed are available via interlocutor 'feedback', negotiation of meaning also proceeds on an internal cognitive basis. Little is known directly about the highly complex procedures that operate within the mind in making sense of communication: ways in which individuals hold contrastive meanings in dynamic equilibrium within and between referential, transactional and interpersonal levels, whilst continuing to monitor the in-flow of speech; or how decisions to selectively attend to various aspects of communication are made in real-time processing.

### 4.4 Criteria for Negotiating Meaning

A further complication in considering meaning negotiation lies in the distinction between three major criteria invoked in the process: accessibility; appropriacy; and acceptability; each of which cuts across the three major levels of communication.

#### 4.4.1 Accessibility

Though it equally applies to transactional and interpersonal levels of communication, **accessibility** is often initially thought of as having to do with the comprehensibility of code choices, accurately identifying the sense of language

tokens and assigning referential value to them. As a descriptive tool, the concept of accessibility can subsume notions such as intelligibility and identifiability, and in many ways is preferable to the more controversial, normative terms of 'accuracy' and 'correctness'. Problems of accessibility can occur when systemic indices and/or their contextual referents are unfamiliar to one or more participants. Consider, for example, the comprehensibility of terms such as 'willy-warmer', 'stubby-holder' or 'punkah-wallah', for those whose mental lexicon does not include them; or syntactic and lexical features such as those in the following extract from an anthology of West African literature:

I tell my wife for a small voice say Veronica my daughter wan cut my hair with trong ear. I tellam make him leff Mikere alone do him book, na dee only thing I talk. My wife begin preach politician for me because him go college for England, me I go for farm.

[I told my wife in a low voice that my daughter Veronica's obstinacy is driving me bald. I asked her to leave Michael alone and face up to her studies. That was the only thing I told her. My wife has since been lecturing me because she went to college in America while I went to mine in the farm]

(Ogali 1972:47)

In identifying the sense and reference of specific linguistic items, the accessibility principle underpins many word games, such as crosswords and anagrams, and is a source of both joy and confusion to lovers of poetry and other forms of creative writing.

Though the notion of accessibility has been largely formulated in language teaching as 'accuracy' or 'correctness' in code use, the issue extends beyond features of lexis and grammar to encompass transactional and interpersonal matters. In terms of ideational discourse, the accessibility of concepts depends partly on the degree of shared world knowledge, on the complexity of the propositions and linguistic terminology chosen to convey them and on individual capacity to comprehend them. In terms of language function or strategic behaviour, problems of accessibility can arise when indirect styles of communication are used: amongst other things, the statement, "It's rather cold in here", can function as an observation of low temperature, request to close a window, switch on a heater, or suggestion to move to another place. The multifunctionality of language combined with indirectness in communication, ensure that accessibility will remain a central

issue for discourse analysis.

Likewise at the social symbolic level, underlying personal constructs of role in particular contexts of communication, and rights and responsibilities associated with role-relations, may be relatively inaccessible and easily misunderstood. For instance the degree to which a student creates and sustains an image of teacher as gatekeeper, counsellor, instructor or facilitator, may not be directly observable.

Similarly, there is no guarantee that expressions of interpersonal relations or inner states of being will be comprehended as individuals intend: deferential behaviour displayed through minimal responses, may be as interpreted unwillingness to engage in interaction; and shyness misunderstood as arrogance. Assumptions of shared definitions of situation or a failure to clarify interpersonal constructs which are not transparent in communication can lead to serious misunderstandings at the social symbolic level.

#### 4.4.2 Appropriacy

As a discourse concept, **appropriacy** is linked to performative features commonly expressed as language 'functions'. Thus appropriacy can operate as a predominant criterion in needs analysis (cf Munby 1978) and in selecting and presenting language teaching material for goal directed ends.

In social situations defined as service encounters, the concept figures prominently in the choice of preferred language to accomplish transactional needs. As a criterion for appraising discourse, appropriacy is frequently used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of language chosen for fulfilling 'functional' purposes.

Furthermore, since it assumes a fairly straightforward relationship between participants and their behavioural objectives, it has, to a large degree, been considered a fairly neutral and unproblematic notion. However, as an ecology of communication seeks to demonstrate, this cannot be the case, since appropriacy is coterminous with the concept of accessibility, at the level of language code on the one hand, and the social symbolic criterion of acceptability on the other.

Though it has been widened in an attempt to accommodate some interpersonal features of context, since appropriacy owes allegiance to a performance-related economic metaphor and is understood largely in such terms, it seems inappropriate to use the term to refer to essentially social symbolic features of context and communication.

For this reason, and to preserve the distinction between transactional and interpersonal levels of communication, I have introduced the notion of acceptability as a further criterion for appraising language behaviour. Having developed the notion of acceptability, we can then re-examine the nature and scope of appropriacy.

#### 4.4.3 Acceptability

Due to an emphasis on formal and functional features of discourse, and a tendency in applied linguistics towards polarising the accuracy - fluency distinction, relatively little attention has been paid to the notion of **acceptability** in communication in a social symbolic sense. Though the term is commonly enough used in syntactic studies to refer to native speaker assessments of grammaticality, as in the 'well-formedness' of sentences (cf Smith and Wilson 1979:44ff and Stubbs 1983:84ff), it takes on a much wider meaning, indeed an altogether more contentious role, with regard to the social symbolism of communication. When, for instance, a parent rebukes a child for using a swear word, "Don't let me hear you say that word again", the unacceptability of the item in question has more to do with parental assessment of sociolinguistic propriety within the ongoing parent - child relationship, than with judgements about the grammatical correctness of the language token.

The criterion takes on rather different meanings in relation to transactional discourse and interpersonal communication. In the former case, it can be used to refer, for example, to agreement or disagreement about ideas or propositions - "I don't accept that as a valid argument". In the latter it can indicate whether various aspects of role and communication rights meet with the approval of an interlocutor - "I'm not here to answer questions; you answer my question".

As regards the felicitous performance of speech acts, acceptability embraces procedural and situational conditions, including reference to persons occupying key positions and having the necessary attributes and role qualifications to enact the procedures required.

With reference to social symbolism more generally, acceptability can describe something of the ease or discomfort interlocutors experience in relating to and presenting various identities and role-relations in contexts of communication. We may ask, for example, how comfortable teachers feel in each of the roles of gatekeeper, counsellor, instructor and facilitator; how at ease students feel in corresponding roles. We may also enquire to what extent teachers and students are willing or able to 'take on board' or operate within various sets of rights and responsibilities locally invested in role-relations, in contrast to being defined institutionally.

Considering that formal role specifications also embrace interlocutor roles, such as instructor or counsellor, the acceptability principle carries with it important social symbolic implications for negotiating meaning. In short, the acceptability of social-symbolic constructs, inferred and projected through various styles of communication, is a crucial, though as yet relatively unresearched, motivation and criterion for understanding participant performances of and responses to acts of communication.

#### 4.5 The Social Symbolism of Meaning Negotiation

The moment a conversation is started, whatever is said is a determining condition for what, in any reasonable expectation, may follow. What you say raises the threshold against most of the language of your companion, and leaves only a limited opening for a certain likely range of responses.

[J.R. Firth 1934]

Though meaning negotiation may be construed as a problem-solving task it centrally involves interrelated sets of social, psychological, educational and economic variables. The challenge to individuals to actively participate in meaning negotiation occurs within constraints imposed by definitions of situation. These definitions incorporate constructions of teacher - student role relations (2.2.6),

attitudes and orientation towards talk and silence (3.4.2), motivations for performing tasks to achieve educational goals (2.2.3.3. - 2.2.3.5), and responses to economic forces operating on communication (2.2.3.6).

This dynamic context of motivations and constraints on meaning negotiation affects each level of communication. The accessibility of language codes, for instance, is generally a prerequisite to effective discourse, though, in so far as it is not deemed crucial to an understanding of communicative intent, the intelligibility of specific items, may not be pursued by interlocutors. From an ecology of communication perspective, interest in the negotiation of meaning goes beyond a concern for clarification of code systemic tokens. Meaning negotiations, and the distribution of negotiation work amongst interlocutors, have economic-transactional and social-symbolic significance which assumes particular importance in asymmetrical encounters. In using code choices to express needs or desires, speakers symbolise the acceptability, or otherwise, of expectations vis a vis communicative rights and responsibilities.

#### 4.5.1 Complementarily Differentiated Negotiation

Despite evidence from social anthropology that in the modern world of "gesellschaft" organisation, the majority of person-to person relations are of unequal status (Leach 1982), evidence too from discourse analysis of unequal language behaviour in asymmetrical social encounters, (Atkinson & Drew 1979, Candlin & Lucas 1986, Erickson 1976, Harris 1984), the notion that we can assume some kind of procedural equality to obtain between individuals with regard to meaning negotiations in discourse has been extrapolated from conversation analysis into general discussions of discourse:

[gist] formulations, from either interlocutor, can be introduced at any point in a negotiation where either feels the need to establish agreement ... again, it is obvious that upshots can be formulated by either interlocutor in the course of a conversation when either feels the need to draw a conclusion.  
(Widdowson 1984:118)

conversationalists can 'close down' a topic by using items identical to those isolated as frames in classroom discourse, and while they cannot produce metastatements about the future content of the discourse they can and certainly do produce retrospective statements as transaction boundaries.  
(Coulthard 1985:123-4)

However the notion of procedural equality in meaning negotiation does not adequately take into account the various asymmetries of linguistic knowledge, social roles, personal constructs, affective states and performative skills in producing and interpreting communication. Discourse may be 'jointly' produced, however minimally defined, but not necessarily equally constructed. Individuals' communicative performances, along with dispositions towards and expectations of meaning negotiation do not always support the notion of an equitable distribution of interlocutor rights and responsibilities or demonstrate equality of participation:

the more experienced, knowledgeable skilful partner takes a greater share of the burden and greater responsibility for the success of the interaction than the partner who has less experience, knows less and is a less skilful communicator  
(Trim 1983:76)

In seeking explanations for such behavioural inequality, there is no a priori reason for assuming an isomorphism between language proficiency and level of participation in negotiating meaning. Differences in familiarity with particular social situations (Rumelhart 1983), in certainty of one's identity, belongingness and self-esteem (Stevick 1976), of role-relation constructs and expectations (Kelly 1955), profound linguistic inequalities, and may be considered a most fertile source of communication problems, misunderstandings and negative evaluation of interlocutor.

In unequal social encounters, asymmetry of power and status as it affects perceived role-relations, rights and responsibilities, has important implications for the negotiation of meaning at all levels: in evaluating issues of code accessibility, transactional appropriacy and interpersonal acceptability.

Where marked differences in rates and kind of meaning negotiation are systematically occurring features of communication, their transactional and symbolic significance has to be fully recognised and accounted for. Only by so doing can we begin to work towards less unequal perceptions of specific role-relations and behaviour.

Distinguishing the notion of **complementary differentiation** from **participant equality** in communication, we can clear the way to recognizing unequal patterns

of meaning negotiation; and seek to account for them by investigating the complex interrelations between structural asymmetries within educational institutions, social roles in time and space, affective states of being, economic forces and procedural reciprocities in language behaviour.

#### 4.5.2 To Negotiate or not to Negotiate

The distribution of talk within social encounters can itself influence decisions to negotiate meaning. Where certain interlocutors hold the floor for much of the time, as teachers tend to do in classrooms, less vocal participants considering negotiating meaning must exert a strong will to reduce the asymmetry created and reinforced by long stretches of interlocutor talk.

Acts of negotiation may be viewed as interventions within the communication 'flow' - in ethnomethodological parlance, a 'side sequence' to the conversation. Since initiations represent an assertion of will to negotiate rather than submit to the frame constructed by an interlocutor, they can be symbolically interpreted as realising the perception of both a right and responsibility to negotiate meaning.

Decisions to negotiate meaning may, in theory, be acted upon at any point within an interlocutor's turn, or at turn boundaries. Decisions **not** to initiate negotiations of meaning are equally significant and may be taken for a variety of reasons: pragmatic, such as the slight import of a particular token to overall comprehension; economic, such as time constraints in the light of other pressing business; social symbolic, such as the power and status positions assumed; or any combination of these.

For instance, though transactional exchanges warrant co-operative work for mutual understanding, the finiteness of resources within institutional settings, in practice the limited amount of time and energy participants have at their disposal, creates counter socioeconomic pressure to "do things", and be seen to "get things done". The effect of this may be to reduce controlling participants' willingness to commit themselves to prolonged engagement in meaning negotiations, at times at the expense of ensuring interlocutor understanding.

Considering that decisions not to negotiate meaning are often not made known to an interlocutor, the underlying reasons for such decisions may also remain hidden. Interlocutors who occupy or perceive themselves in a subordinate position and who wish to display a deferential attitude to a person occupying, or perceived to be in a 'higher' position, may be more concerned with signalling submissiveness by non-intervention than dealing directly with the accessibility of what is communicated. In certain types of discourse, such as quasi-formal interviews in social institutions, by and large they may not actually consider it their right or responsibility to initiate negotiation within the encounter. Though such cognitive dispositions may not be directly observable from surface features of talk, since they influence the nature of the interaction performed, they must be taken into account in arriving at understandings of actual communication.

Where an individual values displays of acceptable role behaviour more than concern for the accessibility of code, or appropriacy of discourse, not asserting one's own frame of reference nor actively seeking to meet comprehension needs, can lead to genuine communication problems remaining hidden and unresolved. Thus more dominant participants who expect interlocutors to interact as discourse equals, may, in the event of the latter initiating few meaning negotiations, not be aware of the reasons for this or their social symbolic significance.

#### 4.5.3 Negotiation and Risk

Given that a discursal intervention is also, in social psychological terms, an intrusion into the metaphysical space of an interlocutor, a decision to negotiate meaning, particularly in the face of a more powerful interlocutor, can be construed as a form of risk-taking.

Thus, bearing in mind that at the heart of the risk concept and the social symbolism of communication, is a tension between co-operative and territorial imperatives (3.4.4 - 6), whilst each act of negotiation may be construed as a form of social co-operation, it can also be interpreted as an invasion of individual territory.

With a continuous state of tension existing between these opposing forces, the decision to initiate a meaning negotiation can be fraught with uncertainty and anxiety both as regards interlocutor response to the imposition of negotiation at a particular moment within an encounter, and to the eventual outcome of the negotiation itself. In asymmetrical encounters, a fear that the weight of imposition (Brown and Levinson 1978) may be construed as a face-threatening act, may result in a decision not to negotiate a particular item.

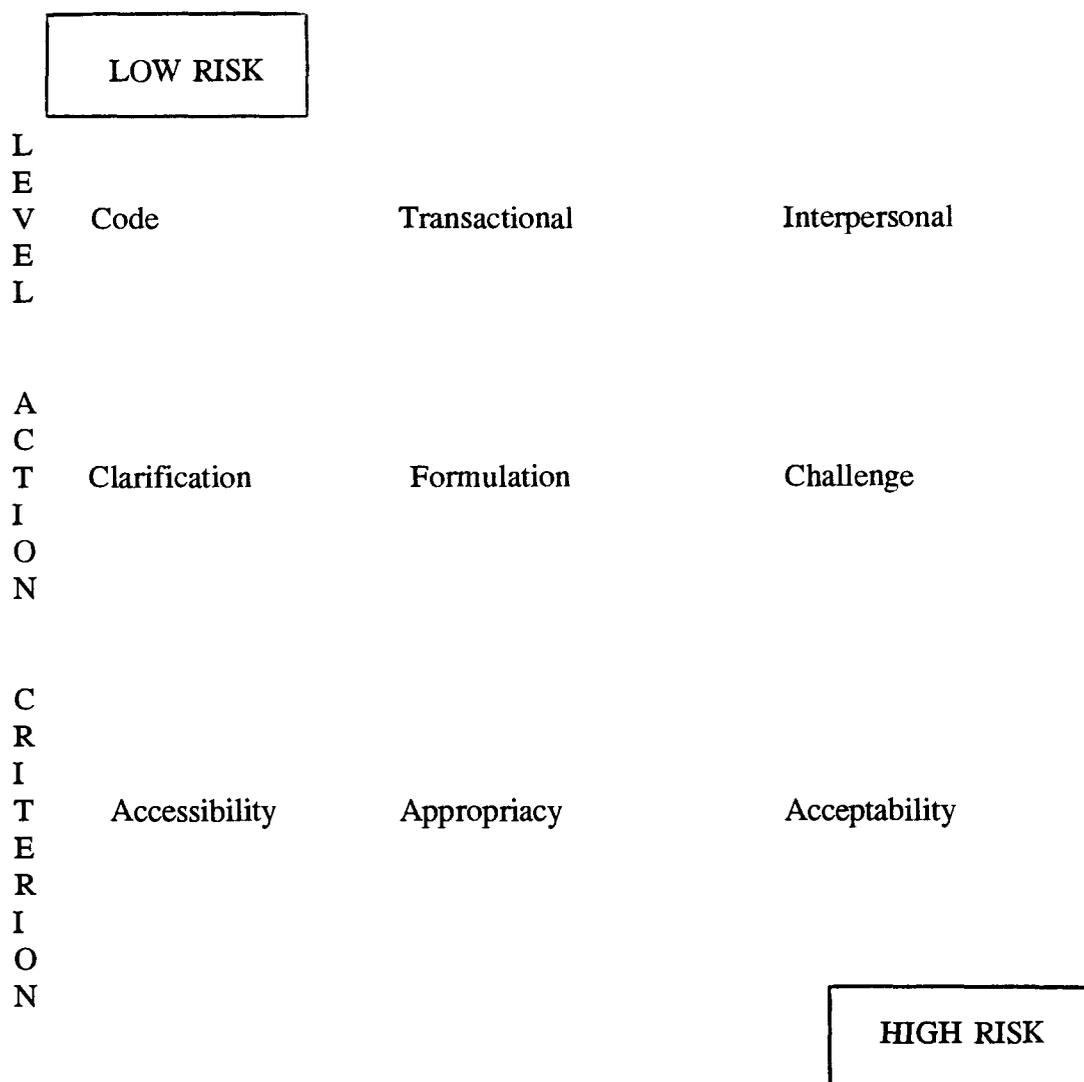
Scotton (1983:117) refers to the social-symbolic purpose of conversation as "the negotiation of a set of rights and obligations between speaker and hearer". Inevitably in the process of arriving at a 'charter' of interlocutor rights satisfactory to all, individuals take bearings on their own constructs of interpersonal relations. Since expectations of speaking rights and responsibilities are intertwined with assumptions of role, they may be directly discussed, as in the courtroom dialogue (Appendix A), or covertly constructed through general patterns of meaning negotiation to produce what Myllymiemi (1986) refers to as 'systematically distorted communication'.

Furthermore, the degree of assessed risk depends to some extent on the area of meaning under negotiation: code-systemic; economic-transactional; and social-symbolic. Where interlocutor focus is on language code, in negotiating the sense-reference value of systemic indices, would seem to place less territorial imposition on participants, is less risky, compared with the negotiation of transactional substance, where text in discourse is foregrounded. This, in turn, appears less threatening than the negotiation of social-symbolic meaning, where attention moves to individual expectations of role-related behaviour, and the threat to 'face' is more direct.

Negotiation procedures themselves can likewise be graded on a cline of low - high risk. Considering the degree to which each procedure can be measured in terms of a territorial invasion, the act of clarification might be thought less imposing than that of formulation, which in turn seems less of an immediate threat than a direct challenge to interlocutor. As focus shifts from the accessibility of language forms used as indices, to the appropriacy of propositions as the substance of discourse, to the acceptability of formal relations at the level of social structure, so risk to self

in terms of the potential occurrence of face-threatening acts, becomes heightened. These points, interrelating communication levels, negotiation procedures and criteria, may be expressed diagrammatically as follows:

### RISK MATRIX IN MEANING NEGOTIATIONS



[ Figure 8 ]

Tannen (1987) argues that the way in which something is framed is more difficult to challenge than a direct statement. If this is indeed the case, then it suggests that in asymmetrical encounters where it is the more powerful interlocutor's assumptions of role-relation rights and responsibilities that predominantly influence behaviour within the situation, directly negotiating such, for example by challenging their validity, cannot easily be effected without risking a face-

threatening act.

Since decisions to risk meaning negotiation are presumably also made taking bearings on a cost-benefit type framework, the whole area of risk and communication strategies is a complex one requiring more investigation than hitherto accorded.

#### 4.5.4 Negotiation: Assertion or Accommodation?

A reluctance to actively participate in meaning negotiation may, alternatively, be motivated by unfamiliarity with the actual notion or its procedures:

maybe this whole notion of negotiating work tasks and getting feedback and using people as a sounding board for ideas is actually an unfamiliar one to many overseas students... it's also unfamiliar to many, many home based students, particularly I think it's true of scientists and mathematicians as well; the whole thing of their undergraduate training is one where they, well to caricature I suppose, sit in large lecture halls, take notes and then regurgitate rather than write essays or submit themselves to the sort of Oxbridge tutorial system or do very much work in groups where they have to argue with their peers and so on [Interview 1.11]

A deep-seated resistance to negotiating meaning may be demonstrated in a preference for the orthodoxy of gatekeeper control, not least because of the security and predictability which accompanies the old order. In the context of negotiating meaning between teachers and students engaged in a professional course in adult education, Millar et al (1986:429-30) refer to the hidden curriculum of "sustained student dependence on staff - for knowledge, for course design, for validation of achievement and for leadership".

