

The Relevance of Speech, Reading and Writing to Socially Based Discrimination in Schools: Ideas and Empirical Illustrations (*)

W. P. ROBINSON (**)

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Let us start with the example of two pupils who begin their year's study of geography and history with comparable records of achievement in both subjects and whose more general performance and behaviour do not lead us to expect any differences between their achievements in these subjects at the end of the year. The expectations prove to be false: pupil A performs in line with our estimation; pupil B does likewise in geography but in history her performance is well below expectation.

Inquiries into the reasons could lead to a number of hypotheses focusing on the subject, or the pupil, or the teacher, or the relations between any two or all three of these. Perhaps B did not find her curiosity aroused by the story of «The Spanish Armada». Perhaps, as a Buddhist, she became particularly appalled at man's inhumanity to man during wars fought in the name of Christianity. Perhaps she would have done better if she had not been ill and missed the first two lessons which set the frame

or reference for most of the first term's work. Perhaps she was put off by the teacher's accidental personal resemblance to a disliked uncle. It may also be that pupil B reminded the teacher of a disliked niece, and that the teacher assumed her to be similar and treated her accordingly. It may be that pupil B handed in initial pieces of work that irritated the teacher into subsequent reduced or unhelpful interaction.

There are many reasons that might have given rise to pupil B's under-performance in history and which have nothing to do with B's presumed membership of a given social category of socio-economic status, gender or any other social identity. From the several hundred tapes we are now analysing, I am coming to hold the view that the variety of reasons and factors relevant to such issues is legion; there are many many processes of decision-making and decision-taking by pupils and teachers that can operate. If one can conceive of a «plausible story», then the chances are that cases can be found of that story being enacted. One might add that cases can also be found of quite implausible but true stories that may explain why pupil B has done relatively poorly in history — or any other subject.

Some of these explanations include com-

(*) Paper given at the VIth Colloquium «Psychology and Education», ISPA, Lisbon, October 1991.

(**) University of Bristol, United Kingdom.

ponents of a «self-fulfilling prophecy», a sequence out of initially false teacher expectations eventuating in behaviour that subsequently renders the expectations true. Some of these are based on beliefs about the characteristics of members of social groups. Many are not.

While routes to unnecessarily low achievement are manifold, how many children go down which route is unknown. To estimate at any particular time how many children are under-achieving in which subjects and why requires, at the least, massive national surveys. To find out how much of this under-achievement is linked in some measure to teachers beliefs about the characteristics of members of particular social groups likewise requires sample surveys — and more. Up to the present time these studies not been conducted, and so, although social psychologists have a role to play in describing and explaining the likely routes into under-achievement, they are in no position to comment on the relative frequencies with which the various routes are being followed.

Within that sub-set of possibilities which involve discriminatory behaviour by teachers, we can ask social psychology to chart processes and provide explanations, and I shall attempt to do this, but again, without national surveys, we cannot hope to estimate the numbers of teachers whose conduct is discriminating inappropriately against or for members of particular groups. If we ask about the possible roles of social and personal identity in these events, we can quickly generate routes of teacher inference, which, *in combination with certain values*, may lead to discrimination.

1. Teacher analysis of features of pupils
 $p \rightarrow$ conscious identification of p as a member of social group $X \rightarrow$ attribution of academically-relevant personality characteristics $\rightarrow$ discriminatory behaviour.
2. As 1, but where the «identification» is not actually conscious.
3. Teacher analysis of features of pupil $p \rightarrow$ attribution of academically-relevant personality characteristics $\rightarrow$ discriminatory behaviour.

Probably each of these and others can be

found (Robinson, 1979). We would almost certainly find very wide variation in the range of teachers' beliefs about the extent of the co-variation of social group membership and relevant pupil characteristics, from hardly significant correlations, which might be quickly abandoned, through to strong high correlation indicative of «stereotyping», which might not be easy to change.

