

Dialects and Education

Functions of Language in the Classroom.

COURTNEY B. CAZDEN, VERA P. JOHN, and DELL HYMES, Eds. Teachers College Press, New York, 1972. lx, 394 pp. Cloth, \$9.50; paper, \$5.95. Anthropology and Education Series.

The question of how to deal in school with the language of minority groups, particularly the Blacks, has occupied many writers and many research projects since the early 1960's. The early projects tended to be based on the idea that minority language was simply a deficient version of the majority language ("deficit theory") and to involve intervention models for correcting the deficiencies. Even from the newspapers one can learn that such projects still continue in teacher training and in other programs. The deficit theorists and the interventionists now find it necessary to advance their opinions more subtly than before, even obliquely. Thus one might miss, on a casual reading, the survival of such interests in this collection of papers and the particular preoccupation with the Black community. But in the collection there is a preponderance of authors who either formerly espoused deficit theory or who, like many former deficit theorists, continue to oppose the use of Black English for such purposes as teaching reading. Obviously, then, the collection is potentially an important key to the climate of opinion in the educational world.

Emphasis on the Blacks emerges most clearly, paradoxically enough, from the article that deals with the topic furthest removed from the United States, German dialects. Fishman and Lueders-Salmon allude quite early in their article to the importance for pedagogy of research on the Black dialect (p. 67). These authors quickly specify that the situation of the German dialect speaker, whose dialect is the required one for an area, is unlike that of the ghetto Black who "has to go outside in order to be self supporting" (p. 72). They emphasize that there is "little educational concern" about dialects in Germany (p. 72), there being a place in German regional society for those who master Standard German imperfectly if at all. One would think, then, that the argument of this article would be for a *different* policy in the United States from that in Germany; but the authors invoke the German evidence to suggest that it is inadvisable, even "dysfunctional" (p. 80), to use Black English dialect readers. Thus

the German example would apparently support neither the teaching of Standard English by more effective methods nor the use of Black English in education. But the authors have given us good reason to consider the answers drawn from "regional Germany" irrelevant to the American case.

The teaching of Standard English (the dialect of schools, publishers, television networks, and so on) is regarded as unfavorably in this collection as is the use of dialect readers. Kochman writes of the "low efficiency quotient" (p. 229) of such a program and remarks that it cannot increase the children's "ability to use language" (p. 228). Kochman's article incorporates most of his important "Rapping in the Black Ghetto" (1). But surely the speech events described (rapping, sounding, signifying, shucking, jiving, running it down, gripping, copping a plea), in all their marvelous complexity, develop independently of—almost in opposition to—formal educational programs. Kochman suggests that the school should concern itself not with "how the child says something" but with "how well he says it" (p. 229). But his own evidence seems to argue that "how well" is essentially beyond the domain of the school. On the other hand, schools have long concerned themselves with teaching language varieties ("how"), and some of their modern techniques work rather well.

Effective arguments have been made for the teaching of Standard English to Black children by second-language methods and for the use of dialect for initial reading instruction. These arguments, first advanced by William A. Stewart, are summarized in Dillard (2, chapter 7). Choice between these strategies is, in my opinion, a matter of feasibility in individual cases. Too much of the recent literature has been devoted to evasions of both issues. The collection under review clearly represents the viewpoints of authors who would not advocate either step.

The expression "ability to use language" is a key one for this collection, and for the language and educational philosophies of many of the contributors. (For their far-reaching influence, one need only consider the practices of programs like "Sesame Street," which aim at endowing their young audience with the ability to use symbols, hardly considering the possibility that the children already use symbols which the school system does not reward.) Whether behaviorists (with a stimulus-

and-response view of language which allows for little complexity in its structure) or cognitivists (with a healthy view of the conceptual apparatus of the human being but a vagueness about how that apparatus is linked to actual utterances which often makes it seem that they believe in thought transference), they have tended to be ill at ease with or even inimical to recent developments in syntactic theory. The behaviorists, especially, tended to be uncomfortable with the rejection of the "language is speech" formulation. Many psychologists, including some contributors to this volume, have been dismayed at the removal of language from the domain of motor behavior, which psychological techniques were especially fitted to deal with, and the demonstration (especially by Chomsky) of the relevance of logical considerations. Some of them disciples of B. F. Skinner, and all of them probably more at home with Skinnerian techniques than with symbolic logic, they have tended even to hold outright grudges since Chomsky's devastating review (3) of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* (4).

Anyone who is interested in language as it is actually used ("performance") must confess to being involved in some considerations which for the M.I.T. philosophers of language are relatively trivial: "on and off rules," patterns of precedence in speaking, culturally determined ways of expressing confidence or diffidence in verbal interaction. These are at least part of the concerns of sociolinguistics, a discipline which has received little attention from the transformational-generativist innovators. But it might as well be acknowledged that the student of the "uses" of language must operate in a climate of opinion wherein the language itself is acknowledged to be much more complex than it was before Chomsky published his *Syntactic Structures* in 1957.