Paradoxically, skilful performances of helplessness testify to the power of dependency when used strategically as a means of gaining control over others. Krebs and Whitten (1978) report on experiments demonstrating that the greater the dependency of a person in need, the more help the person is likely to receive. "Realizing that people feel an obligation to help those in need, weak persons may

inflict their dependency on others, and thereby gain control over them" (ibid:88). For this course of action to be reciprocated, interlocutors are required who derive a more basic form of power in giving help and who like to use such actions as a means of establishing a superior position and status. For others, however, feeling strong and independent is more important than trying to secure the rewards that dependency brings.

Perhaps the most worrying feature of the tendency to allow others to predominantly define or control situations, is the surrender of individual rights and responsibilities for one's own participation in social encounters. Instead of experiencing interaction in teacher - student encounters, including engaging in meaning negotiations on the basis of self-confidence and a strong identity within the institution, of shared expectations of equal discursal rights and responsibilities in encounters and trust in another to accept alternative constructs without negative evaluation of interlocutor, we may find a preference, on both sides, for complementarily differentiated communication.

Accommodating to what one construes another's expectations of an encounter to be, for students can amount to an exercise in teacher appeasement:

they are looking for something you know ... [something] is required by the lecturer get round that and maybe the interviewer has got what he's needed  
[Interview 3.4]

In the case of teachers, a temptation is to yield to what one imagines a student's expectations of one's role: providing clear instructions, sound teaching, a strong lead in discussions, etc. In situations where language behaviour is characterised by a reciprocity of submission and control, the immediate threat to role relations is of foreclosing or reducing possibilities for interaction. A longer term danger is that of sustaining states of helplessness or dependency.

Differences in personality clearly play an important part in shaping attitudes and behaviour in language negotiations, and Hudson's (1966) distinction between 'convergers' and 'divergers' is relevant here. Bannister and Fransella (1986:96) contrast people more likely to go along with the ideas of others because they "believe that one of the most valuable things in life is to get on with people, not

upset them and so forth", with those of a non-conformist tendency who "construe themselves as being independent of others, set high store on forming their own opinions and do not believe that the majority usually knows best".

However the value of these general categorisations is best assessed in relation to actually occurring encounters. In asymmetrical communication where approval is sought from persons charged with gatekeeping responsibilities, and/or rewards are anticipated for pursuing lines of convergence, the motivation to accommodate (Giles and Smith 1979) to a high status interlocutor can be quite powerful:

in a cross-cultural encounter, a speaker may converge not only because he personally likes his interlocutor but also because he believes he should by virtue of his role positions, and also because as a subordinate group member in this particular cultural setting, he should converge towards dominant-group speakers (Bourhis 1985:126 original emphasis)

The notion of 'preference structure' (Sacks 1973, Sacks & Schegloff 1979), the idea that second parts of adjacency pairs can be ranked in terms of responses which are either preferred or dispreferred, would also account in part for reciprocal language performances:

the preferred response to questions is an expected answer while the dispreferred response is a non answer or unexpected answer. The preferred response to an invitation is an acceptance and the dispreferred a refusal.  
(Potter and Wetherell 1987:83)

In highly specialised discourse types, such as professional interviews, the majority of first parts of adjacency pairs are most likely produced by gatekeepers. The effect of this on gateapproachers can be to create a sense of preferred responses on the part of interlocutor which they may then attempt to realise in responses conforming to such imagined expectations.

Heritage (1984:7) transforms a feature of discourse structure into an explanation of communicative behaviour at the interpersonal level. He suggests that "the role of preference organisation in relation to a wide variety of conversational actions appears to be strongly associated with the avoidance of threats to 'face' and ultimately the avoidance of outright conflict". This seems to support Berger's (1979) summary of studies revealing a tendency for behaviour perceived as a threat

to other, to be judged negatively.

This kind of evidence can also be interpreted as a reinforcement of the motivation to accommodate to expected patterns of communication by careful avoidance of dispreferred responses, actual or imagined.

If risk-taking through divergent responses is considered by some to be too costly a venture to undertake, participants can pay an equally high price for pursuing risk-avoidance strategies by not negotiating definitions of situation or communicative intent. Rumelhart (1983 :158) suggests that "failure to clarify features of the context often leads to very non-normal interactions"; and Harder's (1980) notion of the reduced personality of the second language learner appears to find support from Schlenker and Leary (1985:171) who report that where anxiety outweighs a person's desire to create a good impression on another,

a protective self-presentational style, in which the focus is on avoiding blatant failures rather than achieving major successes, is engaged. The result is a lowered level of participation in interactions (eg initiating fewer conversations, talking less frequently), the avoidance of topics that might reveal one's ignorance (eg factual matters), minimal disclosure of information about the self ... and a passive yet pleasant interaction style that avoids disagreeing (eg reflective listening, agreeing with others, smiling).

O'Keefe and Delia (1985:66) remind us that "communication is not simply a psychological process of interpretation; it is also a process of social co-ordination". From a sociological perspective, differences in rate of negotiation can be viewed as an exercise in teacher control. Wiemann (1985:86) defines control as follows:

control is the constellation of constraints people place on one another by the manipulation of both interactional structure and content, which limit the options appropriately available subsequently ... that is, the doing or saying of something has the potential to prescribe or proscribe next possible actions or statements.

Regulation of talk results in what Scotton (1985:103) refers to as 'powerful language', which "attempts to control the overall exchange in three main ways: it directs the amount and content of what gets said, it evaluates such talk by passing judgments or providing interpretations, and it organizes the exchange".

Degrees of communication control can be observed by examining degrees of participant talk and turn-taking management, along with the use of specific negotiation procedures such as topic initiations and focussing questions, requests for clarification, formulations of previous discourse and challenges to interlocutor speech. It can also be detected by investigating participants' interpretations of communication as it proceeds and as viewed retrospectively.

Besides accounting for the influence of individual dispositions towards meaning negotiation on negotiation behaviour, one of the most important issues to address is how individuals manage to manoeuvre within this artificially created and highly constrained framework to pursue their own communication agenda.

In the following sections I explore these issues further with detailed reference to a number of encounters between two course directors and their postgraduate students.

#### 4.6 Meaning Negotiation and Interview Management

In accounting for the management of interviews as a specific speech event, we can identify a number of widely used procedures: **topic initiations**, **focussing questions** (cf Crymes and Potter 1981), and **formulations** of interlocutor speech (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970, Heritage and Watson 1979, Thomas 1984). **Clarifications** of meaning are another set of commonly used procedures for managing the encounter as a communication event, whilst **challenges** to statements (Labov and Fanshel 1977) are also possible.

Finally, a variety of **metalinguage devices** may be used for general framing purposes or to indicate current position and future disposition towards the event (Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974, Tannen 1987).

In theory these various procedures may be invoked by any participant, though given the asymmetrical nature of role relations in social institutions, together with experiences of an unequal distribution of talk management within interviews, we may anticipate their being used predominantly by interviewers.

In the following sections I illustrate how each of these procedures is used to signify social symbolic relations between participants and influence communicative choice within teacher-student interviews. I also show how within a highly managed speech environment, individuals require confidence, willingness, knowledge and ability to manoeuvre within the constraints of this framework to pursue their own agenda.

#### 4.6.1 Thematic Control

One of the most effective ways of setting parameters for communication is through control of the thematic framework. Both course directors managed their interviews in this way by using specific procedures such as initiating talk, maintaining a focus on certain topics and summarising discussion, before bringing talk to a close.

In terms of an interview agenda, the course directors had a clear idea of areas they wished to raise for discussion, both as regards student progress on the academic programme and their general welfare. This is borne out by course directors' comments on interview expectations as well as by their systematic coverage of a set of topics during the interview itself:

I wanted to talk specifically about some of the things that had come out of the er assignments ... I mean the problem of making use of reference material without actually writing it word for word so that it patently obviously you know is not an individual's writing but something taken without recognising it er that would be one and then another one which I think probably counted for most people the need to be critical rather than descriptive and so on ... I was also as an ancillary thing, I should have mentioned this, trying to reinforce with them that it's not automatic that they go on to a masters ... in other words sort of semi-preparing the ground a bit if I have to make that difficult decision at the end of the year and some of them- for some it's the end of the line ... there were some things that I wanted to find out I mean I wanted to try and find out whether they felt they'd had enough help I think I probably didn't get that through very clearly er what else could be done er particularly what can be done in the time that's left

[Interview 3.13]

In each set of interviews, the topics discussed can be grouped around the following areas (see Appendix C for a complete list of topics in each set):

- \* general progress to date
- \* courses taken and difficulties encountered

- \* plans for the next stage of the programme
- \* health and welfare issues
- \* any other business.

In addition, each course director explored an area of concern specific to his or her programme: the Diploma director sought to find out what problems students thought they would face if not accepted onto the MA programme; the MA director to elicit comment on students' experience of the transition between the Diploma and MA courses, on their perceptions of staff response to their needs, and on ways of improving the MA course.

#### 4.6.1.1 Topic Initiation

The most striking observation from an analysis of topic initiation in both sets of interviews, is the gross disparity in the number of topics initiated by teacher and students. Of over 100 topic initiations in the MA interviews, no fewer than 76% were performed by the course director. In the Diploma interviews, 80% of the 50 topic initiations were made by the course director. In other words for each topic introduced by a student in the MA interviews just over three were initiated by the teacher; in the Diploma set, the ratio was four teacher-initiated topics to every student one.

Furthermore, many 'student-initiated' topics can be understood as follow-up responses to a topic or theme introduced by the teacher rather than occurring as independent items:

- D.V. if you were to start this term all over again is there **anything you'd do differently** about the way you work or about the way you relate to people, use groups or you know anything like that
- V.A. [4s] er: no if I had to start what I would have done differently or what I've learned so far is the **study skills**, you know the document you gave me (right) previously I wasted a lot of my time  
[Interview 2.2]

What we see then in terms of the substance of the communication is a slot and filler type framework such that a general topic introduced by the teacher is one

which students choose various items of response to, as the following examples illustrate:

- D.A. what so far have been your sort of **major problems**  
 Q.I. actually initially it was that of er especially with assignments I used to find it difficult to **lay hands on some books**  
 [Interview 2.7]

In all but a single case where students initiated topics, teachers followed up with some exploration of the issue. The exception occurred in a Diploma interview where, rather than the student-initiated topic being pursued, a fresh one was introduced by the teacher:

- J.E. the other problem we have is er in our country there is no way of keeping up with your profession (no) you will not get access to the modern publications and all this  
 D.A. was this course what you expected, I mean is what you're getting out of it what you expected  
 [Interview 2.8]

Since both course directors sustained an empathic listening stance throughout their interviews, this may be interpreted as a rare lapse in terms of appropriate responses to student contributions.

Of a total of 35 topics raised during the MA interviews, 57% were initiated 3 or more times. Of the latter, 80% were initiated by the teacher, providing an indication of her role in giving a direction to the encounters as well as her agenda priorities. These included:

- \* reviewing students' experience of academic work in the first term
- \* eliciting comments on students' experience of the transition from the Diploma to the MA course and of staff response to student needs
- \* discussing any changes to study patterns since beginning the MA,
- \* inviting suggestions for improving the course or making special provision for overseas students
- \* discussing study plans for the Christmas vacation and the following term
- \* expressing concern for welfare issues such as accommodation and family

- \* 'any other business'

By contrast, only 2 topics were 'initiated' by students 3 times: a review of the educational psychology course; and the problem of tracking down reference material. A further 4 topics were 'initiated' twice by students: three in connection with first term difficulties and one concerning special provision for overseas students.

Taking the Diploma interviews as a whole, considerably fewer topics (23) were initiated for discussion compared with the MA set (35). Of these, a much smaller proportion (26%) were raised 3 or more times compared with the MA interviews. In 5 of these 6 cases the topics in question were initiated by the teacher:

- \* general progress to date
- \* course experience compared with expectation
- \* response to teacher comments on assignments
- \* writing critically
- \* problems in proceeding to the MA

The only issue raised three times by students was that of forthcoming examinations. A further 7 topics (30%) were raised twice during the interviews, 6 of these by the teacher. These were:

- \* the most and least useful parts of the course
- \* major problems so far
- \* English language proficiency
- \* plagiarism in essays
- \* student concerns over the next few months
- \* the next stage of the course

By contrast, the only issue raised twice by students was that of tracking down reference material. Again, the preponderance of teacher-initiated topics points to a high degree of agenda setting and control by the course director.

#### 4.6.1.2 Focussing Questions

In the case of these interviews, focussing questions most often follow directly the initiation of a topic by the teacher. They function to direct interlocutor to a particular aspect of the topic:

D.V. now how about the **psychology** this term, **what's your experience been on that?** [Interview 2.4]

D.V. okay now let's move on to er... well- wait a minute just stay at the level of the courses, **has there been any disappointments about the first term?** [Interview 2.5]

Commensurate with this type of encounter, there is a similar disparity between teacher - student performance of focussing questions as topic initiation. In the MA interviews, 97% of focussing questions were performed by the teacher; in the Diploma interviews the proportion was the same. Comparing the rate of questions asked to topics initiated, in the MA interviews the teacher asked an average of 1 focussing question per topic; students, on the other hand, asked on average only 0.03 questions per topic. Thus in the MA interviews the teacher was 34 times as likely to ask a focussing question as a student. In the Diploma interviews, the teacher rate of 1.1 question per topic was 28 times greater the student rate of 0.04.

Given that an important function of focussing questions is to draw attention to a particular aspect of the topic, one of the consequences of their unequal distribution in professional encounters is to place control of talk firmly in the interviewer's court. Furthermore, since interlocutor response is constrained by the particular focus placed on the topic by the interviewer's question, interviewees need to show considerable alertness and skill in linking their responses to the question in such a way as to ensure their own agenda items are presented and given an opportunity for discussion.

#### 4.6.1.3 Formulations

Another important means of topic management is through the use of formulations. These may be thought of as attempts to summarise propositional meaning or illocutionary force by presenting the gist of preceding talk or offering an upshot of

meaning as inferred by hearer (Heritage and Watson 1979). In this sense, formulations "lead to a reduction of the message to its basic essentials" (Widdowson 1984a:117):

D.V. I mean if you were designing those psychology seminars- let's just look at psychology, what would you recommend?

U.A. ..something that would be concrete, more concrete

D.V. ..well just tell me what concrete is for you then

U.A. ..I think it would have been more concrete if we were discussing lots of what was in their reading lists

D.V. **right so it's really- for you it would have been good if you could have got closer to understanding the theories, the concepts** (discussing that yes) okay I see

U.A. I think that would have been a little bit more (right) concrete

D.V. and did you feel comfortable in the group being the only foreign student there?

U.A. oh they were quite nice, it's just that I found it almost impossible to participate in that

D.V. because you had nothing to say or

U.A. yeh there was just nothing

D.V. **right so it wasn't that you wouldn't have wanted to contribute (no) but rather that it wasn't answering your questions and your problems** (no it was not) right [Interview 2.1]  
[formulations in bold]

Besides their retrospective discourse function, formulations appear to have an important prospective role in topic management, to prepare the way for, or actually perform, a topic closure, thus enabling the discussion to proceed in another direction or be brought to a close. This can be seen in the following extracts:

U.A. [MA student and course director have been discussing ways for U.A. to get most out of his course] I think what I like with this place is more the.. many curriculum work that- that is going on

D.V. **mhmh.. so it's useful to be in touch with that and to know the actual people (mhm) who are doing it (yeh) so I mean that brings us to the two bits of the course which you can make your own the dissertation and the report..**

[Interview 2.01]

B.Q. [Diploma student has been describing a meeting with a helpful teacher] er she is a very kind very patient (mhm mhm) she talked about a lot of things to me (that's nice) yes very nice.. yeah

D.A. good... **so that was really last term** (this is really last term) **and that really has helped you to.. settle in..** (yeah) yes (I think so) yes now what about this term... [Interview 2.12]

In each set of interviews, almost all formulations were produced by the course director. Besides their transactional function of providing feedback to students on how their contributions have been understood, their social symbolic value is one of reinforcing dominant speaker status. Thus formulations operate as a powerful act of communication, constructing or revising frames of discourse or resolving moments of crisis when authority is threatened (Thomas 1984). As such, they represent a difficult device to counter and, not surprisingly, appear to be rarely challenged by a 'dependent' interlocutor.

As a preparatory device for topic closure, formulations form one member of a powerful triumvirate of talk management strategies: initiating, focussing on and summarising talk. Taken together, these three communication procedures represent a very effective means of directing and constraining interlocutor contributions.

They create a framework in which, assuming participants agree to perform cooperatively and reciprocally, interlocutors must work hard to shape their contributions in such a way that they can insert their own topics or individual responses within the constraints imposed by these framing devices.

#### 4.6.2. Further Procedural Work

Besides introducing, focussing and bringing discussion to a close, there is much other procedural work to be done as topic related talk proceeds. In the following two sections I illustrate the importance of several of these meaning negotiating procedures: clarifications, challenges and the general use of metalanguage.

#### 4.6.2.1 Clarifications and Challenges

Two principal kinds of intervention may occur within the communication flow, clarifications and challenges. The purpose of clarifications may be seen essentially as a quality control mechanism in the sense that an interlocutor intervenes at a point where communication is threatened by divergent understanding. When an interlocutor is unclear as to a speaker's intended meaning and wishes further comment or exposition, s/he may request a clarification of meaning:

V.A. the book is quite good- it raises a very good you know selection of points..

D.V. is this **philosophy of education, that one?**

V.A. yeh it's called 'Is Biology Sexist' or 'Is Science Sexist'

D.V. oh right [Interview 2.2]

K.E. really what I was expecting was for how you know to address ourselves to the issues

D.V. **er which issues? the issues raised in the lectures?**

K.E. the issues raised in the lectures and then relate them you know to our experiences

D.V. yeh [Interview 2.5]

Acts of clarification, then, perform the useful function of helping to keep communication 'on track' and, in themselves, appear to be relatively uncontentious.

Challenges to interlocutor speech on the other hand indicate disagreement with what has been expressed, and provide information about the challenger's own beliefs (Crymes and Potter 1981):

D.V. have you felt squeezed out of that group? I mean that's slightly what I'm picking up, they're such a lot of lively people that it's

Q.C. well in the sense that because- I mean what they will talk about is.. and what I would talk about would be quite different (mhm mhm) because if I were to you know to move in and say you know we

have this arrangement (mhmhm) there's quite a big mismatch between my own experiences

D.V. **sure but it's not to say that the other students wouldn't be interested coz they're {not}** [Interview 2.3]

An interesting relationship exists between these two negotiation procedures in so far as a request for clarification can be misinterpreted as a challenge, or vice versa. Consider, for example, how a misplaced stress in the following sentence could unintentionally produce a face threatening act or sound a note of exasperation: "Yes, but what do you mean by that?"

As to the amount and distribution of requests for clarification and challenges to interlocutor speech in these interviews, there is again great disparity in the performance of teachers and students. In the MA interviews the teacher accounted for 92% of all requests for clarification; in the Diploma interviews, 82%.