Stereotypes about social identities, coupled with other as yet unspecified factors, are but one basis of the possible discriminatory action by teachers, which taken together are just one sub-set of the reasons why pupils achieve lower than predictable results. Their prevalence is unknown. One might ask, «When did you last meet a teacher with a stereotype?». Certainly one meets teachers who presume degrees of covariation between social identity and academic achievement that over-estimate what has been found in empirical studies. Certainly one encounters teachers who hold beliefs of this kind for which no supportive evidence at all exists (eg the female brain is less well-suited to science). But in the absence of relevant and valid evidence, perhaps we should be more reluctant to invoke the concept of «stereotype» as a primary explanation.

«Stereotyping» used to refer to a very strong presumed belief about co-variation of social identity and personal identity: if a person is a member of a specified social group, he or she will be believed to have nameable characteristics in specifiable measures. Where the co-variation can be represented as a correlation approaching 1.0, a stereotype may be said to exist; if the true correlation is a 0 or substantially less than 1.0, no stereotype not exists.

Any definition that goes beyond or departs from this is likely to create conceptual complexity where simplicity is to be preferred. It is likely also to confuse empirical co-variants or consequences with the simpler concept. Hence, if we add «highly resistant to change» to the definition, we will only create difficulties if we find that some presumed high co-variations can be broken quickly and easily by presenting negative instances to the believer. What might have been a conceptually clear field of study in which progress might have been relatively straight forward has been bedevilled

by such conceptual muddles-and by dangerously naive methods of measurement.

From the first study of Katz and Braly (1933) social psychologists have played pencil-and-paper games, with nationalities at the top of the page and checklists of traits below. They have persuaded willing respondents to place their ticks. The answers may have something to do with social representations of groups (Moscovici, 1972). They may in some cases bear unproblematic relations to the actual beliefs and actions of some of the respondents, but generally speaking we have wandered around in a jungle since those early studies, and we have done so in part because we failed to engage in sensible «conceptual wood-clearing» before we plunged in among the undergrowth.

Whilst I too shall have to rely to some extent on results from pencil-and-paper answers in reviewing discrimination in schools related to pupil speech or writing, I shall try to invoke observational data where possible, and I shall use the term «categorising» rather than «stereotyping». This is not because these two words are necessarily inapplicable to the phenomena I shall refer to. They both do however express a moral attitude that I would wish to avoid, in the first analysis. To perform any sequence of actions, vis-a-vis others we have to make predictions based on some measure of categorisation of people, objects, events, and we have to make pre-judgements about them; that these can be false is to be regretted. That these pre-judgements can give rise to «self-fulfilling prophecies» in schools (a set of beliefs which then functions to the disadvantage or advantage of pupils who are identified as members of particular groups) is also to be regretted, but I think that immediately referring to the teachers responsible as «being prejudiced» or «holding stereotypes» can be misleading as a description and, if we are concerned with social change, it is unlikely to encourage them to change their beliefs. For example, ignorance is not prejudice.

The school matters I shall be discussing lack the Sturm und Drang of aggressive conflicts. They lack the dramatic qualities of modern shibboleths in Northern Ireland where «wrong» sounds can cost people their knee-caps. They lack the impetus to widespread rioting

apparently provoked by the South African government's attempts to impose the learning of Afrikaans on black children several years ago in Soweto. However, they do involve real people in real situations of continuing discrimination, with language use playing a role at several phases of that discrimination over the 15.000 hours that children spend in school.

Even so, in preparing the text, my thinking has oscillated uncomfortably between two positions: the first is that anything to be said about language and its use in relation to judgements about others is so well documented as to be unoriginal; the second is that there is so much of such complexity to be said that I have neither the competence nor time space to cope. A third problem, already referred to, is that we lack evidence of the survey kind. How many teachers hold what views about language and its associations with social identity on the one hand and achievement on the other and how many exercise how much discrimination of what kind in their teaching? We have little idea about this beyond the fact that every investigator in the field has found positive results with opportunity samples of teachers.