Within this intellectual context, it makes little sense to write of going "beyond" linguistic system as does Hymes (p. xlvii). It might as well be acknowledged that such concerns are rather *beneath* linguistic system. This more modest approach would by no means belittle the importance of sociolinguistics and other use-of-language inquiry. But it would keep investigators from concluding, as do Horner and Gussow, that John and Mary (ghetto preschoolers) "sound alike" but "have strikingly different verbal techniques for dealing with life" (p. 189). They

do admit that John and Mary sound alike—meaning probably that they have the same dialect—but they apparently consider that sharing a language system has no deeper implications. These “language use” observations might be adequate for the vocal signaling behavior of chimpanzees, with which psychologists seem more at home. But can it be asserted that, given this “great difference” in the signaling behavior, it makes no difference how much John’s grammar resembles Mary’s or how much either resembles or differs from the grammar of the teachers they will face in school? It would not, if language system were really reducible to “topography,” as in Skinner (4); but recent linguistics has been full of demonstrations that it is not.

Gumperz and Hernández-Chavez object that “linguistic evidence on language or dialect differences” constitutes inadequate material for presentation to the educator (p. 105). The truth of this statement cannot really be doubted. But it seems even less adequate to present material on “language use” without anything on contrastive linguistic systems.

There is great practical value in an article like that of Byers and Byers on non-verbal communication (pp. 3–31). The importance of such extralinguistic signals as eye avoidance and other elements of “body language” should certainly be impressed upon educators. But the authors fall into the classic trap of suggesting that one person’s body language may be inferior to that of another rather than merely different (p. 13). And when they treat a speech event of a very simple nature (child asking to be given a drink of water) as consisting of (i) body orientation, (ii) catching the eye, and (iii) vocalization, it is not clear whether they are aware that the example is inadequate to illustrate, and does not test the limits of, the complexity of the messages which can be conveyed by even a small child. Bloomfield (5) presented a Jill who induced Jack to get her an apple by what may well be the verbal equivalent of gestures, and of the “manding” and “tacting” which Horner and Gussow catalog for their John and Mary. But such a demonstration doesn’t even begin to prove that either Jill or Mary is incapable of expressing esthetic approval or disgust at the sight of the apple without any intention of eating it—or that either is incapable of talk-

ing about topics far more abstract than an apple without intention of producing a “response.” The contributors to this collection do not begin to explain how the much more complex message-conveying properties of language are to be dealt with, educationally or otherwise.

References to “language use” are commonplace in the writings of verbal behaviorists (see “verbal techniques for dealing with life” in Horner and Gussow, above, and the term “functions of language” in the very title of the collection). The notion has not, to my knowledge, been articulated clearly enough for me to take responsibility for a fair representation of the idea. Skinnerians typically refer to language structure (or system) as “topography,” by which they apparently mean that it is largely static in nature. Such restrictions would not be acceptable today to any group of linguists. All schools now insist upon a dynamic view of language structure which involves the full range of the speaker’s knowledge and which would therefore include “language use.”

The “language use” orientation of this collection is so strong that Philips, writing about Warm Springs Indian children, while noting that the English of these children is “not the Standard English of their teachers, but one that is distinctive to the local Indian community” (p. 374), does not specify one single form of that “local” dialect. This is especially disappointing because there is reason to believe that many Indian groups have spoken in the past and perhaps still speak varieties of English that are of special structural and historical interest (2, chapter 4). It is praiseworthy that Philips, like others

in the collection, recommends that the school system adapt to the learning style of the children rather than continue attempting to impose a rigid framework upon that community. The collection as a whole, however, does not present a very convincing counter-argument to the more traditional principle that the school system be aware of interference from the language systems of its pupils and devote some of its efforts to making teachers aware, through contrastive analysis, of the possible effects of that interference. The “nonstandard” English of the Indian children may well explain some of their educational maladjustments, although of course it is not the only explanation.

There are valuable ancillary suggestions in this collection, but it does not disprove the thesis that there is value in using the “disadvantaged” child’s own language in the educational process, whether in reading instruction or (through contrastive analysis) in the teaching of the “standard” dialect. There is still no reason to believe that the “use” of a language variety may be taught in such a way that the need for internalized knowledge of a variety of wider communication is in any meaningful sense reduced or obviated.

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References

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3. N. Chomsky, *Language* 35, 26 (1959).
4. B. F. Skinner, *Verbal Behavior* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1957).
5. L. Bloomfield, *Language* (Holt, Chicago, 1933).

Archeology as Anthropology

Contemporary Archaeology. A Guide to Theory and Contributions. MARK P. LEONE, Ed. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, and Feffer and Simons, London, 1972. xvi, 460 pp., illus. Cloth, \$15; paper, \$8.95.

In a recent paper in volume 1 of the *Annual Review of Anthropology* Zubrow reports that his survey of over 2000 references dealing with environment, subsistence, and society does not unequivocally demonstrate the existence either of a new paradigm in archeology

or of a set of “classics,” literature that is so frequently cited as to be particularly notable. I think that in Mark Leone’s book we have evidence that there is indeed a new paradigm emerging and that there is a set of seminal publications forming the basis for present and future work. This reader is a superb collection of articles representative of the most exciting developments in archeology in recent years. One indication of its contemporaneity is the fact that among its 28 contributors are two grad-