Whereas in the MA interviews the teacher challenged students 5 times and was not challenged directly by them, in the Diploma interviews the teacher made 4 challenges, the students 3. Occurrences of student challenge bear further examination, since they tend to co-occur with a challenge from the teacher. The first challenge in the Diploma interviews is from a student, and is immediately counter-challenged by the teacher who challenges the student a second time several exchanges later:

D.A. you can make both of those chapters perhaps one but you may decide that that is not going to work... you'll only know that when you start putting it together in writing.. then you can put something in here, yes there's something here about the special problems.. of the training of science teachers and again I would do this in relation to both U.K. and Somalia

J.E. **but er: I don't see any problems in here because**

D.A. **well there are problems**

J.E. when I am comparing with the problems in Somalia with here.. er to us there are no problems

D.A. well.. th- you know.. you may be right (that's true) problems are all relative

J.E. that's real, I mean that's real because the resources- there are not enough resources over there (true) I mean (okay) the teachers are

D.A. **but you can still make the comparison**, I mean alright let's not talk about them as problems you can look at what is happening in pre-service teacher education.. er and you can make suggestions.. er as to whether any of these ideas have any kind of value in Somalia  
[Interview 2.8]

The second occurrence of a challenge in the Diploma interviews leads to another exchange of challenges between teacher and student. This time it is the teacher who challenges first through disagreement with the pessimistic outlook presented by the student who is seeking to express anxiety about the possibility of not proceeding to the MA and of its detrimental effects on his career. Concerned too about the demoralising effect of failing to achieve entry onto the MA, the student then counters the teacher:

D.A. what were you expecting in terms of the course is it what you expected or

I.U. well what I'm getting out are very useful definitely.. but there's one thing that sort of demoralised me about the course which if my employers had known that they would not have released me.. that is the fact that attending this course does not mean going in for Masters.. because they wouldn't have released me if they don't know that I would not go for Masters programme

D.A. **well you may do I mean you don't know that you're not going**

I.U. **no but.. it's- I'm- I'm saying what it- it really demoralised me a bit** because I started thinking okay that means.. that if I don't.. meet the standard I'm going back home because it will mean many things to me.. it will mean it will affect my promotion.. I will not get another opportunity to go for a course until all the others have gone  
[Interview 2.10]

A short time later in the same interview, the student challenges the teacher's opinion that a problem in his essay writing is cultural, concerning the art of criticism, and suggests it is to do with writing:

D.A. the word critique actually means criticism (yeah) not just a description (yeah) ah that is a problem ... I don't know that you have this as a major problem in Nigeria because you're always a critical lot I mean societies

I.U. well the societies defi- you know Nigeria (yeh) is a conglomeration of societies

- D.A. well of course yeh and coming from the North I guess (yeh) yours is more
- I.U. and ah (yeh) not only North- even in the North we have many tribes and (mhm) we have different cultures (yeah yes) so.. criticism is.. it's not part of- you only criticise your colleague freely.. so like your age-mate or somebody you know that (mhm) you are the same and ah: **but all the same I think my problem is not that of culture I have that problem of writing** maybe that's why I have inclined towards mathematics more (yeh yeh) I know I am not good at writing (that's interesting) ... I will get the facts but that structure thing I know is a weakness in me [Interview 2.10]

Two instances of teacher-initiated challenge occur in the final Diploma interview. The first, by making a distinction between different assignments, expresses disagreement with student remarks on the teacher's expectations of written work:

- V.M. I'll tell you one thing D.A. (mhm) shall I [sniffs] to be very very frank ... how I wrote this- and let me explain what I thought is you wanted something from the book... not from my bullshit and all that you know hahah not my own ideas (mhm mhm) you said not from your own idea only- there I went wrong.. (yes) I should have written my idea supported by the book
- D.A. **'pends which assignment you're talking about**  
[Interview 2.11]

The second, whilst listening to the student's explanation for his below-average performance on an assignment, is to challenge the student to face the fact that the quality of his work could be improved:

- V.M. so that is the reason why I didn't do very well in this because I didn't have books that ah (yes yes) and I stayed here I collected
- D.V. yeh well I appreciate that.. ahm: **nevertheless it still means that they're not as good as they could be... okay**
- V.M. thank you very much [Interview 2.11]

Coming between focussing questions and formulations in recurrent cycles of topic-related talk, clarifications can be viewed as side-sequences initiated largely by the interviewer, and add to the overall expectation that responsibility for the management of talk rests largely with the latter.

As to the occurrence of challenges, since these two sets of interviews are perceived by the course directors as informal and centrally involving a counselling role, one might expect there to be relatively few. On the whole this is indeed the case and, where they do occur, challenges are more likely to emanate from the interviewer rather than the interviewees who by and large seek to avoid potential face-threatening-acts to someone whom they perceive in a structurally superior position.

#### 4.6.2.2 General Uses of Metalanguage

Explicit metacomments on anyone's speech are heard as evaluations in any social context (unless they are heard as doing the legitimate practical work of checking on understanding or on whether the audience can hear clearly) (Stubbs 1983:59)

Metacommunication, the use of language for talking about language, is another important means by which meaning is negotiated in social encounters. Linked to the construction of conversational frames (Goffman 1974), it offers a way of managing them, of indicating and charting constantly evolving lines of interpretation (Bateson op cit). Metalanguage then is much broader in scope than any of the negotiation procedures outlined so far.

In asymmetrical encounters, the actual performance of metacommunication, in terms of framing the speech event, monitoring talk as it proceeds and signalling new directions in the conversation, is closely associated with the more authoritative participant, and serves to reinforce perceptions of their dominant role and status.

Referring to the classroom situation, Stubbs suggests:

such metacommunication is highly characteristic of teacher-talk, not only because it comprises a high percentage of what teachers do spend their time saying to their pupils, but also in the sense that its use is radically asymmetrical. Speakers hold quite specific expectations that it is the teacher who uses it. It is almost never used by the pupils; and, when it is, it is a sign that an atypical teaching situation has arisen (op cit:53)

Framing via metacommunication is a process which operates at various levels (Tannen 1987). In the following extract the initial frame constructed by the course director sets the scene for the whole encounter with her student:

**D.V. all I'm doing is chatting to you** very generally about your feelings about this term (yes) and **then I'll just ask you** about any specific things at the end (yes) so.. **just tell me** how you feel about your general progress [Interview 2.2]

Within encounters, metalanguage assists in creating smaller frames which both reflect larger frames and identify various activities (Tannen op cit):

D.A. **I think there are two problems at the moment** (mhm) this is really **I think it's worth our while spending a few minutes on it** (yeh)  
[Interview 2.8]

D.A. well in fact J.E. did come to me on various occasions and I dug him out some references from the books and so on (mhm) so it is a matter of seeking it out er **there are several points in general I'd like to make** er one of them was relating to one of the particular er.. I think it was this one er when you were talking about the teacher training (mhm) is this idea of having tables and information but not using them (exactly) [Interview 2.9]

Essentially the same disparity as in the performance of other negotiation procedures is found in the use of **metalanguage** by teachers and students in these interviews. In the MA set, teacher instances of metalanguage account for 95% of all occurrences; in the Diploma interviews it amounts to 82% of the total.

This frequent use of metalanguage, particularly when unchallenged, gives teachers a profound advantage over students in the construction of frames within the encounter, and has important implications for control of communication:

D.A. how do you think things are going so far? I mean let me start off by asking you before I make comments [Interview 2.11]

D.A. one final question from my end is er how do you feel you're coping with the time that's non-timetabled [Interview 2.7]

D.V. one more thing and I must stop then  
[Interview 2.3]

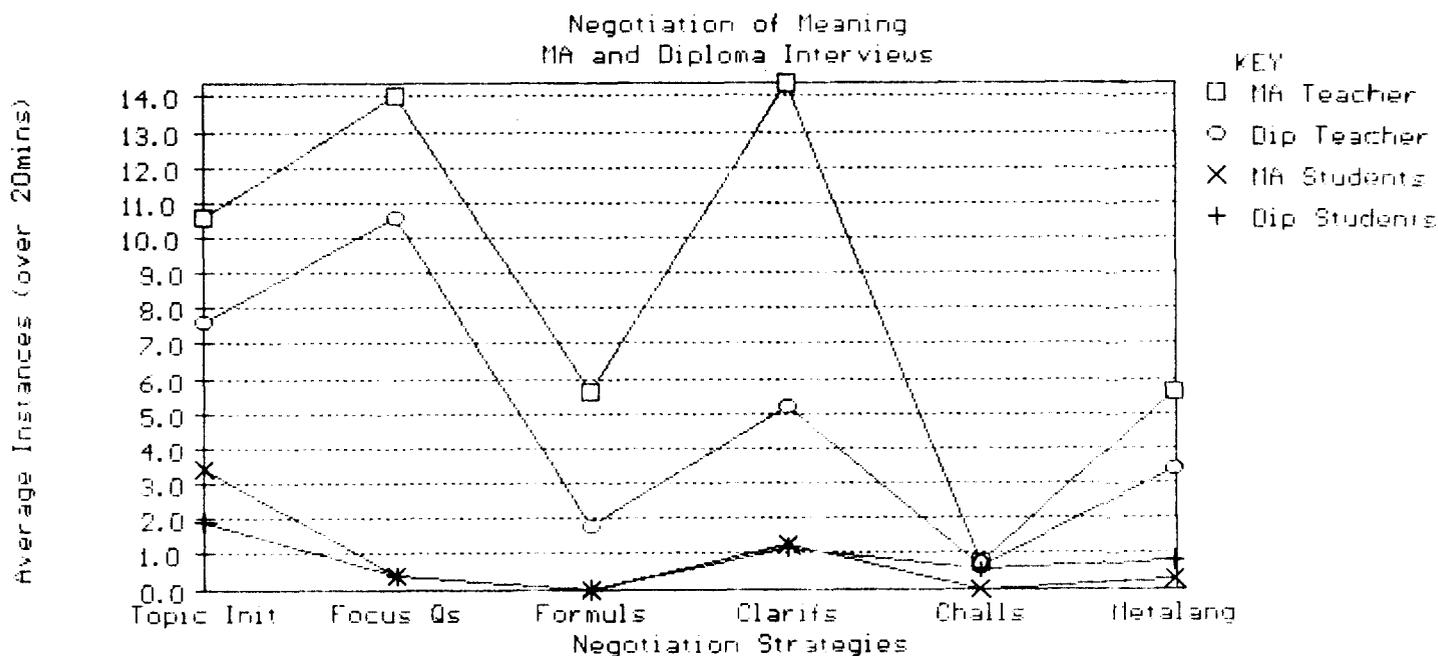
D.A. I think we must let you go and talk to er whoever's coming next  
[Interview 2.7]

D.V. I'd be very interested to talk about that a lot more but you know we're gonna have to stop  
[Interview 2.4]

Together then with topic initiations, focussing questions, clarifications, challenges and formulations, the predominant use of metalanguage by interviewers consolidates control of the encounter within their jurisdiction and constrains conditions for interviewees as regards inserting their own agenda and initiating their own meaning negotiations. I address interviewee responses to these issues in

section 4.7.

Finally, the distribution patterns for these various negotiation procedures is summarised in figure 9.



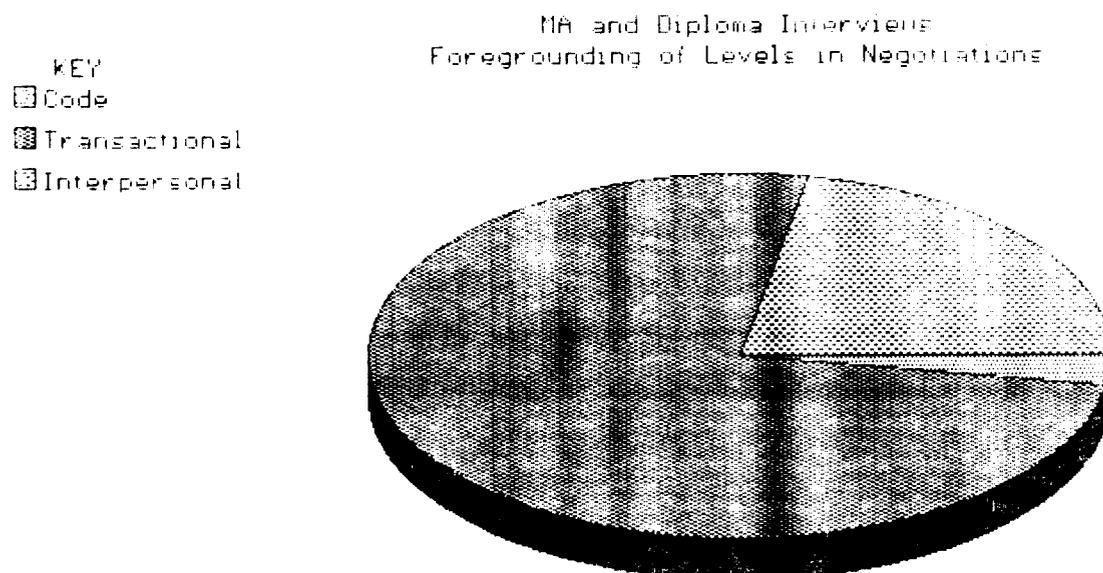
[ Figure 9 ]

#### 4.6.3 Negotiation Across Communication Levels

The distribution of meaning negotiation across communication levels broadly follows the pattern of risk outlined in section 4.5.3. In the MA interviews, 85% of teacher-initiated negotiations focused on the level of discourse, compared with only 14% of a direct social-symbolic import; MA student-initiated negotiations at these levels were 67% and 22% respectively. In the Diploma interviews 73% of teacher-initiated negotiations foregrounded transactional matters compared with 27% social-symbolic; similarly, Diploma student initiation was 78% discourse and 22% social-symbolic.

Taking all teacher and student negotiations, the proportion of code, discourse and social symbolic levels represented in the MA interviews is 6%, 76% and 18% respectively. In the Diploma interviews the proportion is 0%, 75% and 25% The

combined figures for the distribution of meaning negotiations across communication levels in the MA and Diploma interviews is illustrated in figure 10.



[ Figure 10 ]

Though there is some slight variation between teacher and students in the amount of negotiation across the three levels, the general pattern of transactional matters accounting for about three-quarters of all negotiations, with social symbolic negotiation making up just under one quarter and code level accounting for the small remaining portion, holds for both sets of interviews.

The only instance of a language code item negotiated by a course director appears in a request for clarification in the following MA interview:

D.V. let's just look at psychology what would you recommend ... what sort of questions

U.A. something that would be concrete more concrete than what- I dunno ... it is very difficult to put it but as I am saying it wasn't something quite concrete the way they discuss the things

D.V. and so- well just tell me what concrete is for you then  
[Interview 2.1]

In another MA interview the only other instance of code-based negotiation in the data occurs when a student seeks the following clarification:

D.V. who do you talk to when you're not being a student and actually here do you have other Arab friends in London?

A.M. ...er another?

D.V. Arab friends in London (yeh) ah you do good (yeh)  
[Interview 2.8]

That few meaning negotiations occurred at code level can be accounted for by the fact that the students in question had a good command of English, that the teachers and students shared professional interests and worked closely together. Were one, however, to examine communication involving speakers from dissimilar professional background or less proficient users of English, one might expect to find more code-accessibility problems arising.

Though few meaning negotiations were necessary at code level, in each of the interviews recorded teachers and students performed less negotiation of meaning at a level carrying the highest amount of risk, that is the interpersonal or social symbolic, than at the level of transactional discourse.

From this data we can see how to a large extent the politeness principle is realised in the patterns of meaning negotiations at different communication levels.

The evidence also seems to support the view that negotiating the sense-reference value of systemic indices is a less risky act compared with the negotiation of transactional substance, where text in discourse is foregrounded. And that this, in turn, seems less threatening than negotiating social-symbolic meaning, where attention shifts to personal constructs and role behaviour, with the potential for threats to 'face'.

#### 4.6.4 Summary of Negotiation Performed

In all six forms of meaning negotiation considered, course directors consistently outperformed students. Taking the six procedures as a whole, the ratio of teacher to student negotiation in the MA interviews was approximately 17 to 1; in the Diploma interviews around 9 to 1; an average ratio of 13 to 1.

The general picture which emerges then is of course directors qua interviewers in central control of the encounter: constraining it by choosing particular themes and topics to discuss; channelling talk in certain directions; monitoring and revising its course at points of uncertainty or potential divergence; consolidating their understanding of it by producing summaries at regular intervals; and bringing discussion to a close.

In other words in managing communication, interviewers alternately open the gate to talk, conduct most of the procedural work and close down discussion at their discretion.

Viewed in this light, the complementary differentiation of meaning negotiation can be seen as an extension of the classic teacher - student talk paradigm from the classroom to the interview situation, embedding a powerful social symbolic message that reinforces constructs of asymmetrical role and status. That this should be the dominant pattern of communicative behaviour in both situations comes as little surprise in itself. What is further revealed by the analysis however is more important, namely how dependent participants resolve the complexities of role-relations engaged to use the encounter as a forum for presenting matters of import to them in accessible, appropriate and acceptable ways.

In the following section I explore the difficulties of so doing due to communication paradoxes within the situation, and show how in participants' meaning negotiations we can find clues to the various resolutions chosen. I also chart the process whereby participants who are unaware of their contrasting definitions of situation can misinterpret both a general style of communication and the intent of specific negotiation initiatives - with potentially disastrous consequences in terms of negative evaluations of the encounter.

## 4.7 Negotiation Paradoxes and Resolutions

At first sight there appears to be something of a contradiction between the course directors' expressed desire to create conditions for students to open up and talk about their concerns regarding work and well-being and the degree of control exerted over the interviews. On closer examination however, what is being demonstrated here, it seems, is the paradox of necessary intervention to set up conditions for talk. In essence this interview relationship is analogous to the teaching and learning scenario depicted by Widdowson (1990:xiii)

classrooms exist to provide opportunities which would otherwise be denied by controlling conditions for learning which would not otherwise take place ... the central question is how this control is to be exercised tactfully, tightened or relaxed so as to facilitate the learning process ... it is in the setting up of such conditions that teachers apply their special knowledge and expertise and discharge their professional responsibility.

For students, the key to successful participation both in the classroom and interviews such as these lies partly in recognising and accepting the necessary artifice of teacher control; and in being able to move within and beyond the situational constraints to engage in interaction. For students to perform in ways which converge around interviewer intention that discussion of topics should proceed in a relatively open and smooth manner, they need to be fully aware of the multilayered nature of the communication event and able to creatively resolve the various paradoxes generated by role plurality and associated expectations.

### 4.7.1 Creativity and Control

Returning to the comparison of the personal constructs and communicative behaviour of Adam and Charles (4.2.2), Charles frames the course director's control over the interview as a device employed to create conditions for talk. Within the structured yet flexible framework Charles perceives, he is able to 'open up' in the discussion, confident enough to insert his own agenda:

D.V. what else.. well really any other ideas (yes) you have V.A. about the course or..

V.A. I just want to find out how... what.. criteria did you use to assign students to p- supervisors over dissertations [Interview 2.2]

Thus Charles demonstrates both his understanding of and ability to create opportunities to express his own needs within the controlling environs of the encounter. Together with a shared expectation of this, talk is accomplished by creating and sustaining complementary, but essentially different, role behaviour: synchronous exchanges lead to a smooth flow of communication and positive evaluation of the encounter by both parties.

However, in classroom and interview situations alike, confusion can arise in students' minds as to which teacher roles are invoked or enacted on different occasions or at particular moments. Thus failure to distinguish between facilitating and instructing, or counselling and assessing, can constrain student talk in teacher-led discussion and participation in teacher-directed learning processes in general.

In the case of Adam, and in direct contrast with Charles, his apparent failure to identify or reluctance to accept the artifice of teacher control as a framework within which to express himself, has unfortunate consequences not only for his reading of the event, but for his style of participation throughout. It also affects teacher evaluation of him as an interviewee and a student. Consistent with his construction of the encounter as essentially an exercise in assessment, and interpreting the teacher's interviewer role as a regulatory one, Adam views his own role in terms of appropriate communicative behaviour as one requiring him to adopt a cautious approach to any and all questions put to him.

For Adam, being cautious throughout the interview seems part of an overall safety first response to the difficulties of trying hard to satisfy the wishes of a powerful interlocutor. Being uncertain as to what precisely the intent behind each question is and neither wanting to appear foolish by asking for a repetition nor run the risk of his answer being judged 'wrong' in what he perceives to be a 'one-shot' question-answer framework, questions become a series of hurdles to be negotiated with great care if he is to save himself from stumbling:

- Q.C. it's difficult because sometimes you know somebody will come back oh no no that's not what I asked, you know, what I meant was- so I always try to run away from that sort of thing, take time, get the question, sift it out and then get the answer you know... sometimes I do face reporters you know sort of talk to them and usually when they ask questions you just don't bash in and answer those questions,

you think before you even- have they got out of this what they are looking for, you know something in this way; I think this has been my approach even to this interview... (you feel that something fairly specific is being looked for) yeh is required by the lecturer, get round that and then maybe the interviewer has got what he's needed, rather than you pushing something and them saying oh no- another question, sort of you keep on recycling the same thing

[Interview 3.4]

Charles and Adam's contrasting constructs and behaviour are particularly well evidenced in their responses to focussing questions. Whereas Charles interprets focussing questions as open-ended, an invitation to say what he wants about a particular topic, Adam construes them as narrow and precise (cf ten Have 1986), requiring not only specific answers, but carefully worded ones so as to effect a favourable impression on the teacher.

Because Adam believes that his answers to these questions form some kind of quasi-formal assessment of his performance on the course, the strategy he adopts is similar to that of students responding to traditionally conceived teacher - student exchanges in the classroom: find out what the teacher is looking for, then try to provide what one imagines is the required answer.

Q.C. I think in answering questions you were just trying find- to look at the answer- what the questions were supposed looking for... I was trying strictly just to answer questions as they were put to me

[Interview 3.4]

#### 4.7.2 Double-edged Strategies

One strategy Adam invokes in trying to solve the riddle of what exactly the teacher is getting at is to seek clarification of focussing questions:

D.V. so tell me how you feel about this term

Q.C. [3s] er [3s] what do you mean how I feel?

[Interview 2.3]

D.V. is there anything about the way you got down to the business of working that you wish you'd done differently

Q.C. [3.5s] mhm I mean wh-

D.V. or do you wish people had told you things sooner or differently or..  
you know what I mean

Q.C. [4s] I don't know.. what do you mean by that?  
[Interview 2.3]

Adopting this tactic turns out to be something of a double-edged sword. Whilst it brings him the advantage of more time to sift through a question to find an appropriate answer, it is also a risky strategy, for several reasons: first, it allows an interpretation that Adam is experiencing difficulty in comprehending questions; second, since Adam's interruptions for clarification disturb the smooth flow of talk and hold up the business at hand, the cumulative effect of this can be to create a sense of frustration on the part of the course director; finally, in its significance for the social symbolism of the encounter, it threatens to undermine the status quo concerning procedural work being essentially the prerogative of the interviewer.