Confronting these dilemmas I have put on blinkers, shut out the wider world and concentrated on only a few aspects of discrimination in schools. I shall ignore discrimination by pupils and look only at discrimination by teachers and that mainly in the U.K. and U.S.A., with a hint of Australia. Furthermore, I shall focus mainly on *socio-economic status* of pupils as a social category rather than on gender or ethnicity or any other social grouping.

One reason for preferring this narrow focus is that at least the problems of discrimination can be given a real-time, real-life dimension.

As I have already implied, in part our difficulties in the general study of the social psychology of the linkages between perceptions, attitudes and behaviour stem from the too-simple design of investigations. If we just collect responses to conveniently administered questionnaires from conveniently situated victims on a one-off basis, it is hardly surprising that we have difficulties translating these back to individuals living their daily lives.

At least with the studies made of teachers

and pupils we can begin to put together perceptions, attitudes and interactions, although to the best of my knowledge there is still no study that has made a comprehensive longitudinal study articulating all three with even a single sample of teachers. Within the social psychology of education, we suffer from the same fragmentation of problems and perspectives which can be observed else-where in social psychology, and, in addition, the empirical studies of teacher-pupil interaction arising out of Schools of Education are perhaps particularly noteworthy for their general atheoretical quality. Within the area I shall discuss, the «self-fulfilling prophecy» was left as a conceptual slogan for many years, and questions about it revolved around issues of its existence/non-existence rather than the «where», «when», «how» and «why» of its operation. In extremis it was asserted that private beliefs in the heads of teachers could have direct effects on pupils' behaviour; how was left as unproblematic in several accounts of the phenomenon (Nash, 1976) and very confused in others (Brophy & Good, 1974).

What I should like to do is set out an account of the self-fulfilling prophecy and illustrate this with some examples of how it is linked to speech and writing in the classroom, particularly in relation to socio-economic status.

The generalisations offered are in danger of misinterpretation unless one observes that are limited and not universal. They would appear to apply to *some* teachers in Britain, Australia and the U.S.A. at this point in time.

2. INTERACTION IN CLASSROOMS AND THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

- G1** Efficient teaching depends upon teachers engaging teachable pupils in relevant activities for sufficient time.
- G2** Generally, but not universally, teachers perceive pupils in terms of individual and/or socially-based differences.
- G3** Generally, but not universally, teachers make inferences about pupils in respect of characteristics which are believed to be predictive of eventual academic success and failure.

G4 Generally, teachers value pupil success defined as academic achievement in relation to norm-referenced standards; this contrasts with achievement defined in relation to individual progress or mastery to a criterion.

G5 Teachers have at least implicit theories of teaching and learning.

G6 Teachers distribute both the quantity and quality of their interactions unevenly.

G7 Differential treatment of pupils by teachers affects the educational development of the pupils.

2.1. *Self-fulfilling prophecy*

The preceding generalisations enable us to specify at least two of the conditions under which sfp will operate. It will occur among teachers who make and maintain *either* relevant *false* inferences about particular children (G2) or relevant *true* inferences where these are linked in the teachers' minds to *false* beliefs (G2) about the inevitability of the eventual academic success and/or failure of these children (G3), provided that such teachers also: (1) define success and failure in terms of norm-referenced standards (G4); (2) conform to these standards (G4); (3) act on implicit or explicit theories of teaching and/or learning (G5); and (4) distribute the quantity and quality of their interactions in the classroom (G6) in such a manner as to render their predictions true.

In brief, in these circumstances, presumed potentially successful pupils will receive better learning opportunities than their peers, while presumed likely failures will receive worse learning opportunities than their peers.

These considerations will apply both to between-children differences within teachers (see Brophy & Good, 1974) and between-teacher differences across whole classes of children (see Benenett, 1978 for references).