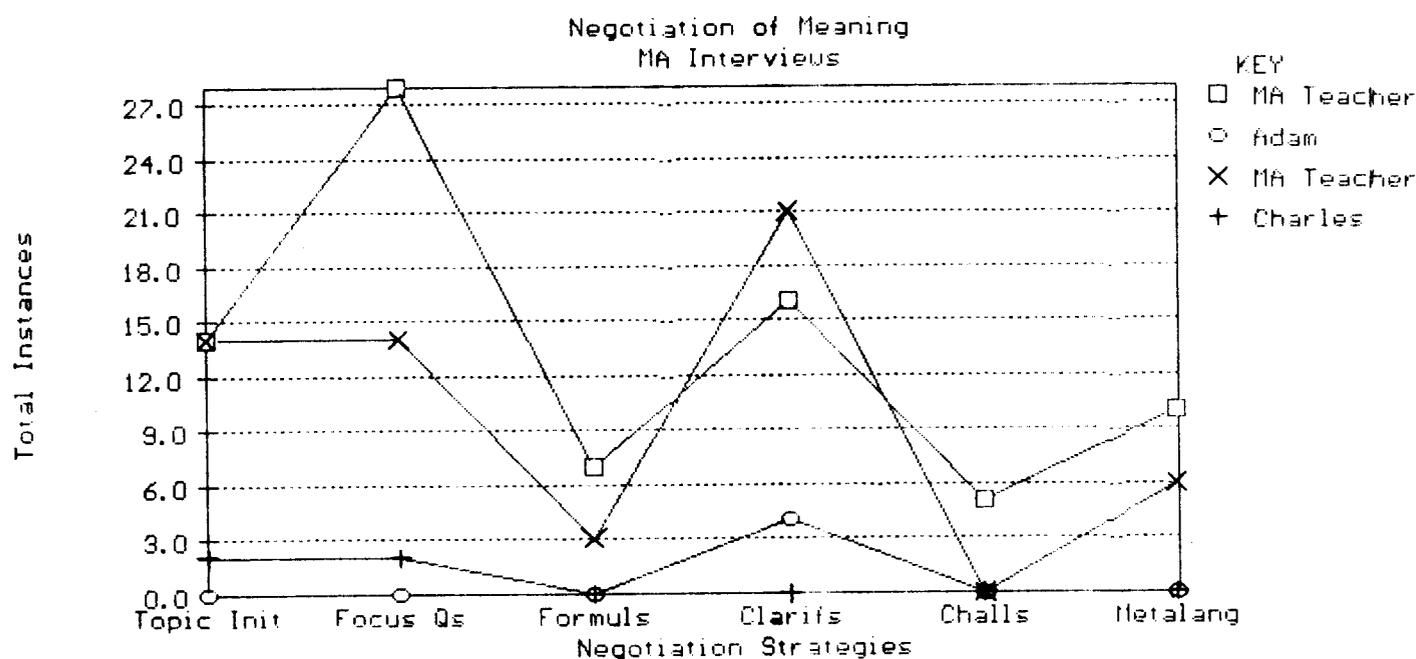
Likewise Adam's tendency to provide non-committal answers to the teacher's questions, follows the damage limitation principle of avoiding incorrect or inappropriate answers in what one construes as an appraisal interview. However this strategy has the marked disadvantage of obliging the course director to increase her rate of meaning negotiation in an attempt to draw Adam out on specific points where she feels he is not addressing the issue.

D.V. what about recent developments then let's go on to that how has that felt?

Q.C. [2s] well it's been alright I think much of er what we covered I thought [3s] er quite adequate although one would say there are certain elements that one would er like to sort of address a bit I think

D.V. mhm well tell me a bit [Interview 2.3]

The overall effect of the ways in which these two sets of problems are dealt with by student and teacher is to increase the amount of meaning negotiation, and processing load, on both sides. The course director produces twice as many focussing questions and formulations in her interview with Adam compared with Charles (figure 11).



[ Figure 11 ]

The amount of procedural work undertaken, arguably more than would have been necessary had participants shared a similar definition of situation, eventually becomes a source of frustration to student and teacher: to Adam because it provides confirmation of the difficulty he faces in determining what the course director is looking for and trying to provide 'correct' answers; to the course director because it entails entering into a number of clarificatory side sequences to explain questions or comments which appear to her to be quite clear.

Rather than a sense of satisfaction from a smooth flow of communication created by complementarily differentiated exchanges, participants experience an interactional asynchrony as a result of lengthy pauses between questions and answers, and frequent interruptions to negotiate meaning. The effect of this is to generate friction with the socioeconomic imperative to get through the business at hand as efficiently as possible in the time available. Furthermore, in not accomplishing encounter goals in good time, a temptation is created on the part of the interviewer, to attribute blame to the interviewee, in this case Adam, for the ensuing state of affairs.

D.V. I was getting very annoyed with him.. I mean I've had several sessions with him which go round and round imponderably because nothing ever gets pinned down and I thought well here we go again [Interview 3.6]

Two further communication strategies displayed by Adam are worthy of comment in so far as they combine with other strategies mentioned in helping the course director form an unfavourable impression of him as an interviewee and, more importantly, raise concern in her mind about his capability as a student.

One of the most striking features of Adam's talk throughout the interview is the degree of indirectness attached to his statements (cf Stubbs 1986). Adam employs a wide range of linguistic markers to reduce the amount of commitment associated with his propositions or to avoid explicitness in his utterances. For instance in his responses to interviewer questions or comments, he makes use of the following softeners (numbers in brackets refer to the total number of occurrences of each item in Adam's speech):

I think	(32)
I hope	(4)
I suppose	(2)
you know	(12)
actually	(11)

He further modifies his speech by employing a large number of qualifiers:

sort of	(24)
quite	(26)
some	(7)
a bit	(7)
in a way	(5)
more or less	(3)
tended to	(3)
up to a point	(1)
once in a while	(1)

On other occasions he succeeds in remaining non-committal:

I don't know	(5)
I'm not sure	(2)
maybe	(2)
it's difficult to tell	(1)
you never know	(1)

He also manages to express a degree of vagueness in responding to questions about his experiences on the MA course:

it's been alright	(2)
it was okay	(1)

The following two short extracts illustrate Adam's propensity to use such devices in his interview talk:

D.V. did you feel that your group worked well for you?

Q.C. [2.5s] yes **I think** it was because we were blessed **in the sense that** there were **quite** a lot of.. er students who were.. {knowledgable} about psychology (mhmhm) and they were **quite** generous in the way they put in ideas (mhmhm) for **some** of us who were **actually you know** plodding back (hahah) behind them so they- they were **actually quite helpful in the sense that** (right) they didn't er hold back any information they had but **actually** they were.. (right) contributing **quite** effectively and.. **you know** we learned **quite** a lot from them [Interview 2.3]

D.V. what about recent developments then let's go on to that.. how has that felt?

Q.C. [2s] well **it's been alright I think** much of er what we covered **I thought** was [3s] er **quite** adequate although **one would say** there are certain elements that **one would er like to sort of** {address} a **bit I think**

D.V. tell me a bit

Q.C. **sort of** er areas where there's... policy er matters and that **sort of thing** because {you have} .. and er particularly.. school organisations (mhmhm) where you are.. well **more or less** talking about your own set up it's difficult to imagine for instance when you- I close my mind and imagine what sort of a school er that would be and exactly what.. what were the relationships and that **sort of thing** so in- in that area it becomes a **bit** difficult for **some**

of us to **sort of picture**

[Interview 2.3]

Using linguistic devices to signal a lack of commitment or vagueness in his speech enables Adam to detach himself from his statements, to deny propositions and their illocutionary force if necessary. In social symbolic terms deploying such communication strategies can be seen as a measure of self-protection.

Unfortunately for Adam, this is not a context in which the course director welcomes indirectness or is prepared to tolerate much vagueness in interviewee talk.

D.V. I was trying to encourage him to be more reflective and to give me more than what he began with which was "well I think there was somehow minor adjustments" or "more or less than" I mean all much too vague [Interview 3.6]

As she defines it, her role within the encounter is to get as much direct feedback from her students as possible so that she can form a clear picture of their thoughts and experiences on the MA course. To that end she and Adam operate at cross-purposes throughout the interview, thus heightening the sense of frustration experienced on both sides and necessitating further investment of time and energy in meaning negotiations.

#### 4.7.3 Revealing Metalanguage

An analysis of the use of metalanguage can yield important clues as to how participants are reading and responding to encounters as they develop. For instance, after only two exchanges the course director senses Adam's defensiveness and remarks, "you sound a little bit guarded".

During the second half of the interview, when the course director tries to summarise her understanding of Adam's first term on the course, she expresses her puzzlement:

D.V. so it's been a... has been reasonably successful then this term er.. you d- you- you really- I mean I'm puzzled coz you really don't look as if it's been.. a burning success.. but it hasn't been a.. (oh it has) miserable (it has) disaster [Interview 2.3]

On three separate occasions Adam prefaces his response with the phrase "I should say", giving an important clue both to the assessment frame he has constructed for the encounter and his anxiety to appease the course director by providing her with responses which he imagines she wants to hear.

This frame is most clearly revealed in Adam's response to the course director's expression of puzzlement, whereby he makes his most direct reference to the struggle he is engaged in to try to say what he hopes will be positively evaluated by the course director. His comment brings forth a very direct response from the latter:

D.V. so it's been a... has been reasonably successful then this term er.. you d- you- you really- I mean I'm puzzled coz you really don't look as if it's been.. a burning success.. but it hasn't been a.. (oh it has) miserable (it has) disaster

Q.C. it has er:: I:: I think I should try to say yes yes

D.V. hahah hahah I don't want you to say anything that you don't (hahah) believe

[Interview 2.3]

One metaphor in particular that seems to sum up the predicament Adam finds himself in, it comes in an exchange which occurs mid-way through the interview:

D.V. so I might be exaggerating the problem

Q.C. I think so it's er:: maybe the level I'm not sure I can't- I can't get the whole thing straight

D.V. you haven't got your finger on it still

[Interview 2.3]

Sadly, for Adam, the conceptual framework which underlies his struggle to "get the whole thing straight", along with the fact he hasn't "got his finger on it still" in terms of understanding what the course director is seeking of him throughout the interview, is never directly explored or articulated. The course director is aware of Adam feeling uncomfortable and anxious during the interview:

D.V. I think of all the students I talked to he's the one who projected most the feeling of being in some sense on trial ... I think he's an anxious person, there's a lot at stake for him

[Interview 3.6]

And senses his frustration in the responses he gives to questions:

D.V. I never know with Adam whether he's buying thinking time coz I don't think he is very quick or whether it's frustration on his part because actually I'm not playing the game he thinks he's there to play so there's a note of annoyance in his tone quite often  
[Interview 3.6]

At no point, however, are there moves towards a clarification of participant roles or expectations about role behaviour which would give Adam an opportunity to explain how he understands the encounter and enable him to revise his perceptions of the course director towards more of a counselling than regulatory function.

Thus precisely the outcome Adam wanted to avoid, a negative evaluation by the teacher, actually occurs, and appears to do so as a result of the very strategies he deploys to prevent it happening.

#### 4.8 Future Research

Research into the complex network of relations that exists between social, economic and psychological forces shaping language behaviour in contexts of communication is in its infancy. Much work needs to be done in determining how tensions within and amongst these various forces influence moment-by-moment decisions; how speakers successfully encode the range of meaning levels (code-systemic, discourse-economic and social-symbolic) simultaneously expressed through language tokens; and how interlocutors attempt to resolve tensions and ambiguities in speech through procedures which lead them to selectively attend to one or more levels of meaning.

Referring to interconnections between social expectations and psychological needs, Bourhis (1985:126) suggests that "what is needed now is an approach which could take into consideration not only the existence of social norms and rules but also account for how speakers perceive and internalise these norms depending on their psychological needs, motivations and beliefs. An integration of the accommodation and sociolinguistic approach would need to account for how sociolinguistic norms and rules are obeyed and broken depending on how they interact with speakers' motives, feelings and attitudes in the course of conversations".

Besides this, there is a host of other questions to be addressed. Milgram (1974:145) argues, for instance, that "there is a propensity for people to accept definitions of action provided by legitimate authority." Do participants tend to accept external definitions of situation, and make little attempt to alter 'imposed' contextual constructs? Does the structural asymmetry of encounters within social institutions, as evidenced in symbiotic role-relations and unequal distribution of knowledge-based resources (economic, linguistic and institutional), create powerful forces against meaning negotiation by less powerful and privileged individuals?

Do feelings of relative powerlessness and dependency discourage individuals from negotiating meaning, particularly as regards rights and obligations in various roles? Analysing social relations along the dimensions of status and intimacy, Brown and Ford (1964) suggest that it is usual for higher status persons to initiate acts of association that increase intimacy. Could this principle be extended to describe the process by which acts of negotiation are initiated? What perceptions of freedom in and responsibility for initiating acts of negotiation do participants have?

What influence does the combined effect of the co-operative principle in discourse and economic criteria favouring the efficient exchange of discourse transactions, exert on gate-keeper's willingness to allow the negotiation of role-related constructs; and how far is this process, which necessarily invokes relations within social structure and questions of power and privilege, acceptable to them? What influence does the territorial imperative, combined with a fear of socioeconomic sanctions, have on the willingness of structurally dependent members to pursue meaning negotiation?

If individuals do display, at times, a preference for the safety-first principle of "nothing ventured nothing lost" as regards meaning negotiation, what precisely are the consequences of such risk-aversion? When participants choose communication avoidance strategies do they, as argued by Harder (1980), relinquish a degree of freedom to define their place in the on-going interaction. And do they, as a consequence, have a reduced role in events?

In encounters where the principle of active involvement predominates, where, on the part of encounter controlling participants, there may be less tolerance for alternative styles of communication, is there an interlocutor preference for disengagement? And is the adoption of territorial strategies more likely to lead to negative evaluation of communication and individual identity?

Finally it is pertinent to ask whether the call itself to negotiate meaning is not perhaps another manifestation of the liberal desire for social democracy and equality of economic opportunity founded on a false assumption of **discoursal equality** as distinguished from **communicative reciprocity**; on a failure to take adequate account of profound structural inequalities in social encounters within institutions, the effect of which may be to reinforce a double bind on symbiotic relationships (Erickson 1976), to endanger communication with complementary schismogenesis (Bateson 1972), or, more simply, to promote misunderstanding and negative evaluation. These are some of the questions crucial to developing our understanding of communication through the "negotiation of meaning" in social encounters.

#### 4.9 Summary

In this chapter I have tried to show something of the complex nature of meaning negotiation, as a central communication process and in its forms, functions and social symbolism. I have also described how assumptions of shared understandings of a speech event can mask potentially serious conflicts of expectation and behaviour; and how vital social symbolic aspects of meaning negotiation when not clarified remain a hidden cause of misunderstanding and negative outcome.

As I have argued earlier, it is vital for students to understand the paradoxical nature of teacher control. Likewise it seems crucial for teachers to remain alert to the fact that students may hold quite different definitions of situation and be prepared to initiate negotiations of social symbolic meaning whether in classroom interaction or interview situations. Doing so at the outset of an encounter, particularly when one experiences asynchrony or senses an interlocutor may hold a different set of constructs, can save an unnecessary expenditure of time and energy later in trying to clear up serious misunderstandings. An exploration of personal

constructs that reveals contrasting perceptions may also prevent teachers from misattributing communication difficulties to personality features and from negatively assessing interlocutor.

In the final chapter of the thesis I look at the implications of my research for language education and indicate ways in which we can devise materials and methods for students and teachers to become more aware of the social symbolic dimension of communication. By so doing, we may enhance our understanding of social symbolism and improve our interpersonal skills to deal more sensitively and confidently with such issues in our classrooms.

## Chapter 5                    The Educational Value of an Ecology of Context and Communication

The word 'education' means literally, the process of leading out. Thus we are talking of the way in which all your faculties and capacities should be encouraged to expand and unfold themselves ... the essential spring of all growth is within you.

(A.N. Whitehead 1947:171)

If he [a teacher] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

(Kahlil Gibran 1926)

To be educated is, after all, to develop the questioning habit, to be sceptical of easy promises and to use past experience creatively.

(Chinua Achebe 1984:53)

### 5.1                    Introduction

In this thesis I have sought to describe the limitations of centrifugal approaches to linguistics and show how notions of context and communication can be enhanced by incorporating relevant insights from anthropology, sociology and social psychology. I have outlined a general framework for an ecology of context and communication which locates social symbolism at its centre, and argued that, to be descriptively adequate, accounts of language behaviour must integrate important aspects of social symbolism. They must also show understanding of participant orientation to and performance of meaning negotiation. In this final chapter I argue for the educational value of such notions and illustrate ways in which students and teachers can foster the development of creative and critical processes by exploring central aspects of social symbolism.

#### 5.1.1                The Challenge of 'Educare'

Amidst its range of meanings and purposes, education exists to promote the growth and development of the individual as a whole person. This refers not only

to the acquisition of economically exploitable knowledge and skills, but also to the process of bringing to consciousness and leading out (educare), latent capacities for reflexive, critical thought as well as responsible action.

As human beings operating in social contexts, we have a fundamental need to make sense of the world around us and ourselves as part of it, if we are to construct satisfactory interpretations of situations and processes we engage in pursuit of personal goals. Referring to educational settings, Habermas (1971:4) argues:

In every conceivable case, the enterprise of knowledge at the university level influences the action-orienting self-understanding of students and the public. It cannot define itself with regard to society exclusively in relation to technology, that is, to systems of purposive-rational action. It inevitably relates also to practice, that is, it influences communicative action.

However economically orientated communicative activity may be, whether rehearsed in classrooms or performed outside, it does not take place in a vacuum but is embedded in social networks and contexts-of-situation. Like any other area of the curriculum, language teaching takes place in social time and space amidst asymmetries of position and status accorded to teachers and students in educational institutions. Besides providing an arena for teaching activities, language learning classrooms are social constructs, with various meanings invested by teachers and students in definitions of situation, role-relations and expectations, along with sets of knowledge and skills deemed relevant to learning processes (cf Wright 1987). These social symbolic features of context and communication require exploration and understanding if confidence is to be gained and energies released for playing a full part in meaning negotiation.

#### 5.1.2 Meeting Individual Needs

Like any other subject area, language teaching must accommodate its planning and practices to the fact that learners bring their own identities, motivations and concerns with them to the classroom. If not, it may ride roughshod over individual sensibilities and sociocultural values in the pursuit of economically motivated agendas.

Combining the notion of education to do with leading out what is latent in the mind with reflection as a vital correlative to action, we can see the importance of educational processes which afford teachers and learners regular opportunities to bring to consciousness and review frames and constructs for defining classrooms as social contexts and interpreting locally constituted communication.

In addition, attempts are being made in many institutions to move students away from a teacher-centred approach to more open learning formats, presented as a transition from teacher dependency to greater learner 'autonomy'. The corresponding shift in responsibility for educational achievement onto learners themselves may actually be quite dissonant with the previous classroom experiences of many students. For such an ambitious aim to succeed therefore requires the development of reflexive learning programmes to enable students and teachers to explore the changing nature of roles in educational processes. This seems essential if both sides are to be well prepared for the qualitatively different kinds of educational practices that follow a refocussing on teacher role as facilitator and student as 'autonomous' learner (cf Ellis and Sinclair 1989 for one example of how 'learning how to learn' might apply to EFL).

### 5.1.3 Redressing Transactional Imbalances

Given the permeation of social institutions with science and technology along with society's need for new generations of technologists (Habermas 1971), much emphasis has been placed in recent years on the function of education to produce and transmit technically exploitable knowledge and information. Whilst our political masters stimulate an economic climate to support such efforts, a constraining effect in setting educational goals according to industrial society's purposive-rational imperative, is the assessment of curricular objectives by the criterion of instrumental action. In drawing up essentially task agendas wherein a subject-specific syllabus is planned in terms of 'doing things' and 'getting things done', and classroom work assessed primarily in terms of 'efficiency' and 'productivity', teachers become subject to the constraints of this socioeconomic metaphor.

As the metaphor of education as an economic activity is vigorously pursued, so teachers and educational institutions are seen as 'producers' of knowledge and skills, and put under increasing pressure to give 'value for money' to 'consumers' by submitting themselves to the purposive-rational imperative. Thus their efforts become concentrated primarily on the transmission of knowledge or skills considered directly useful to students. Where teaching is framed in this way, education can be reduced to a notion that amounts to little more than an uncritical activism.

Language teaching has not escaped from this ideologically motivated paradigmatic shift in conception of the role and purpose of education. Although 'the communicative approach' has been hailed in many quarters as a radical departure in language teaching and 'communicative methods' adopted by practitioners in a wide range of learning contexts, it seems ironic that conceptions of communication informing it should be largely confined to the efficient production of text for transactional purposes, leaving little room for a consideration of the social symbolic significance of communication and contexts of use.