The starkest form of the self-fulfilling prophecy takes no cognisance of the perceptions, conceptions, and behaviour of its victims. In power-coercive situations the conduct of the victims makes no difference to the outcomes. However, children are not necessarily simply victims. If teachers have made false inferences about their characteristics, the

children (and significant others in their lives) may act to confound their teachers' definitions of them. Where children and their potential allies are relatively ignorant of their standing, however, they may well come to accept their teachers' views. If this results in children being defined as academic failures, then that may be incompatible with fundamental human aspirations. These points are taken up in G8-11.

G8 In the absence of contrary influences, pupils' perceptions of themselves will come to accord with their conception of how they think their teachers see them.

G9 Human beings strive to gain high self-esteem and/or escape from or avoid low self-esteem.

G10 Options for enhancing self-esteem are: (1) performing better academically; (2) finding and accepting alternative dimensions of value which do not yield unfavourable comparisons; (3) inverting the critical dimension of value, so that high self-esteem derives from being an academic failure.

G11 Since G10(1) cannot be achieved by all in a norm-referenced system G10(2) and/or (3) are the constructive options available and are likely to result in the emergence of a counter-school sub-culture in those societies where cultural conditions permit this.

I would add that this account applies only to the overt inferences; it ignores the possibility that the same processes and outcomes could result from discriminatory processes that have not been raised to the status of conscious beliefs.

The particular account has the virtue of beginning to refer to social psychological theories concerned with identity and social comparison processes. Clearly certain phases can also be linked to Attribution and Equity theories. The accounts of perceptions of teachers and pupils can and have been fleshed out to be embraced by person perception theory (see Robinson, 1984).

From this point I could proceed to go through G1 to G11 three times, first illustrating generally how language and its use can be entered into

the generalisations, second, doing the same for the SES (or any other social grouping) of pupils, and third, to expose the intersect of SES and language use. I have attempted to pursue the second and third elsewhere (Robinson, 1979, 1984) and will only illustrate their essence briefly. It maybe more useful to make some general and fresh comments about each and seek to highlight what I find of particular import for some reason, although it is useful to show links between the generalisations already-given and language (see Table 1).

3. SPEECH AND WRITING AS A BASIS OF CATEGORISATION AND COMPARISON

If we ask how the speech and writing of pupils enter into these processes, we will find them operating in multifarious ways at various points (G2 and G3 for example as identifying markers). Instead of referring to the well-documented evidence on initial impressions and the role of speech in these beginnings, let me move to the end results. It is perhaps important first to remind ourselves that the assessment of school achievement rests heavily on the writing and/or the speech of pupils in many school subjects. Internationally, written products are the most common basis of formal educational assessment. The British nation-wide examinations at 16+ (and 18+) are mainly written examinations or coursework. Awareness of and conformity to the norms of Standard English (SE) are necessary conditions of success, and so is the mastery of the particular *genres* within each subject. (We may also note that the criteria of evaluation are not necessarily made explicit and when they are, they may not correspond to reality. For example, studies (Hake & Williams, undated) have shown that samples of secondary teachers of English who said they were evaluating compositions in terms of directness and simplicity of expression were in fact positively influenced in their marking by the complexity of syntax, especially the degree of nominalisation.) All contingencies presumably exist. Stated policy in line with teaching methods, and both in line with criteria of assessment may not be as common as rationality might expect. At university lecturers

TABLE 1

Educational achievement of school pupils: how their speech, reading and writing enters into the outcomes via teachers' activities

G2 $\longleftrightarrow$ H1	1. Pupils' speech and writing is evaluated by teachers generally in terms of two standards: (1) age-related norms; (2) deviations from Standard Dialect 2. Criteria of evaluation operate at all levels of linguistic analysis: phonology, lexicogrammar, semantics, and pragmatics 3. Some criteria are less directly related to academic achievement than others 4. Teachers generally perceive future potential in terms of present achievement
G3 $\longleftrightarrow$ H2	1. Writing and reading are seen as more educationally relevant than speaking and listening; performance in the former skills will be seen as more important 2. Proficiency in reading may be seen mainly in terms of speed and freedom from errors, but proficiency in writing is judged against more complex and mysterious criteria 3. Standards of good writing are not generally made known to pupils and may not be known to their teachers
G5 $\longleftrightarrow$ H3	1. Teachers' beliefs about the development of proficiency in speech and writing are likely to be vague and sloganised, e.g. practice makes perfect; reading good literature helps writing development; teaching «grammar» is essential (useless) 2. Teachers' conceptions of language are likely to see the Standard Dialect as correct; features of other dialects will be seen as errors to be eliminated
G7	No special comments except to note that the speech and writing will be a source of covariation for treatment
G8, G9	Perceived control of speech and writing will be a component in these evaluations
G11 $\longleftrightarrow$ H9	1. Failures should reject <i>both</i> Standard Dialect <i>and</i> proficiency in writing. Proficiency in speech will be valued only for non-educationally relevant functions 2. Valued self-images, especially for boys, are likely to draw on the stereotype of the strong, though, silent male 3. The speech of secondary school pupils will be like Bernstein's «restricted code» — as a consequence of the treatment received rather than as a reason for underachievement

may say they value problem-solving competence, originality of ideas and independent approaches. Their marking may be based on conformity to the lecturers' opinions on a massive scale. Too many true anecdotes how to dare to digress.

Corson (1985) has recently advanced an interesting thesis that competence to use the Graeco-Latin based vocabulary of English is a major factor affecting examination success. Having demonstrated that the specialised conceptual vocabulaires of secondary school

and college subjects rely heavily on words of Graeco-Latin origin, he proceeded to demonstrate strong correlations between a general knowledge of this vocabulary and both examination success and socio-economic status. (For writing it is presumably better to exploit your digits than to use your fingers. «Serial assimilation of graphic material» has a status that «reading» does not.).

For English the correlation was .64, Maths .42, and Science .58. Table 2 shows the extent

TABLE 2
Percentages of Graeco-Latin Nouns in Samples of Texts (after Corson, 1985)

ORIGIN	PERCENTAGE GRAECO-LATIN NOUNS
Philosophy of Education	40
Sociology	38
Psychology	32
Physics	31
Logic	30
Mathematics	29
English Literature	26
The Times (Editorial: Economic)	24
The Times (Sports)	21
The Mail (Editorial)	18
The Mail (Sports)	11
The Sun (Editorial)	12
The Sun (Courtroom story)	4
Children's Fiction (for age 12)	10
Children's Fiction (for age 5-6)	0

TABLE 3
Percentages of Graeco-Latin Nouns as a proportion of all words used in samples of speech and writing of middle and working class youths aged 12 and 15

MODE		AGE		AGE CHANGE	%
ORAL	Task		12	15	
	Class				
	Description	WC	.67	1.23	82
		MC	.98	2.97	102
	Explanation	WC	2.52	2.65	6
		MC	1.90	5.55	244
WRITTEN	Description	WC	2.01	2.25	12
		MC	1.81	5.94	228
	Explanation	WC	3.94	4.67	18
		MC	3.23	9.47	193

of the use of Latinate nouns in various English texts as a percentage of all nouns. The link between Latinate nouns and school subject terminology is clearly evident. Corson argues that this vocabulary becomes particularly important after the initial years of secondary schooling. After the ages of 12 and 13 the specialised genres become the required modes of expression. If that is so, then these effects may also be expected to diffuse into and be affected by the everyday language use of pupils.

At this point in the argument Corson suggests low SES pupils are likely to be especially disadvantaged by this transition because they:

1. Come from homes where everyday talk and reading matter is less likely to be imbued with Graeco-Latin vocabulary (see Table 2);
2. Are less likely to learn Latin (or Greek) in school;
3. Their peers are like them.