A plausible explanation for this may be found in the link between early approaches to communicative language teaching which valued language forms as tokens of a currency to be used for exchanging notions and performing functions (Wilkins 1972, van Ek 1975, Munby 1978), and Bourdieu's (1973) conception of communicative competence as an economic asset, a form of capital essential for achieving transactional goals. This viewpoint was itself embedded within a purposive-rational imperative that focussed on a relatively unproblematic notion of "what people want to do or what they want to accomplish through speech" (Finocchiaro and Brumfit 1983:13).

An ESP movement soon established itself around a concern for functional-notional specifications based on analyses of learners whose transactional needs could, it was assumed, be predicted with some degree of ease and accuracy (Brumfit 1986:vii). Combining situational frameworks and behavioural objectives (Yalden 1986:32ff) produced, it can be argued, systematically distorted communicative syllabuses in that they paid little attention to the social symbolic nature of language

and its users, or to the effect of styles of communication on the presentation and evaluation of self by others.

Rather, the assumption appeared to be that once armed with the necessary language tokens for exchanging functions and notions, learners were somehow equipped to accomplish the range of transactional routines they were being trained for. However, as Aston (1988) has demonstrated, performing an economic transaction in service encounters, one of the most commonly presented types of language situation in functional-notional textbooks, is by no means the simple or straightforward business it might appear to be, and can entail interlocutors in much social symbolic communication. Furthermore, in preparing language learners for communication in 'the real world' by focussing largely on transactional performance, little attention is paid to the range of roles assumed and identities presented in contexts of communication, or to the asymmetrical structure inherent in the majority of public/professional encounters. The failure of language teaching to adequately address these issues seems all the more ironic at a time when there is such a high degree of sociocultural heterogeneity in our classrooms.

A strong argument then for the educational value of the social symbolism of interaction is that the meaning and purpose of both communication and education goes beyond the production and transmission of technically exploitable knowledge for the continuation of economic processes. As Brown (1968:209) reminds us, "possessive mastery over nature and rigorously economic thinking are partial impulses in the human being". Where the danger exists of allowing such partial impulses to become "tyrant organisers of the whole of human life" (Brown *ibid*), or where we place undue emphasis on narrowly focussed economic agendas, it is important to redress the imbalance through a complementary focus on the social symbolic nature of the contexts and communication processes in which all human endeavour is embedded.

#### 5.1.4 Reflecting On and Acting Upon

A further argument for the educational value of social symbolism, is grounded in the need for reflection on communicative activity within social encounters and social institutions. This kind of reflexive activity itself constitutes a vital part of

the education process, and is concerned with examining a number of related areas and purposes. Habermas (op cit:8) argues that "the translation of scientific material into the educational process of students requires the very form of reflection that once was associated with philosophical consciousness". Besides then the need to consider the constraining influence on communicative performance of powerful economic forces in social settings, there is the equally important need to reflect on the nature and role of the various systems of social knowledge, institutional order and cultural value that influence definitions of situation and meaning negotiation between teachers and students. Such reflection and discussion is particularly important in situations where students' capacity for learning is hindered by fear of or undue deference to authority in text and context.

An unhealthy dualism in language teaching of action without reflection contrasts with learning through planning, acting and reviewing, a cycle of reflective thought and action (Thomas and Harri-Augstein 1985).

#### 5.1.5 Quality Assurance

Declining numbers of school leavers, a desire to increase access to higher education and government cut-backs in funding, have led most British universities to expand their provision of courses and enrol students from a wider range of sociocultural and educational backgrounds than before. A key part of this expansion is the recruitment of mature students and students from 'overseas'.

Many mature students defined as 'non-standard entry' may have little experience of formal education beyond secondary school; others may have outdated images of university life and expectations of teacher-student role-relations which do not match those of lecturers. For many overseas students, a UK university course is their first direct experience of British education. For both groups, therefore, creating opportunities for exploring personal constructs of higher education and examining some of the major difficulties in 'becoming a student' is essential to maximising their learning potential.

Furthermore, at a time of rapid expansion in the higher education sector, there is a need to ensure that teaching standards and programme quality are maintained, that

students receive the academic and pastoral support they require and do not 'fall by the way-side' as a result of a diminishing of their educational experience by institutions increasingly pursuing economic agendas.

#### 5.1.6 The Economic Argument

Besides there being a valid educational argument for paying attention to the complexity of our social nature, it makes sound economic sense to spend time reflecting on the diversity of participant constructs of social context and role-relations since they can constrain both classroom communication and educational achievement.

If meaning is not negotiated from an early stage in higher education then miscommunications and misunderstandings which inevitably arise may cause frustration and harm to students and teachers, and are likely to reflect badly on the institution itself.

Where a predominant socioeconomic metaphor promotes a view of higher education as a commercial enterprise (Grubb Report), there is always the danger of higher education institutions relying on false economies, of making fewer resources available to provide academic support for learners (Bacchus 1987).

The benefits to students in engaging the social symbolism of educational contexts and communication are crucial: helping to reduce uncertainty and anxiety in their novitiate; increasing self-confidence for academic endeavour and assertiveness to negotiate meaning. All of these are important means for students to fulfil their educational potential.

To the institution also, the rewards are considerable: an investment in helping students negotiate meaning at an early stage is cost-effective in the long run by reducing the likelihood of serious misunderstandings, with potentially disastrous consequences, later. In more positive terms, it can help ensure 'client satisfaction' not simply by providing value for money in terms of academic support but also by enhancing the quality of the educational experience as a whole.

## 5.2 A Process Syllabus for Social Symbolism

The challenge for teaching programmes then is to find ways and means of enabling students to enhance their sense of identity and belonging within the educational institution and, since value is increasingly placed on learners becoming more responsible for setting and achieving learning goals, to assist them in so doing.

Rather than subscribing to an economic imperative to 'do things' and 'get things done' at the expense of reflection on social symbolic meanings, the central tension between economic forces and social processes in institutional settings can be creatively reconciled in the form of a complementary social symbolic syllabus. Alongside the task agenda of a subject-specific syllabus in any academic discipline, a social symbolic, process syllabus could help students achieve learning goals by enabling them to reflect on personal constructs and communicative experiences in the educational setting.

Essentially a process-oriented syllabus for social symbolism would offer students and teachers opportunities to explore two interrelated areas in which novices experience difficulty: developing a satisfactory sense of identity and self-esteem within the institution; and promoting critical faculties by developing confidence to negotiate meaning in speech and writing. In doing so, teachers are likely to expand their roles of facilitating and advising.

### 5.2.1 New Roles for Language Teaching

ESL and communicative language teaching in general have suffered from an activist tendency, in that it has concentrated too much on "doing things with words" and has not bothered to ground this interactional work in critical dialogue. (Baynham 1986:2)

Taking the achievement of educational goals and the difficulties encountered by novices in taking up student roles as its subject matter, language teaching could provide key elements for a social symbolic process syllabus. It could offer an advanced course in language and communication awareness, preferably integrated with academic work in the students' subject area. By being accessible to individual reflection as well as a stimulus for group discussion, a syllabus organised around

social symbolic features and processes would allow individuals to work through studentship and teachership problems as they arise in the course of their novitiate.

Furthermore, in encouraging dialogue between action and reflection, language teaching could evolve into an important mediation service, enabling students and teachers to recognise the psychological reality of plural constructs and accommodate individual styles of communication to differing processes and role-relations.

Rather than promoting a functional fixedness by, for example, foregrounding a particular teacher-student role-relation or relying on a single style of communication, language teaching as mediation could encourage individuals to make sense of paradoxical features of context and communication by holding apparent contradictions together in an ecological metaconstruct, and thereby pave the way for greater flexibility in actual communication performances.

Mediating opposing sets of student-teacher role-relationship could be achieved by showing how the meaning of each set is, of necessity, defined in terms of contrast with others; and how, by understanding the part played in education processes by individual role relations, the value of each can be preserved. This process can also go some way towards enabling learners to cope with initial feelings of uncertainty and insecurity amidst the ambiguities of a rite of transition.

Formulating a central goal of language education as promoting mediation between personal constructs and communication allows teachers to facilitate a shift in control over educational processes towards learners by making them more aware of their rights as clients, and responsibilities as students; empowering them with metalinguistic knowledge and skills to negotiate satisfactory learning contracts. Such a service is clearly needed if the binary mould of expectations and evaluation of performance asymmetrically distributed between teachers and students, is to be broken.

A further aim is to help teachers and students reconcile communicative tension in social and educational processes. This involves enabling students to hold together the paradox of dependence on those with specialist knowledge, or skills, and

authority to examine their progress through the rites, with a sense of one's own responsibility for creating meaning and demonstrating critical thought.

Overall then what is being encouraged in this kind of language learning is the fostering of a constructive interdependence in negotiating meaning based on a respect for the complexity, integrity and fundamental equality of individuals. This is in contrast to teaching situations which, by perpetuating a powerlessness and dependence on the part of students, do little to discourage the tendency for learners to relinquish their rights to negotiate acceptable definitions of situation. The empowering of all to assume rights and responsibilities in this process holds as true for the pursuit of educational goals as for the general process of negotiating meaning in communication.

The metalinguistic empowering of individuals can come about through enabling individuals to experience a cycle of interrelated procedures - reflection, insight and transformation - that are in turn integral to the process of liberation from repressive structures - linguistic, cognitive and social. Berger and Kellner (1981:106) argue that the need for this 'praxis of freedom' is common to all areas of human existence. Freedom for interaction can occur only when ambiguities of linguistic, textual or contextual structures are revealed, or the limitations of preferred communication strategies understood.

For Habermas (1971:127), "the moment of success in creative language usage is a moment of emancipation". In enabling the renewal or transformation of personal constructs and communication strategies, language teaching becomes language education and opens the way for all involved in the learning process to experience what Maslow refers to as the highest form of motivation, "self-actualization", and move towards what for Jung (1967:17) is the goal of personal development, "self-realisation of the unconscious ...the personality desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole".

The distinction between language teaching and language education is analogous to that between communication and interaction (3.7). Whereas language teaching for communication is conceived in terms of notional-functional categories and the realisation of language forms for specified purposes, language education for

interaction is to do with the process of undermining formulaic constructs by becoming aware of their limitations. That is to say language education is essentially concerned with creating conditions conducive to the transformation of thought and action.

Where emphasis is placed on the transmission of knowledge and skills in an institutional context of power and control, there should equally exist the radical possibility of undermining such hegemony. Where there is little room in language teaching for nurturing educational values, there is equally little room for the growth of critical faculties or the transformational potential of education to be realised. Put differently, teaching for communication without the prospect of educating for interaction provides little hope for growth and renewal of linguistic, cognitive and social structures. In such situations, continued reliance on stereotypical constructs of role-relation or routine language formulae may lead to fossilisation and decay. However where the need to promote education for interaction is recognised and measures taken to facilitate its development, then conditions conducive to construct transformation and risk-taking in language use can be established.

With reports indicating insufficient academic provision for addressing student problems to do with identity, belonging and control of learning processes (cf The Grubb Report), language teaching, which in many universities seeks to provide a support service for overseas students through pre-sessional and in-sessional EAP, could develop its capacity for enabling learners to negotiate meaning and gain more control over educational processes. Despite its self-imposed limitations of study skills to be taught, tasks performed, topics to be covered, and routine formula rehearsed, EAP is well placed to develop the interactional competencies and capacities of learners by raising awareness of and focussing on procedures commonly used to present social symbolism in educational contexts and communication.

The aim of a syllabus for social symbolism then is essentially to promote opportunities for students and teachers to take bearings on themselves, on the educational settings and processes in which they are jointly engaged, on their personal goals within these settings, and on how best to achieve these in terms of

maximising opportunities for teaching and learning through the negotiation of meaning.

### 5.2.2 A Centrifugal Approach: Language Awareness

[Modern languages] want to be treated as living, and the method of teaching them must be as elastic and adaptable as life is restless and variable. (Jespersen 1904:4)

A.N. Whitehead (1962:8-9) reminds us that in education "we are dealing with human minds and not with dead matter ... the mind is never passive; it is a perpetual activity, delicate, receptive, responsive to stimulus". For Frawley and Lantoff (1985:40), "mind must be seen developmentally and dynamically. An individual ... must continually adjust his cognition to the circumstances at hand, since he is fundamentally a social being. His language assists in, and is indicative of, his cognitive adjustment". Given the fact that language plays a vital role in the formation of personal constructs, one approach to developing a syllabus to explore social symbolism in educational settings is to begin with a reflective, critical awareness of how we use language in contexts of communication to constitute ourselves, define social situations and interpret communicative intent.

If, paradoxically, knowledge structures constrain as much as facilitate our capacity for creative thought, that in a sense "every interpretation is an imprisonment and an exclusion, an act of aggression against the multiplicity of life" (Kiberd 1988), then the process of bringing to consciousness and reflecting on assumptions and presuppositions underlying acts of communication is a vital first step in liberating ourselves from ossifying traditions of thought and behaviour.

Given the role played by language in presenting personal constructs and social processes, it means the need to develop a 'critical language awareness' (Ivanic 1988) to examine the ways in which an 'invisible pedagogy' - "all those aspects of interaction which make up the roles and relationships that are constructed in a particular classroom and which create the context in which learning is encouraged or inhibited" (Mullard, cited in Roberts 1988) - permeates the language teaching process.

By reflecting on our own and others' use of language, we can become more aware

of how diverse definitions of situation and role-relationships interact with procedural choices to signal topic control and conversational management, and how language is differentially used to negotiate meaning.

Significant steps toward realising the educational value of knowledge about language in the school curriculum in England and Wales, have recently been taken following the publication of the Kingman (1988), Cox (1989) and Harris (1990) reports. A long-time advocate of language awareness programmes, Hawkins (1992:5) feels justified in claiming their pedagogic relevance is at last being appreciated:

'Teaching about language', after some doubts and opposition from English teachers, has come to be accepted as an essential element in the curriculum for all pupils.

Though the focus of published materials for teaching (Tinkel 1988) and teacher-training (Hawkins 1987, and LINC undated) is at present largely on aspects of code, text and the major language skills and processes necessary for decoding texts, an approach to language awareness such as this could be extended to include materials and activities on social symbolism and the sociolinguistic criterion of acceptability in context and communication as here defined.

### 5.2.3 A Centripetal Approach: Self/Other Awareness

It is assumed that when persons interact with each other, they do so at varying levels of awareness ... it is further assumed that in order to generate reliable knowledge and a high degree of understanding of others, close monitoring of their behaviour as well as the relationship between the others' behaviour and one's own is required ... an important step in the generation of knowledge and understanding is an increase in awareness about the monitoring of one's own and others' behaviour.

(Berger 1979:127)

A second approach to developing a syllabus for social symbolism is to begin by exploring the range of personal constructs created in and around contexts of communication, and to work inwards from these to examine language forms used to realise individual perceptions and communication. Whichever route is adopted, the area and depth of coverage would be broadly similar: the starting point may be determined by whether the initial points of connection students and teachers wish to make with the syllabus are via specific language forms or more general

cognitions.

In the sections that follow, I outline several broad areas of social symbolism which a process syllabus might incorporate. Clearly there will be other important issues which students and teachers would wish to discuss in relation to learning processes and educational goals. Indeed we might suggest a general principle to the effect that any social symbolic issue of context and communication which is a potential block to students developing faculties and skills for achieving learning goals may be considered for inclusion within a syllabus of this kind.

### 5.3 Aspects of a Syllabus for Social Symbolism

Much that could be included in a syllabus for social symbolism can be grouped around four major themes: identity and self-awareness; becoming a student; orientation towards communication; and negotiating meaning. Below I indicate aspects of social symbolism that could profitably be explored in a process syllabus:

#### A) IDENTITY AND SELF-AWARENESS

- i) Self-identity and personality.
- ii) Social identity and presentation of self.

#### B) BECOMING A STUDENT

- i) Loneliness, uncertainty and anxiety:  
Feelings of unfamiliarity and insecurity in new educational settings/processes - their effect on performing communication with individuals more familiar with the settings/processes and secure within the institution.
- ii) 'Them' and 'us':  
Perceptions of distance/asymmetry between 'us' (students/novices) and 'them' (teachers/experts). Feelings of marginalisation.
- iii) Status reversal and novice dependence:  
Experiences of this in the context of demands for learner autonomy and teacher productivity.

- iv) **Aggregation:**  
Anticipation of enhanced social position and status on leaving institution. Likely effects of any transformation of personal constructs or changes to interaction patterns over the 'liminal' period.
- C) ORIENTATION TOWARDS COMMUNICATION**
- i) **Personal preferences for talk and silence:**  
The effect of socio-cultural influences and classroom experiences of talk and silence on orientation to communication and interaction in present setting.
  - ii) **Co-operative and territorial imperatives:**  
Perceptions of co-operative and territorial imperatives in relation to social/educational goals and economic criteria.
  - iii) **Risk-taking and risk-avoiding:**  
Personal preferences for risk-taking and risk-avoiding in communication. Resolutions of risk conflict with implications for involvement in interaction and achievement of learning goals.
- D) NEGOTIATING MEANING (1): ORAL COMMUNICATION**
- i) **Role constructs:**  
Perceptions and experiences of conflicting sets of teacher-student role-relations (eg gatekeeper- gateapproacher; counsellor-client; instructor-novice; facilitator-creator/critic). Resolutions of such conflict for effective interaction.
  - ii) **Interlocutor rights and responsibilities:**  
Expectations of meaning negotiation between students and teachers. Notions of contextual authority in teachers' constructs, in relation to empowering students towards responsibility for learning.
  - iii) **Procedures for negotiating meaning:**  
Awareness and experiences of negotiation procedures on different language levels (eg topic initiation, requests for clarification, formulations of speech, challenges to interlocutor).
  - iv) **Negotiation styles and communication strategies:**  
Resolutions of tension/conflict in interaction and implications of preferred communication metastrategies for achieving educational goals.
- NEGOTIATING MEANING (2): WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**
- i) **Role constructs:**  
Perceptions and experiences of conflicting sets of writer-reader role-relations (eg expert-novice; one source-creator of meaning). Resolutions of such for effective interaction with written texts.

- ii) **Reader rights and responsibilities:**  
Expectations of the negotiation of meaning between readers and writers. Notions of textual authority in writers' constructs, in relation to assertiveness training for students vis a vis meaning negotiating in written texts.
- iii) **Procedures for negotiating meaning:**  
Awareness and experience of procedures for negotiating meaning in written texts, including assigning reference, revealing ambiguity, uncovering presuppositions, working out implications and authorial attitudes; bringing one's own identity, values and personal experiences to bear in assessing the value of a text.
- iv) **Negotiation styles and interpretation strategies:**  
Responses to the notion of textual authority residing in authorial comment in relation to developing critical skills.

Taking each area in turn, and with sample material in Appendix E), I will outline the kinds of exercises that can be used to promote greater understanding of social symbolic issues pertinent to educational settings. These activities are not conceived as an end in themselves: their purpose is to stimulate thought and discussion that may create possibilities for personal growth and professional development. To that end, involvement by teachers as well as students in the same or parallel set of reflective material is encouraged.

### 5.3.1 Identity and Self-Awareness

The decision to undertake a course of study or embark on a career in teaching is an important event in the life of an individual and presents a timely opportunity to reflect on one's identity and personality in relation to new educational goals. This reflexive activity can also be seen as part of a wider process of monitoring personal goals. Students and teachers are not simply learners or practitioners of language or other subject matter, but individuals in their own right as well as social beings who continuously present themselves to others and monitor others' evaluation of themselves. A desire for social approval and corresponding fear of negative evaluation can be influential factors in individuals' decisions for or against risk-taking in communication and learning.

In this regard Stevick (1976:50) reminds us of the importance of social-psychological factors in education: "we cannot in any of our classrooms assume

that students (and teacher) are comfortable either at the level of 'identity' or at the level of 'self-esteem'".

By encouraging students and teachers to use language for self-reflection, we can become more aware of our individualities, and the plurality of social identities we present through our attitudes, values and opinions. The first set of exercises in Appendix E offers students and teachers a chance to bring to consciousness constructs of self and an awareness of how we constitute self which can be related in positive ways to the educational settings and learning processes engaged.

### 5.3.2 Orientation Towards Communication

There is a profound public ignorance of the nature of communication and in particular of human language, its place in the life of society and the individual. (Trim 1983:74)

The fact that communication is a shared experience does not mean that individuals likewise perceive it, produce it in equal measure, feel as comfortable in taking part or derive the same degree of satisfaction from it. A wide range of orientation towards communication has been reported, from the high-involvement levels of New York Jewish speech style (Tannen 1991), to prolonged periods of silence on the part of Athabaskan Indians (Scollon and Scollon 1981).

Differing orientations towards communication within the family (cf Bernstein 1971), together with diverse communication experiences in 'traditional' and 'modern' classrooms, mean that we cannot assume homogeneity in terms of previous communication experiences or present orientations on the part of students from a wide variety of educational systems and cultural backgrounds.

Expectations of student and teacher roles and role behaviour are likely also to influence attitudes and behaviour toward communication in the classroom and other educational settings. The second set of exercises in Appendix E is designed to assist students and teachers explore their orientations towards communication and the implications of these for learning processes.

### 5.3.3. Becoming a Student

The concern in this area of the syllabus is for reflection on those rites of transition directly engaged in becoming a student, and their effect on the individual in educational settings: rites of separation from family, friends and cultural milieu, from 'normal' social time and space, to occupy the position of a student; and of marginalisation within the educational institution. Such feelings may be intensified for overseas students who have to adjust to being in a new social and cultural milieu as well as a new educational environment.

It is important therefore for students as novices to have opportunities for reflecting on how prolonged feelings of doubt and insecurity can affect learning behaviour and classroom communication.

The general aim then in this section of the syllabus is to assist students to recognise that feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and insecurity which accompany status reversal and marginality are 'natural', and that when 'owned', can be creatively worked through to foster a sense of belonging and achieve learning goals. (See Appendix E for sample exercises).

### 5.3.4 Negotiating Role Relationships

Without special and prolonged training most people do not find it easy to give a correct representation of their relationships to one another. Yet they present these relationships all the time. (Danziger 1976:29)

Since the concept of meaning negotiation is central to education and communication processes, it will occupy an important position within a syllabus of social symbolism. We can consider the meaning negotiation part of the syllabus from three interrelated perspectives, each of which generates its own learning goals: firstly, reflective material to assist individuals become more aware of their rights and responsibilities to negotiate meaning; secondly, material that will encourage them to become more confident and capable of exercising their rights and responsibilities; thirdly, material to help develop constructive means of negotiating meaning at points of divergence or conflict. The fourth and fifth set of sample exercises in Appendix E are designed to encourage individuals to cross

these thresholds.

Active participation in defining learning needs and helping to shape a relevant curriculum is another important area of meaning negotiating for learners.

To achieve this, Millar et al (1986:431) see the central task for teachers being "to assist learners to obtain that grip on their own language and culture that will allow them to negotiate actively the essential tension between tradition and autonomy".

The tension and ambiguity present in the various sets of role-relations engaged by students and teachers creates a need for meaning to be negotiated to enable individuals as social beings who are fulfilling educational goals to satisfactorily resolve opposing constructs. In the fourth set of sample material, I have included exercises for reflecting on definitions of teacher and student roles, locating them on various interpersonal dimensions or matrices and for considering beliefs and attitudes towards the notion of rights and responsibilities for negotiating meaning.

### 5.3.5 Negotiating Meaning in Interaction

every generation of students is susceptible to its teachers' presuppositions, and these presuppositions are potent to the extent that they are unspoken. It is assumptions, prejudices and implicit metaphors that are the true burden of what passes between teacher and taught. Facts, skills, details are in comparison ephemeral ... they are also identifiable and rejectable. What the teacher spells out, the pupil can question. What he assumes, especially from a position of unchallenged legitimacy, his pupils will tend to swallow whole and unawares. (Hudson 1976:43)

As I have sought to demonstrate, negotiating meaning in teacher-student interaction involves not only the exploration of role-related rights and responsibilities but also the ability to intervene in an encounter to deploy meaning negotiation procedures such as clarification of talk, summarising chunks of discourse and challenging interlocutor on points of disagreement. Meaning negotiation procedures such as these define the boundary between interaction and communication where the latter is conceived in terms of rehearsing and producing routine language forms and functions in relatively uncomplicated transactional exchanges.

Since decisions to initiate meaning negotiation have to be weighed against asymmetries of power, distance and weight of imposition on interlocutor, there is need for a process syllabus to help learners explore the implications of such decisions. As well as considering the localised, effect of meaning negotiation strategies adopted, there is need to look at their overall effect on an encounter and interlocutor evaluation of. Such exploration must take cognizance of individual preferences and sociocultural values as regards risk-taking and risk-avoiding in interaction.

Furthermore, as part of an academic curriculum which requires a critical understanding of its subject matter, students are called on to negotiate meaning in written text by asserting and comparing their own cognitive schemata with its, rather than being easily swayed by notions of 'authority' in text or author. Negotiating meaning in text, which includes pragmatic work such as assigning reference, uncovering presuppositions and implications, and working out authorial attitudes, often serves the purpose of creating an individual commentary - an important aspect of the critical process. In so far then as procedures for negotiating meaning in oral and written texts are desirable learning goals, there is a need for awareness raising about their role in achieving educational goals, together with an exploration of techniques for so doing.

In educational settings where a critical response is highly valued, it cannot be assumed that all students understand the critic's role, have had training in the 'art' of criticism or, particularly if predominant experiences are of an educational system where value is attached to rote-learning, feel comfortable with the notion and confident in their ability to apply it.

To that end, the fifth set of sample exercises in Appendix E is designed for students and teachers to reflect on issues such as these.

## 5.4 Developing a Syllabus for Social Symbolism

In the previous sections I have outlined important aspects of social symbolism which could be used as the nucleus for a syllabus, and provided sample material for raising consciousness of relevant issues. In this final section of the thesis, I give further pointers as to the kinds of material and methods which could be used for developing a social symbolic syllabus.

### 5.4.1 Learning Materials

Following the principle that in understanding interaction we are primarily concerned with meanings invested in contexts and acts of communication, the most appropriate material for awareness-raising in this regard is that which individuals bring themselves to educational settings, first person experiential forms of knowledge. Since individuals' autobiographies are likely to shape definitions of current situation, this rich resource of constructs and experiences could be a starting point for personal reflection and discussion of role and communicative behaviour.

Extracts from literature and biography that deal with themes such as separation, marginalisation and aggregation could also be used to elicit personal constructs.

A further source of self-access learning material stems from notes or personal diaries which students could be encouraged to keep as a way of charting their progress through the rites of transition. In so doing, they could record specific communication problems and successes en route to achieving educational goals.

Likewise, role-plays or representations of scenarios highlighting some of the tensions and ambiguities of the novitiate, and showing a range of resolutions to the situation, could be a stimulus for thought and discussion.

#### 5.4.2 Teacher Role

The role of teachers within a syllabus for social symbolism in context and communication is firstly as facilitators to help create an environment conducive to bringing to consciousness and articulating personal constructs and experiences of teaching and learning situations. The resulting affects and cognitions may act as a catalyst for discussion of difficulties experienced in taking up present student and teacher roles.

Having paved the way for such discussion, teachers have another important role to play in promoting the development of learners' communicative capacity by drawing attention to metalinguistic skills and procedures which can empower students, as 'clients' and 'consumers' of educational services, to negotiate meaning concerning role-relations and 'contractual' rights and responsibilities in educational processes.

#### 5.4.3 Criteria for Implementing and Appraising

Since what is conceived here is an enabling process for students to maximise opportunities for learning as well as for the professional development of teachers, it is not intended as a series of language patterns to be drilled or communicative behaviour for rehearsing.

Rather, formed around material to promote reflection on interpersonal issues, it requires a considerable degree of awareness and sensitivity on the part of teachers to a range of educational experiences, sociocultural values and individual styles of communication if it is to achieve its aims.

In situations where teacher-student exploration of issues may be difficult or unrealistic to pursue, it should still be possible for learners to engage the material on a self-access basis. Nevertheless, a sensitively led discussion of issues can also benefit individuals by introducing alternative ways of seeing and interacting.

Designing appropriate and acceptable assessment procedures for a social symbolic syllabus is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of all. It would, of course, be possible to design exercises that test students' knowledge of a range of relevant constructs or ability to deploy a range of meaning negotiation strategies. However to test the learning of such cognitions would say little directly about whether personal constructs are being challenged by reflecting on issues arising from the material. And to attempt to measure performances of meaning negotiation amidst the complex and subtle phenomena involved therein, implies a reductionism and behavioural determinism inconsistent with the aims of the syllabus. Thus it appears very difficult to determine the degree to which individual thought and behaviour is being affected in and by the educational processes engaged in a social symbolic syllabus.

One way of resolving this dilemma would be to encourage individuals, by means of self-observation and report, to chart changes in their own definitions of situation and interpretations of text/context; in self-confidence for initiating meaning negotiations in interaction; and in procedures used. Insights thus obtained could offer an indirect measurement of progress.

Ultimately though, the most telling commentary on both the syllabus and students' experience of it will be in terms of whether it succeeds in challenging personal constructs of teaching and learning and promoting ways of negotiating meaning that are individually acceptable, besides helpful in achieving learning goals. It may also be indicated by the degree of success students achieve in their academic or vocational programme, in part as a consequence of revising personal constructs and developing acceptable ways of negotiating meaning.

## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have sought to develop notions of an ecology of context and communication, of processes and constraints on meaning negotiation in interaction. If what is proposed in the final chapter appears a long way from traditional conceptions and concerns of language teaching, it can be comprehended as an attempt to argue for the educational value of increasing our awareness of the rich social symbolism of contexts and communication, and of meaning negotiation

as a vital resource for presenting self and making sense of others.

In seeking to understand socially situated language use, we encounter a paradox whereby in order to develop a capacity for successful interaction we must first make explicit and comment upon aspects of knowledge and experience which are not normally discussed: "hence it is necessary to interact abnormally in order to teach normal social interaction" (Rumelhart 1983a:161).

If, by exploring aspects of social symbolism in such a syllabus, we can create conditions for individuals to overcome the limitations of personal constructs and experiences in a way which enhances learning, then we may achieve something of value in language education.

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M - Magistrate KH - Defendant C - Clerk

- I C: thank you - and I think in May of this year you were before this court for motoring offences when you were fined thirty-five pounds and for costs fifteen pounds making a total of - fifty and uh you were ordered to pay within twenty-eight days - you haven't as yet paid anything or been in touch with the court - can you explain why you haven't paid and what your situation is at the present time
- 2 KH: yes - the reason I haven't paid - is - [A] that I haven't got the fifty pounds and also secondly that I feel that I was totally unfairly judged to be guilty at the time - I saw my solicitor about it and he said that he didn't think it was [2] worth going any further - said it would only cost me more money which I couldn't afford - I brought the solicitor from Derby in the first instance which cost me fifteen pounds - and I asked him to get - if it was possible to get me delayed because I felt so strongly about it that I wanted to take the matter further [2] and at that point it is resting with him and at the present time I've been trying to get in touch with him but he was away for three weeks [2] and I still feel most strongly about it
- [utterances left out]
- 3 M: you're not prepared to make the court an offer - of payment [2] because I think I should tell you the [the alternative is going to prison Mr
- 4 KH: if I do [ ]
- 5 KH: fair enough - if I do I'm condoning injustice - which I think it was in the first place
- 6 M: hmm - well [we can't re-try the court
- 7 KH: even - even the prosecutor at the time - at the recess when the two magistrates went out - of whom I think your companion was one - stated at the time that the case should never have even been brought up - that he agreed entirely with my action
- 8 M: hmm - we can't re-try the case I'm afraid
- 9 KH: so I've got to pay it - and accept injustice
- 10 M: yes - well it's up to you - I say the [alternative could very well be prison
- 11 KH: which says a lot for - which says a lot for British justice
- 12 M: hmm
- [5]
- 13 KH: there is a lot could be said - but obviously I would be had for contempt of court - if I said it - which I don't propose to say
- 14 M: hmm
- 15 KH: which I feel very very - bitter about the whole situation
- 16 M: hmm
- 17 KH: you were actually on the Bench
- 18 M: no that's nothing to do with it - the composition of the Bench when the case was heard has nothing to do with it and we can't re-hear the case - it's just not possible - the decision has been made and you've missed your opportunity - to appeal - that's open to everybody - and if you're dissatisfied with the appeal in the Crown Court you can go further - those are the lines along which you should have gone [2] if you felt - uh this injustice - that injustice was being done - but [regrettably now the time has
- 19 KH: but I could not afford to take it further at the time

continued...

- 20 M: hmm well
- 21 KH: so I just have to accept injustice
- 22 M: um - um well it's up to you Mr [H - uh - ūh - I'm putting it to you again
- 23 KH: [ [ ]
- 24 M: - are you um - are you going to make an offer - uh - uh to discharge this debt
- [6]
- 25 KH: would you in my position
- 26 M: I - I'm not here to answer questions - you answer my question
- 27 KH: one rule for one - and one for another I presume
- [3]
- 28 M: can I have an answer to my question - please
- [6]
- 29 M: the question is - are you prepared to make an offer to the court - to discharge - this debt
- [2]
- 30 KH: what sort of minimal offer would [be required
- 31 M: [it's not a bargaining situation - it's a straight question [2] Mr H - can I have the answer
- 32 KH: well I'll just pay the court a pound annually
- 33 M: that's not acceptable to us
- 34 KH: what would be acceptable to the court
- 35 M: no we don't find - uh we want a sensible offer Mr H
- 36 KH: I think that is a sensible offer
- 37 M: no it's not acceptable to us
- 38 KH: how about I pay two pound annually
- 39 M: how much
- 40 KH: two [pound
- 41 M: [no we're looking for a weekly payment - um - either a weekly payment or a sensible period by which the complete amount
- 42 KH: [well if I
- 43 M: just let me finish - the fine will be discharged [2] now we're not having an auction - will you just make an offer and my colleague and I will consider it
- 44 KH: well I don't know what a reasonable offer is acceptable to you
- 45 M: well how much do you earn a week

## Appendix B                      Background to Interviews and Notes on Methods

In the 1986-7 academic year I carried out a series of research activities amongst two groups of overseas students undertaking a one year postgraduate programme at the University of London's Centre for Educational Studies.

One group, following a Diploma in Maths/Science Education, totalled 5 students; a second group consisted of 6 out of a total of 25 students following a MA in Maths/Science Education at the same institution. Though the two groups followed different study programmes, with separate staff and teaching arrangements, there were important links between the Diploma and MA courses: both centred on Maths/Science Education; and the Diploma operated, in effect, as a feeder for overseas students onto the MA. It was seen by the course director as providing important preparation for overseas students for the more arduous demands of an MA programme. Most of the students on the Diploma course wanted to proceed to the MA programme the following academic year, and several of the MA group had themselves successfully completed the Diploma course the previous year.

All the students on the Diploma course were from overseas countries, as were the 6 who participated in the field study from the MA group. I chose to focus on overseas students since it seemed that of all students experiencing a degree of uncertainty and anxiety in new social and educational settings, they were more likely to feel the effects of separation and marginalisation to a greater extent than others. Besides these 11 students, 2 course directors - one for the Diploma and a second for the MA programme - participated in the research. In addition to their general teaching and administrative duties, each had a concern for the well-being of overseas students in their charge.

In the light of difficulties experienced by overseas students on the MA programme in previous years, the MA course director was particularly concerned that the present group of overseas students should receive the degree of support and encouragement she felt necessary for their successful completion of the course.

The Diploma course director was responsible not only for the overseas students following his programme, but also for associate students who came to the centre, mainly from overseas, to spend varying periods of time on private study projects. Two such students who arrived during my period of research agreed to participate in the study.

I divided my work into three stages. During the first two weeks of the academic session I carried out a series of semi-structured interviews with each of the eleven Diploma and MA students (the two associate students arrived later) and the two course directors (Interviews 1.1 - 1.13). The interviews lasted a total of sixteen hours, with an average length of one and a quarter hours. Each interview was audio-recorded to facilitate post-hoc analysis.

A central aim of this series of interviews was to elicit participant definitions of situation and expectations about educational processes embarked on, especially concerning teacher - student role-relations along with associated rights and responsibilities. In so doing, I hoped to elicit a range of cognitions and initial experiences within the educational setting, and uncover differences in role expectations on the part of students and course directors which might surface later in encounters between them. In further inviting participants to talk about past educational experiences in relation to present expectations, I hoped to be able to gauge the extent to which individuals carried over role constructs formulated in previous settings, or construed the present one as in some sense 'sui generis'.

Another important aim of the interviews was to try to ascertain how individuals from overseas responded to an educational setting and processes which represented a period of separation from 'normal' roles and statuses, personal and professional; and to discover to what degree in being initiates in the marginal state of a 'rite of transition', students were experiencing distance from, powerlessness and dependency on institutional representatives for definitions of situation, expectations of role-relations and behaviour. I was particularly interested to learn of any perceptions of structural inequality that might affect willingness to engage in risk-taking, for example by negotiating meaning in face-to-face talk with course directors.

In interviewing the course directors I wanted to elicit their role-expectations of students, and to understand how they set about resolving the ambiguity inherent in their own diverse roles, for instance as gate-keeper, instructor, counsellor and facilitator. I also invited them to express their awareness of how students predominantly construed the course director - student relationship, and the effect of such constructions on communication therein.

The second stage of research coincided with a series of interviews held by each of the course directors with individual students. These interviews arose as a normal part of the course directors' duties rather than being arranged especially for research purposes:

it's something that we should have done in the normal course of events er and in fact didn't do last year; we've had smaller much more casual conversations ... and we realised that we really needed to do something rather more formal and I was intending to do it anyway ... I had to do something like this and had been strongly recommended by the course board

[Interview 3.13]

Both course directors welcomed the interviews as an opportunity to meet their students individually and informally review their progress on the course, besides discussing issues arising such as any difficulty students might be encountering in connection with their work:

we have a responsibility to be clear in our own minds about the obstacles overseas students face, what our expectations are of them and to provide support networks ... the interview is an opportunity for them to talk about their progress this term and raise any work issues, for instance to do with the report or dissertation

[Interview 1.11]

I said I want to talk to them about er what they'd managed to do so far the problems they'd met and it's still time for us to do something about it for the rest of the time ... it's a useful exercise for picking up things ... I mean first of all obviously I want to get- I think it's a good idea to start by getting them to say what they see as their problems rather than me launching in.. and I hope I gave them an opportunity ... and then er I hope I get on to what they find is the most difficult things

[Interview 3.13]

Since she would be absent for most of the second term, the MA course director met with her six overseas students towards the end of the first term (Interviews 2.1 - 2.6).

The Diploma course director met with his five students, and two associates, towards the end of the second term (Interviews 2.7 - 2.11). Each set of interviews was conducted by the course director in the space of a single afternoon: the average length of an interview between the MA course director and students was just under thirty minutes; that of the Diploma course director and students, a little over twenty. Altogether thirteen interviews were video-recorded lasting six hours in total, an average length of just under thirty minutes.

As soon as possible after these interviews had taken place, in most cases between one and three days later, I met each of the participants individually to view the recording of their encounter(s). Thus the MA course director reviewed the six interviews she had conducted, the Diploma course director seven, and each student their own interview. Before viewing commenced, I invited course directors and students to express their definition of the interview situation, including perceptions of predominant role-relations and anticipated behaviour, as they had construed it at the time. We then viewed the recording during which time I invited individuals, with the aid of a remote control device, to stop the tape at any point they wanted in order to comment on any aspect of the encounter. After viewing I raised any points of clarification about the interview which I felt necessary for my own understanding. Twenty one sessions of this kind were held, each of which was audio-recorded, to complete the third series of interviews (Interviews 3.1 - 3.13). This process took thirty four hours with each session averaging around one hour thirty five minutes in length.

I chose the research methodology for its contribution towards producing descriptively adequate accounts of communication in educational settings; specifically, to achieve 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) by incorporating first and second person understandings of situation and events alongside researcher analysis. Hence my decision to interview all participants in stage one to elicit their perceptions of setting and role-relations as well as their awareness of other's constructs; and, in stage three, to encourage first and second person commentary on the course director - student interviews.

The methodology afforded two forms of triangulation: one, linking first and second person experiential understanding with researcher analysis of communication and social setting; another relating stylistic or strategic choices in interaction to personal constructs elicited in stage one, and to individual commentary and evaluation of course director - student interview recorded at stage three.

I have used the data collected in stage one to illustrate points regarding participant definitions of context, along with anthropological explanations of its social symbolism - for instance the ambiguity and existential uncertainty inherent in a liminal world, together with expressions of distance, powerlessness and dependency commensurate with an initiate's position in a rite of transition; contrasted with demands on students to become empowered by involvement in creative and critical education processes.

I have used data from stage two interviews, along with substantiating evidence from stage three interviews, to support the notion of an opposition between socialisation criteria and educational values, reflected also in plurality of role relations. I have used it also to demonstrate how, together with structural inequalities and the dilemma of opposing territorial and co-operative imperatives, this conflict continually manifests itself in a social symbolic tension at the root of interaction and the negotiation of meaning; and is differentially resolved through risk-taking or risk-avoiding language behaviour.

## Appendix C            Topics Discussed in Interviews

### MA Topics (Interviews 2.1 - 2.6)

- 1        General progress to date
- 2        Review of educational psychology course
- 3        Review of maths/science 'recent developments' course
- 4        Progress on psychology essay
- 5        Progress on 'recent developments' report
- 6        Progress on dissertation
- 7        Best things about course
- 8        Disappointments/difficulties in first term
- 9        Unfamiliarity of British schools/education projects
- 10      Little knowledge/experience of educational psychology
- 11      Lone overseas student in seminar group
- 12      Language barrier to academic work/communication
- 13      Participation in group discussions
- 14      Tracking down reference material
- 15      Staff response to student needs
- 16      Organisation of seminars
- 17      Access to supervisor
- 18      Criteria for assigning students to supervisors
- 19      Transition from Diploma to MA course
- 20      Best use of time between Diploma and MA
- 21      Student self-reliance on MA programme
- 22      Changes to work patterns in light of course experience
- 23      Study skills
- 24      Ideas/suggestions for improving MA course
- 25      Appropriateness of course for overseas students
- 26      Special course provision for overseas students
- 27      Making good use of college resources
- 28      Work plans over Christmas vacation
- 29      Option choices for social context module
- 30      Accommodation issues
- 31      Family affairs/Personal problems

- 32 Compassionate leave of absence
- 33 Friends (outside college)
- 34 Course director's sabbatical next term
- 35 Any other business

Diploma Topics (Interviews 2.7 - 2.11)

- 1 General progress to date
- 2 Course experience compared with expectations
- 3 Most/least useful parts of the course
- 4 Major problems so far
- 5 Management of non-timetabled time
- 6 English language proficiency
- 7 Response to teacher comments on assignments
- 8 Effect of assignment deadlines on use of time
- 9 Keeping up-to-date with professional developments
- 10 Tracking down reference material
- 11 Keeping bibliographic details of reading material
- 12 Maximising information obtained for essays
- 13 Writing critically
- 14 Structure of essays
- 15 Plagiarism in essays
- 16 Dogmatic statements in essays
- 17 Concerns over next few months
- 18 Next stage/piece of work
- 19 Forthcoming examinations
- 20 Problems in proceeding to MA
- 21 Health
- 22 Accommodation
- 23 Any other business

## Appendix D Excerpts from Interviews

- 1) [Interview 2-02]  
MA course director (D.V.) and 'Charles' (V.A.)
- D.V. hi.. come in.. hello VA ( { } ) I can't move coz I've got this on me (oh thank you very much) hahahahah you're going to have to put one on see it on your.. arm.. it'll just clip onto there perhaps [3.5s - DV pins microphone on VA] (okay I think) yeh but if we pin it on that side then it's facing up the right way... okay? (yes yes) it's only the microphone alright just a little microphone ahh! getting all tied up in this okay so all I'm doing is chatting to you very generally about your feelings about this term (yes) and then I'll ask you about any specific things at the end (yes) so.. just tell me how you feel about.. your general progress
- V.A. well I think.. I'm doing well (mhmhm) because in my report.. I've been working- I do biology I have been (yes) working with A. .. I just submitted my last.. chapter.. er...
- D.V. the last chapter?
- V.A. last week yes
- D.V. oh that's good
- V.A. I'm seeing him this evening to find out (right) yeh his feelings about it and so on.. if it is alright then
- D.V. you've done it?
- V.A. over the Christmas holiday (you write) I must start rewriting.. (fantastic) how- however that means I have.. I haven't done much on the.. dissertation (no { }) but because of the change on supervision (right) so I have to work with J (yeh) and some were issues which are different from what I had started with {you know like percentages} (oh I see right) er... so that side I haven't done much..
- D.V. no well I don't think many people have
- V.A. but I have- I thought I should do the report first (yes) because I'll get (right) this one out of way then I will (right) start the dissertation (right) but what is giving me problem is the psychology (mhmhm) er that one because I didn't have... don't have much background in psychology.. I've tried to read very hard.. I even saw G (mhmhm) I've s- saw- I saw J.H. as well... so: {hopefully}
- D.V. you saw them to what ask for some more reading (yes) advice or to chat about some problems..

- V.A. er... J.H. is the leader of my- my group (right) so it was more.. about my.. essay.. I'm- tr- I'm trying to- to- to er which I will write (mhmhm) er.. G. is more general on the psychology (right) yes.. so they have given me a lot of help (good) so I hope I would (right) I will write something..
- D.V. so has the problem been literally that many of the ideas are new?
- V.A. yes (right) many of the I didn't have- I didn't have much- my PGCE course.. didn't have much of psychology (okay) and so on (right) so it's a matter of what I have got is what I heard in the lectures and the seminars (right) and th- the books (reading) I've been reading (right) here (right right) yes
- D.V. how have you found the psychology seminars?
- V.A. ..the seminars were good- our group was quite good (mhmh) er.. we.. er each one of us chose an area covering the whole range of what was put in the first er lectures and the people really prepared for and we had very good over the time very good discussion and (good an- and you felt that) and I got a lot from it (oh smashing) yeh because I could {you know contact} the- my fellow students (right) to clarify matters where I found difficulties
- D.V. and it's been at an appropriate level in terms of the (yes) examples (yes) because I think for some people maybe the school.. coz most of the other people are secondary school teachers (yes) aren't they..
- V.A. erm: in my group there were some primary school teachers (mhm) some.. mostly secondary school teachers (right) so the.. you know they will actually bring in very relevant you know issues (oh good) and { } (right) good
- D.V. and have you had a chance to talk about your experience so that they've had that (yes) as a different example?
- V.A. I could come in and we were three from overseas.. so we could come in now and then to put in our.. (right) {you know} our input and so on (right) so it- no I liked it {for one thing} and I think (that's good) it will help me (good) yes
- D.V. it's interesting that there are three of you from overseas that's probably been important hasn't it coz ({it was important}) talking to U.A. who was the only overseas (I see yes) one in his group (yes) he felt it's been (he felt out) difficult to (yes) he couldn't quite always connect with what they were talking about and didn't feel strong enough to say 'Hey well I want to tell you about... my (hahah my group) yeh

- V.A. yeh so he was {alone} but we were three so I think we.. (right) we got something we could come in and so on..
- D.V. right ( { } ) so it's important for me to know coz it means I ought to make sure.. I mean I thought we had.. but there's obviously been a slip up I really do need to make sure that you are always in twos or threes (in twos yeh) in a group (yeh) even
- V.A. because I know one of us was not in there originally but
- D.V. ah: changed (yah)
- V.A. he.. I think he was not on the list so he (right) just he- he came to {you} afterwards
- D.V. oh K.E. when he arrived (he came) late (to our group) yes.. right
- V.A. but he- our group as far as I'm concerned it was.. (really) I really enjoyed it and because of my limited knowledge I got something {you know} (right) from this
- D.V. so you could really struggle with ideas and make sense of them (yes) in that group (yes).. that's smashing.. now how about- it's biology isn't it? how about (yes) the recent developments group?
- V.A. biology is my.. my best area we had here so far (mhm) including my diploma work (mhmhm) the discussions.. were very good (mhmhm) we were a small group
- D.V. yes you have that advantage (yes) compared to physical science (yes) don't you what are you about nine or (yes) something..(yeh)
- V.A. around nine (yeh) so.. we could participate in the discussions and actually the.. the book itself although the title is... ah.. the book is quite good- it raises a very good you know selection of points ..
- D.V. is this philosophy of biology education? that one?
- V.A. yes (yeh) yeh it's called 'Is' er 'Is Biology Sexist' or 'Is Science Sexist'
- D.V. oh right (yeh) oh yes that's right
- V.A. although the title is..is
- D.V. a bit irrelevant to the (is) contents hahah

- V.A. the issues which are raised there some- some of them relevant to what the title is (mhm) but they are all you know controversial issues (mhmhm) you know er: genetic counselling homosexuality (mhmhm) and {the sexual controversy on animals} (oh right animals) and so on so they were such topics (right) which were very controversial and er nearly everybody {gave} a discussion- participated in the dis- (good) in the discussion and it was very lively actually
- D.V. you look as if you're really excited about it
- V.A. I'm very excited about it and (yeh) I'm very sorry that it is just (finishing) come to an end (yeh.. it'll feel) the real issues- I mean the current issues are {particularly} controversial (right) it was- I liked it very much and it has... it has very good relevance to my.. er report (mhmhm) that's why I think I have (of course) worked very hard (right) and- at it
- D.V. I mean can you put your finger.. clearly the book is important on the success of this that small group.. (yes) good book (yes).. anything else that you think- I mean if- if there are any things we can learn to.. you know..
- V.A. er: the other thing is the organisation {of} how the leader organised the whole thing (yeh) er.. what he was doing is [3s] er different from what we have been doing in psychology in psychology we have been given each one.. an area (yeh) to you know to lead the discussion (mhmhm) him everybody was supposed to read.. and he had a- a coin to toss every time we met (right) so that everybody had to read (right) because
- D.V. you never knew if it was going to be you
- V.A. you never knew whether it's me so you know in the psychology you could say today I'm not leading the discussion' (right) and just sit still (back) and because all the right group we- you know you don't have to participate.. but in there you had to read.. and maybe show {other that you} so you are able to follow the discussion (right) and you know the interest you- you read you have- you raise questions and ask some- perhaps we can trace the (sure).. you follow the discussion and enjoy it
- D.V. that is important isn't it coz (and that was the diff-) it is only when you've read and you've (yes) got an investment
- V.A. yes then you can in- participate very well in that discussion so you know that is another element which I found which is also new to me and it was (right) I think as far as I'm concerned it has (right) worked very well (right) yes
- D.V. okay great..

- 2) [Interview 2-03]  
MA course director (D.V.) and 'Adam' (Q.C.)
- D.V. that's wonderful... wouldn't do for the BBC but I think it'll do for us hahah.. alright J. see you.. okay well all I'm doing Q.C. is just to ask people about their progress generally and then.. if necessary looking at specific things so tell me how you feel about this term
- Q.C. [3s] er [3s] er {I mean} what do you mean how I feel
- D.V. well tell me if there have been any disappointments for example... both.. either for you or in terms of what different courses have provided
- Q.C. [2s] not quite I think er [3s] I have- well there's only one- er maybe two-two areas you know to talk about (yes psychology) the er psychology (and recent developments) and the.. recent developments er... well the psychology's because it's the first time after a long time of doing psychology (mhmhm) so one doesn't m-expect... er: a lot of wonders that one would have done so {I think} it was- it was alright in a way in the sense that [2.5s] I could put in what I- what I managed to put in.. and the er.. recent development I suppose w- was okay I think
- D.V. okay well let's just go back to the psychology a minute er.. you sound a little bit guarded?... alr- there is a problem that it's- there's a gap okay well I think that's true for a lot of people in fact isn't it that they might not have done very much before in their PGCE (mhm yeh) or in any case it was a long time ago.. er::.. I mean how did you feel it was relating to your actual concerns were you able to make use of it in terms of er.. your job
- Q.C. ...well in terms of my day-to-day job (mhm).. er:: [2.5s] not much because er I'm not so much concerned with the classroom wor- I'm not- (mhm) I don't always sit in the classroom (mhm) and do classroom work (mhm)... but... er part of it useful in the sense that.. I.. get myself concerned with preparation of some materials for teachers.. therefore one has got to know a bit of psychology (mhm) on what is relevant for what age group (mhmhm) and that sort of thing (mhmhm) so in that respect it was er quite useful er extremely useful
- D.V. and that I mean teachers are learners and
- Q.C. teachers and learners and that sort of er D.V. need to be motivated and
- Q.C. need to be er in motivation of- of- of teachers themselves (yes) if you want to structure a course for them (right) for instance so one has got to learn to do that (right).. but if you tie it to the office work that also has

- D.V. okay I can see (yeh) yeh.. er: and what about the actual experience of the group did you feel that your group worked well for you?
- Q.C. [2.5s] yes I think it was because we were blessed in the sense that there were quite a lot of.. er: students who were.. {knowledgeable} about psychology (mhmhm) and they were quite generous in the way they put in ideas (mhmhm) for some of us who were actually you know plodding back (hahah) behind them so they- they were actually quite helpful in the sense that (right) they didn't er:: hold back any information they had but actually they were.. (right) contributing quite effectively and.. you know we learned quite a lot from them
- D.V. and did you feel you could contribute?.. was it easy for you to contribute?
- Q.C. up to a point yes:: er: I think the beginnings were a bit difficult but- and then somewhere along the line I- I think... I sort of picked up the- the- the tricks behind it so
- D.V. and the confidence a bit yeh?
- Q.C. and the confidence (yeh) yeh because you see... beginning I think the confidence is what you know and what you don't know.. (mhm) and eventually I- I.. I co-well I could effectively talk and.. (good) communicate with everybody
- D.V. and presumably that that matters doesn't it because
- Q.C. it does.. in a way because if you can't communicate you can't talk (mhm) er you sort of get left out and you sort of begin to worry whether (mhm) or not you are doing something
- D.V. and you can drift off can't you I mean a-
- Q.C. yes yes that's quite possible so: (right) er: but... it's quite- quite- quite lively I think and er and I- I enjoyed the
- D.V. right.. I mean obviously those groups are all different and so people have been saying different things about the (mhm) psychology groups (mhm) depending (mhm) on which group but I mean if you could er... if you were planning those groups for another year are there any things that occur to you that are obviously very good practice that we ought to make sure happen on the basis of your experience?
- Q.C. [2.5s] er [6.5s] I think our group was:: er:: well organised I think I- I don't think I've got anything to add in the sense that we were.. given specific tasks (mhmhm) to do... er:: and er the only variation was that each and every group had its own way of.. presenting (right) ahah which meant er:: it's- it's an advantage {you know} (right) in the sense that you-

you need variety hahah (mhm) in the way (mhm) of presenting material (mhm) and getting at the same thing ({erupt} yes) {also} the same presentation all the time so.. that er I thought.. was quite good... er::...

D.V. what's the composition of your group are there more- is there more than you from overseas in your group?

Q.C. ... yeh my group we had the largest I think obviously with (okay) three (three)

D.V. and that helped did it to er...

Q.C. er well not- not th- not necessarily because even if (mhm) there were three of us.. we wouldn't talk (mhm) about er psychological issues in relation to our own experiences (ah:) between ourselves because it wou- it wou- sort of er.. put us off.. (right) so er::... but in terms of er... preparation when you're actually discussing and trying to (right) to see which way to go (mhmhm) that tended to help because we would come together and sort of discuss er.. either the previous.. seminar (right) or the er next seminar..

D.V. right and that was at the level of the ideas.. rather than again asking questions about what sense should I make of this for my work.. it was more about sorting out the

Q.C. I think (reading) the sorting out the level of the ideas (yeh) that was more crucial to the issue (mhm mhm) rather than trying to relate it to one's (right) work (right) yeh er.. that didn't feature a lot I think it was (okay) at what level should we pitch it you know (okay) and that sort of thing (right) yeh (right)

D.V. okay well what about recent developments then let's go on to.. that.. how has that felt?

Q.C. [2s] well it's:: its been alright I think much of what we covered I thought was [3s] er.. quite adequate although one would say there are c- certain elements that one would.. er like to sort of {address} a bit I think

D.V. mhm well (where there's a) tell me a bit

Q.C. sort of erm:: areas where there's... policy er matters and that sort of thing because {you have}.. and er::.. particularly.. school organisations (mhmhm) where you are... well more or less talking about your own set up it's difficult to imagine for instance when you- I- I close my mind and imagine what sort of a school er that would be and exactly what.. what were the relationships and that sort of thing so in- in that area it becomes a bit difficult for some of us to sort of picture

- D.V. you couldn't really get inside (even to sort of yeh) these people's (and er you know) lives yeh (you know sort of who come and say oh you know that's- that's.. that's- that's
- D.V. this is in spite th- you have been to English schools haven't you last year?
- Q.C. I've been to some of them I think (yeh) we went to about three or four of them (yeh) I think so {yeh I think} it was three or four yeh (yeh).. so it's- it's quite different- they're different you find that each school you visit (sure) is different (absolutely) from the other one they're not (yes) the same (yeh) that's (yeh) the way I discovered they're not like (right) our schools where you.. you practically can make er a guess (right) er from one school to another (right) but here.. the organisation the departmental set up is (mhm) totally different (mhm) from one school to another each s- headmaster and the- the teachers have got their own way (mhm) of doing things (that's right) yes
- D.V. well is that a really big gap I mean if there were a way of.. putting you in a partnership with say a part time student who's in a school.. during the term of recent developments would it help if you could go to that person's school and check things out on the ground or.. is that not even the right level for you to be concerned about?
- Q.C. er.. not quite but it would help if er one would find the opportunity of say for instance.. er sitting in a department er (mhmhm) two or three days and see wh- the way they manage (mhm) their things (mhm) how they make decisions maybe that would give
- D.V. coz presumably the visits you made last year on the diploma were very.. in a sense preliminary and.. they were part of kind of introducing you to the wider British scene and (mhm) so (mhm mhm) your question would have been perhaps quite superficial and at the growth level of what are the big differences and so on
- Q.C. the issues that (yeh) bring in the {policy} (yeh)
- D.V. so this would be a chance to really check out some specific (yeh) things (yeh yeh) if you could go in (yes yes) I think that's one of the things I'd like to think about not necessarily insisting that people do but where.. it would be helpful in terms of er.. checking out.. policies or organisational matters (mhm) or particular issues for kids of different levels or ages er..
- Q.C. {yeh because the curriculum}
- D.V. so if we could build that in as ah- as an arrangement informally (mhm)

Q.C.           coz you see the curriculum issues here.. they- they are so complex in my own opinion (mhmhm) that er when you talk of er.. one.. say integrated science in one school it could be different integrated science in another- in the next school (absolutely absolutely) so er.. you never know which one you're talking about (right) hahah (right) so er.. you are reading a certain particular curriculum development and somebody has read a different one and their views sort of well don't { } simply worry whether I'm looking (yes) at- at the right thing or not there's quite a lot of... differences

## Appendix E Sample Material for Exploring Social Symbolism

1) **Identity and Self-Awareness** (Section 5.3.1)

Exercise Name	Twenty Statements about Myself
Topic	Self Identity
Aim	Reflection on self-image
Instructions	Give 20 answers to the question "Who am I?" If you feel comfortable in doing so, discuss your results with others after they have completed the activity.
Pause for thought	What sort of terms did you use to describe yourself? Why these? How many of your answers indicate membership of various groups? How do these groups support your social identity and your new status as a student or teacher? What challenges do you anticipate being faced with as a student in reaching your educational goals? And how do you imagine the various aspects of your social identity will assist (or maybe hinder) you in this regard?

N.B. The four most commonest categories of answers are family relationship, occupation, marital status and religious identity. (Source: Argyle 1983)

Exercise Name	Myselves, myself										
Topic	Changing Self Identity										
Aim	Reflection on self-image										
Instructions	Beginning with your present self (S), locate your various selves, as honestly as you can, on the following continua.										
	<table> <tr> <td>Self (here and now)</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Past Self (5/10/20 years ago)</td> <td>P</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Future Self (realistically)</td> <td>F</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ideal Self</td> <td>I</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self I don't want to be</td> <td>D</td> </tr> </table>	Self (here and now)	S	Past Self (5/10/20 years ago)	P	Future Self (realistically)	F	Ideal Self	I	Self I don't want to be	D
Self (here and now)	S										
Past Self (5/10/20 years ago)	P										
Future Self (realistically)	F										
Ideal Self	I										
Self I don't want to be	D										

### Personality Factors

reserved/detached	- - - - -	outgoing/warmhearted
concrete-thinking	- - - - -	abstract-thinking
easily upset	- - - - -	calm
submissive/conformist	- - - - -	assertive/dominant
prudent/serious	- - - - -	impulsive/lively
disregards rules	- - - - -	morally concerned
restrained/shy	- - - - -	bold/uninhibited
tough/realistic	- - - - -	tender/sensitive
trusting of others	- - - - -	suspicious of others
conventional/careful	- - - - -	imaginative/careless
forthright in dealings	- - - - -	shrewd in dealings
confident/self-assured	- - - - -	apprehensive/self-reproaching
conservative by nature	- - - - -	radical/freethinking
prefer being in a group	- - - - -	like to be self-sufficient
undisciplined	- - - - -	self-controlled
relaxed/tranquil	- - - - -	tense/frustrated

**Pause for thought** How have you described yourself in the present? What changes do you feel there are in you from times past? How do you hope to grow and develop in the future? What are the main differences between your present and ideal self? What keeps you from closing this gap? What reasons underlie your wish to avoid becoming the self you do not want to be? Which aspects of self will be most important for you to develop further as a student or teacher? For what reasons? How will they affect your attitude and ability to engage in interaction to fulfill your learning goals?

[Source: Cattell et al 1970]

2) **Orientation Towards Communication** (Section 5.3.2)

Exercise Name      Reflecting on Previous Communication

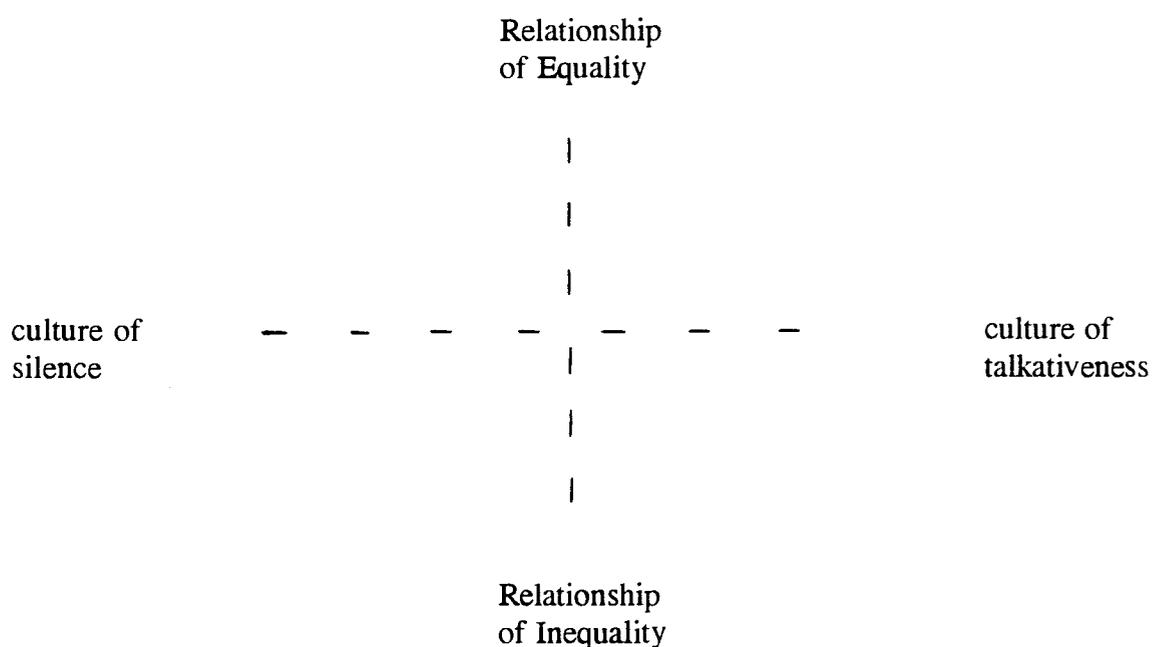
Topic                Prior Communication Experiences

Aim                    To assist students to reflect on their personal communication history.

Instructions         Spend a few moments to think of how you were expected to behave, in terms of being silent or talkative, by each of the following groups of people in the various situations described.

- i)      As a child . . . .
  - a)      By parents in the home.
  - b)      By teachers at primary or preparatory school.
  - c)      By friends outside home or school.
  - d)      By others outside home or school.
- ii)     As a young adult . . . .
  - a)      By parents in the home.
  - b)      By teachers at high school or college.
  - c)      By friends outside home or school.
  - d)      By others outside home or school.

Instructions (ctd)    Now summarise each by plotting their position on the matrix below.



**Pause for thought** In which situations or with which groups of people were you expected to be silent more than talkative; and in or with which encouraged to speak freely? In which situations or with which groups of people did you find it most difficult to speak? How much change in others' expectations of you or in your own style of communication occurred between the time when you were a child and a young adult? And how much change between then and now? In what ways have these earlier experiences influenced your present attitudes to and actual patterns of communication with different people? Which styles of communication do you think are most likely to help or hinder you achieving your educational goals?

**Exercise Name** Defining a 'Good' Communicator (Part 1)

**Topic** The Qualities of a 'Good' Communicator

**Aim** To assist students and teachers to reflect on their notions concerning what makes someone a 'good' communicator.

**Instructions** Reflect for a few moments on what it means to be a 'good' communicator. Write down the various qualities or attributes you feel best describe a 'good' communicator. Try to be as specific as you can.

**Pause for thought** Which are the most important qualities of a 'good' communicator, as you see it? For what reasons?

**Instructions (ctd)** Now compare your notes with a fellow student or your teacher.

**Pause for thought** How much similarity and difference is there between your definitions? How do you explain this? In the light of your comparisons, is there anything you wish to change in your own definition of a 'good' communicator?

**Exercise Name** Defining a 'Good' Communicator (Part 2)

**Topic** The Qualities of a 'Good' Communicator

**Aim** To assist students and teachers reflect on their notions of what makes a 'good' communicator.

**Instructions (ctd)** Compare your 'improved' definition of a 'good' communicator with the attributes listed below which have been said to characterise a 'good' language learner.

The Good Language Learner is . . .

- a) positive in outlook and learning strategies.
- b) actively involved in learning tasks.
- c) willing to practice, often trying out the language in real communication.
- d) willing to initiate conversation, often seeking out opportunities to do so.
- e) strongly driven to communicate and willing to do different things to get his/her message across.
- f) someone who experiments with new language in order to develop his/her knowledge of and ability to use it.
- g) constantly searching for meaning.
- h) often not inhibited or unwilling to appear foolish.
- i) tolerant and outgoing.
- j) able to empathise with other speakers.
- k) someone who monitors his/her own and others' speech.

**Pause for thought** Which of these attributes do you think are common to a 'good' communicator and a 'good' language learner? What further qualities or abilities do you think are necessary to develop as a 'good' communicator?

[source adapted from Rubin 1975 and Stern 1980]

<b>Exercise Name</b>	Self-awareness in Communication
<b>Topic</b>	Being Mindful, Approaching, Empathising and Flexible in Communication
<b>Aim</b>	To assist individuals to reflect on their own communication behaviour.
<b>Instructions</b>	Read the following statements and respond to each by indicating the degree to which it is true regarding the way you usually communicate. Try to be as honest as you can in your answers.

- 1 definitely not true for me  
 2 probably not true for me  
 3 I'm not sure  
 4 probably true for me  
 5 definitely true for me

1) I usually pay attention to the situation and context I'm in when I communicate.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2) I try to make regular opportunities to meet people who are different from me.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3) I try to understand others' experiences from their perspectives.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4) I generally adapt my behaviour to the situation in which or people with whom I am communicating.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5) I can fairly easily recognize when a person with whom I am communicating has a different point of view.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6) I generally think that developing relations with people who are different from oneself is a desirable thing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7) I can 'tune in' without much difficulty to the thoughts and feelings of others when we communicate.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8) I can modify the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I want to give them.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9) I try to find rational explanations why others may behave in a way I perceive negatively.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

10) I have genuinely tried to form relations with people who are different from me.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11) I am often able to tell what others are thinking or feeling without being told.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

12) I communicate quite differently with acquaintances and with close friends.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Pause for thought**      Can you detect any patterns in your responses? Questions 1, 5 & 9 are on being mindful; 2, 6 & 19 on approaching; 3, 7 & 11 on empathising; and 4, 8 & 12 on being flexible. For each category, the higher your score the more likely you have or are developing this ability.

[source              adapted from Gudykunst 1991:110, 120, 122 & 126]

### 3) **Becoming a Student** (Section 5.3.3)

Exercise Name      Metaphors for Reflection

Topic                Images of Becoming a Student

Aim                  To assist individuals to describe and interpret their most important images about becoming a student.

Instructions        Read the following statements about becoming a student made by people at the beginning of their studies. Then write down the main image(s) you have about yourself becoming a student.

1.    I'm very excited about it all. Now that the children are grown up, it's the first opportunity for me to do something I really want to do, something for myself.
  
2.    I feel I'm going back to childhood again, coming to class at certain times, leaving at a fixed time, referring to books because teachers expect you to, doing assignments etc.
  
3.    For me it's like a voyage of discovery, charting unknown territory.
  
4.    I'm just like a man who's jumped into a pool of water and is scared of drowning.
  
5.    For me ...
  
6.    I feel ...

Pause for thought    Which of these images do you consider to be the most positive and negative? In what ways are they likely to help or hinder you becoming a student. How might you try to transform a negative image into a more constructive one?

Exercise Name	Feeling Lonely in a New Situation
Topic	Loneliness
Aim	To enable students get in touch with their feelings of being lonely or cut off from familiar surroundings in a new environment and to explore ways of managing the experience constructively.
Instructions	Read each of the questions below and answer as honestly as you can by circling one of the numbers as follows:

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | definitely not true for me |
| 2 | probably not true for me   |
| 3 | I'm not sure               |
| 4 | probably true for me       |
| 5 | definitely true for me     |

In this new department/college/university ...

- |                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I often feel very alone                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I find it hard to make friends                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I usually do things by myself                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I often wait for people to call or write to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I find it hard to meet people                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I'm frequently excluded by people              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I wish I knew more people to do things with    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I think people don't really understand me      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I feel I do not have an attractive personality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Instructions (ctd)** You can score your answers by adding up the numbers you circled for each of the questions. The closer your score to 45, the more likely you are experiencing loneliness in your new situation.

**Pause for thought** Feeling lonely is a very natural response to being in a new situation. What steps can you take, individually and as a group of new students, to overcome this? What benefits would it bring you if you could take such steps?

[Source adapted from Forgas 1985:206]

Exercise Name	Being Sociable in a New Situation
Topic	Sociability
Aim	To enable students to reflect on the question of being sociable and to explore ways of so doing in their new environment.
Instructions	Write down your estimate of the percentage of your waking hours you spend (a) alone, (b) in the company of others. Then keep a diary for a few days, recording your activities in every 30 minute period by noting down what you are doing, where and with whom. Afterwards add up the amount of time you spent with other people.
Pause for thought	How much difference is there between the amount of time you spent with other people compared with your estimate? Does this result surprise you? How important are social contacts as a student? What advantages are there to be gained from them in terms of increasing opportunities for learning?

[Source adapted from Forgas 1985:203]

#### 4) **Negotiating Role Relationships** (Section 5.3.4)

Exercise Name	Defining Teacher and Student Roles
Topic	Teacher - Student Role Sets
Aim	To assist individuals to reflect on the various teacher - student role sets.
Instructions	Look at each of the following teacher -student role sets listed below. Take a few minutes to think of all the important ways in which teachers and students relate to each other; then add your role sets to the list below.

Teacher as . . .	Student as . . .
Assessor	Examinee
Instructor	Pupil
Facilitator	Learner
Counsellor	Client
Service Provider	Customer
Guide	Novice
Friend	Friend
Adult	Adult
Parent	Child
. . . . .	. . . . .
. . . . .	. . . . .

**Pause for thought** Do you think it's possible for any of these role sets to be reversed in the teacher - student relationship (eg for the student to be a parent to the teacher)? If so, what implications might this have for the relationship?

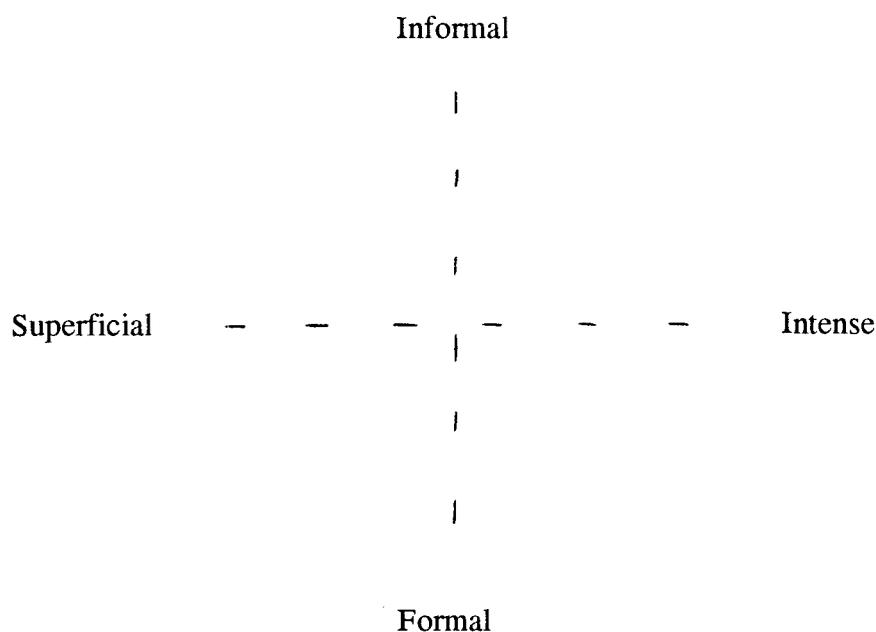
**Exercise Name** Locating Teacher and Student Role Sets

**Topic** Dimensions of Teacher and Student Roles

**Aim** To assist individuals to reflect on the 'equal/affiliative' and 'interpersonal/ intense' dimensions of teacher - student role relationships.

**Instructions** Position each of the following teacher - student role-relationships on the two matrices by drawing a circle in the place you think it best fits.





**Pause for thought** Which of the role relationships are most unequal and friendly? And which most superficial and formal? What are some of the main problems in relationships which are unequal and friendly or superficial and formal? Which of these role relationships characterise(s) the teacher - student role set for you? And for what reasons? Do any of your role sets overlap? Do any seem to be in opposition to each other? If so, how might you begin to resolve the conflict? Which role relationship(s) do you consider most important to develop in order to gain maximum opportunities and support for your own learning?

[source matrices adapted from Argyle and Henderson 1985]

<b>Exercise Name</b>	<b>Linking Role Sets to Ways of Relating</b>
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Role Sets and Interpersonal Relations</b>
<b>Aim</b>	To encourage individuals to reflect on relationship implications of various teacher - student role sets.
<b>Instructions</b>	Try to link each of your teacher - student role sets to the ways of relating outlined in the matrix below.

**dominance**

analyses	advises
criticises	coordinates
disapproves	directs
judges	leads
resists	initiates

**low  
affiliation****high  
affiliation**

evades	acquiesces
concedes	agrees
relinquishes	assists
retreats	cooperates
withdraws	obliges

**dependency**

**Pause for thought** Which role sets place teachers in the most dominant position and students in the most dependent? And which, if any, the opposite? Which ways of relating do you think are likely to prove most (and least) effective for you as a learner? What are some of the main problems in a relationship where you allow yourself to be dominated by another person?

[source matrix by Gough 1957, represented in Argyle 1983]

Exercise Name	Knowing My Rights and Responsibilities
Topic	Student and Teacher Role Expectations
Aim	To provide students and teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their expectations of their various roles
Instructions	<p>Take a few minutes to think of those things that characterise for you what it means to be a 'good' student or teacher, in terms of fully exercising your rights and fulfilling duties or obligations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Make a list of all those things which you consider to be your right as a student (or teacher). Be as specific as you can.</li><li>2. Make a second list of all those things which you accept as being your responsibility as a student (or teacher). Again, be as specific as possible.</li><li>3. Now modify your list to include all those things which you imagine will be expected of you, either by teachers or other students.</li><li>4. Finally put everything you have written down in order of importance, from most to least important. As you do, think of the underlying reasons for your choices.</li></ol>
Pause for thought	<p>If you would like to, compare your ideas with others. Observe any major similarities or differences in your expectations. You may also wish to discuss some of the reasons for your choices. Afterwards, take a few minutes to reflect on how your expectations of yourself are likely to help or hinder your capacity for learning. On which of your rights are you least willing to compromise? Of your responsibilities, Which do you least like accepting? Which of your role expectations might you be prepared to modify in the light of your discussions and subsequent reflection.</p>

Exercise Name	Reflections on Negotiating Relationships
Topic	Attitudes and Behaviour towards Student - Teacher Role Negotiation
Aim	To encourage students and teachers to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour towards negotiating roles.
Instructions	Read and respond to each of the following statements by circling the letter which corresponds most closely to your feelings about role negotiation.
1.	I believe ...
a)	I have little or no right to negotiate my role of student (or teacher).
b)	I have some right to negotiate my role.
c)	I have every right to negotiate my role.
Pause for thought	If you chose a), what are your reasons for this? If you chose b) or c), on what basis do you claim your right?
2.	I believe ...
a)	no negotiation of my role is actually possible.
b)	some negotiation of my role is possible.
c)	a great deal of negotiation of my role is possible.
Pause for thought	If you chose a), what are your reasons for this? If you chose b) or c), with whom would you negotiate your role?
3.	I would find it ...
a)	very difficult to initiate negotiations of my role.
b)	quite difficult to initiate negotiations of my role.
i)	not too difficult to initiate negotiations of my role.
Pause for thought	Can you explain why you chose the level of difficulty you did? How might you try to overcome your fears or apprehensions about role negotiation?

Instructions (ctd) Now complete the following statement.

To negotiate my role as a student (or teacher) means the following things for me . . .

Pause for thought What are the most important things you would want to negotiate for yourself? What would be the ideal outcome from these negotiations from your point of view? What compromise position would you be prepared to accept? And what would you not be prepared to accept?

5) **Negotiating Meaning in Interaction** (Section 5.3.5)

Exercise Name Negotiation Rights Questionnaire

Topic Rights to Negotiate Meaning

Aim To assist students and teachers explore their rights to negotiate meaning in interactions with each other.

Instructions Read each statement and indicate your response by circling the appropriate letter as follows.

- A Strongly agree
- B Agree
- C Neutral
- D Disagree
- E Strongly disagree

In my interactions with other students and teachers I have the right to . . .

1) clarify the meaning of a word or phrase I don't know.

A B C D E

2) summarise what someone has just said to make sure I have fully understood the meaning of the words.

A B C D E

3) tell someone that I disagree with their interpretation of certain words or phrases.

A B C D E

4) clarify with someone what s/he means exactly by a particular concept.

A B C D E

5) recapitulate what someone has just said to make sure I have understood their ideas to my own satisfaction.

A B C D E

6) challenge a notion that I don't agree with.

A B C D E

7) clarify the underlying assumptions of our respective roles in the interaction.

A B C D E

8) summarise what I understand others' assumptions to be of our various identities in the situation.

A B C D E

9) challenge someone's assumptions about our individual rights and responsibilities.

A B C D E

10) . . . . .

A B C D E

**Pause for thought** How confident are you in your feelings, or strong in your belief, that you have rights such as these to negotiate meaning in interaction with others? Which do you find most difficult to think of as your right? And which least difficult? For what reasons?

**Instructions ctd** Now do the exercise again, this time substituting the word 'responsibility' for 'right' in the opening sentence.

**Pause for thought** How different were your responses from the first time? Can you explain this? Again, which do you find most difficult to think of as your responsibility? And which least difficult? For what reasons?

Exercise Name	What it means to be Assertive in Negotiating Meaning
Topic	Assertiveness in Meaning Negotiations
Aim	To assist students and teachers explore definitions of assertiveness.
Instructions	Write down the words you most associate with the word 'assertive'. Discuss your results with others. From your combined lists, put together a definition of what it means to be assertive.  Now do the same for the word 'submissive'.
Pause for thought	What is the difference, in a general sense, between being assertive and submissive? And between being assertive and reckless or foolhardy? What do you think it means to be assertive in terms of negotiating meaning in interaction with others.

Exercise Name	My Personal Record of Meaning Negotiation
Topic	Meaning Negotiation Behaviour
Aim	To assist students and teachers explore their actual behaviour in negotiating meaning with each other.
Instructions	Over a one - two week period, keep a record of your classroom interaction. Make a note of each occasion you take part in negotiating meaning. You may like to use the following abbreviations to help make systematic notes.
Sub	Subject of Class
Dat	Date of Class
T1	Time class began
T2	Time when I was involved in negotiating meaning (make a separate record for each occasion)
T3	Time class ended
No	Number of people present
Tu/Se/Le/La/Ot	Tutorial/Seminar/Lecture/Laboratory/ Other (specify type of encounter)
Typ	Type of Negotiation: clarification; summary; challenge; other (specify)

SI/OI	Was my negotiation self-initiated or induced by others (eg the teacher asking me for questions or comments)
Len	Length of time I spent negotiating meaning
Res	How others responded to my negotiation
Exc	Whether I negotiated meaning via a series of exchanges or in a single question/statement only
Ler	What I learned most from negotiating meaning
Enj	What was most enjoyable for me about negotiating meaning
Dif	What I found most difficult about negotiating meaning
Nex	In what way(s) I might negotiate meaning differently or improve on my strategy/technique next time

**Pause for thought** How many times altogether did you negotiate meaning by trying to clarify, summarise or challenge what someone else said (or wrote)? What prompted you to do so? Which did you find most difficult to initiate: a clarification; summary or challenge? For what reasons?

Now consider how others listened and responded to you. How patiently did they listen? How well did they receive your questions or comments? To what extent did you feel they supported you in contributing to the discussion by negotiating meaning? How satisfied were you with the way you negotiated meaning and with others' response to it?

<b>Exercise Name</b>	<b>My Assertiveness Difficulties in Negotiating Meaning</b>
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Meaning Negotiation Difficulties</b>
<b>Aim</b>	To assist students and teachers explore their assertiveness difficulties in negotiating meaning with each other.
<b>Instructions</b>	Read the following statements carefully and circle the number which best corresponds with your response to each.

- 1 Almost always
- 2 Quite often
- 3 Occasionally
- 4 Hardly Ever

When listening to others discussing in class, I find it difficult to assert myself or my ideas because . . .

- |    |                                                               |   |   |   |   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a) | I am impressed by the language they use.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) | I am influenced by the opinions they present.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) | I trust their interpretation more than my own.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d) | I see the logic of their argument.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e) | I try to sympathise with their point of view.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f) | I don't have very strong feelings about the subject.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| g) | I'm afraid they won't take what I have to say very seriously. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| h) | I don't want to upset them.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| i) | I feel persuaded by people who argue passionately.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| j) | I can't find the words I need to express my own ideas.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |



When a point of conflict emerges or I sense it coming in the classroom I . . .

a) try to change the subject.

1 2 3 4

b) reluctantly find myself getting drawn into it.

1 2 3 4

c) get quite excited at the prospect of a confrontation.

1 2 3 4

d) say that I really must go to the loo.

1 2 3 4

e) pretend it's not really happening.

1 2 3 4

f) tell a joke or a funny story.

1 2 3 4

g) join one of the opposing factions and play an active part in helping it win the argument.

1 2 3 4

h) . . . . .

1 2 3 4

i) bury my head in my textbook and leave it to others to battle it out.

1 2 3 4