As Table 3 demonstrates the speech and writing of 12-15 year old Australian and British pupils show proportions of Graeco-Latin features consistent with these ideas. The increases in incidence of Graeco-Latin derived words is greatest in the explanatory writing of middle class 15 year olds.

Assessment it would also seem to be true that countries do *not* differ greatly in respect of approaches to language in assessment. There may be a choice of more than one language in which the assessment can be made, but within that language, one variety will have achieved the status of being the «standard» variety. This will be the variety spoken and written most proficiently by some elite social grouping, in our cases, by the adult university-educated middle class. This variety will be promoted by the educational system. Noticeable departures from the accepted forms of this variety function both as social markers and as stigmata within the «more than middle class institutions» of the society, and hence as potential reasons for «marking down» children's verbal productions in school (see Edwards, 1979; or Robinson, 1979), be these relevant to initial impressions, continuing interaction or assessments of work done.

Immediately then, young children whose

speech and writing falls within the bounds of the acceptable and the desirable are at an educational advantage over those whose speech does not. In so far as the dialects of children have grammatical and lexical differences from the «standard» variety, they have additional learning tasks that can be compounded by the actions of their teachers.

In my University classes on «Language in Education», I meet at least three types of teacher: those who believe that Standard English (SE) is the correct form of English (and that it should be spoken with Received Pronunciation (RP)); those who recognise the instrumental value of SE and RP within the society, but neither disapprove of or denigrate other varieties; and those who claim to hold the second position, but actually behave as though SE and RP are better. However, teachers' beliefs about language varieties will only become relevant to their teaching practices within the total manifold of their beliefs and values, a point which I shall take up illustratively later.

Here it will perhaps be sufficient to say that the situation is one in which self-fulfilling prophecies can flourish. To anticipate the links with SES, it became very popular in the U.K. in the late 1960s and 1970s to attribute norm-referenced academic failure by lower working class children to their confinement to their «restricted code» of language use — a code that emphasised the social significance and functions of speech to the exclusion of or at least the playing down of its representational function (Bernstein, 1971). Since making true statements strung together in logically consistent arguments is crucial to displays of competence in all school subjects where knowledge is expressed verbally, such children were unlikely to succeed as well in them as those who used Bernstein's «elaborated code» appropriately. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Robinson, 1978), it is simply not true that any school child using language never does so for representational purposes, and it is as plausible to view much of the verbal behaviour of lower working class adolescents as a consequence of their experience in school as it is to cite it as a reason for their failure.

As I see it, the facts are more consistent with a quantitative rather than a qualitative

differentiation. An examination of both oral and written products of lower working class children of any age shows considerable competence in the representational use of language, even if that competence is judged to be less than that of their middle class peers. Most accept the task demands as defined by the investigator (or teacher). This remains true in secondary as well as primary school. However, consistent with what has been called a Boredom Cycle (Robinson, 1986), those doing less well in the academic enterprise of schools are more likely to seek to relieve boredom by messing about in class.

They are disposed to form loose cliques, whose members convert the classroom into a social arena for messing about in ways which enable them to «have a laugh» as they resist attempts by teachers to have them do school-work. The banter takes on the qualities of a «restricted code»; it helps to define them as the in-group of more mature people and often leads to labeling of an out-group of academically successful pupils derogatorily (swots, ear'oles, poofters, keeners). This sub-culture is a product of the differentiating norm-referenced system, and pupil language and its use is relevant both to its generation and maintenance.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ACHIEVEMENT

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that members of this school sub-culture most frequently have low SES backgrounds. However, they constitute but an extreme form of the more pervasive fact of socio-economic status differences in academic performance, and that is an international phenomenon.

What weighting to give which components of the various explanations for this association I do not know. How much of the co-variance could be eliminated by modifying kinds of assessment, types of curriculum, and teaching practices is unknown. We may note that social scientists and ideologists exist at both ends of the opposition. Some believe that all socially-based differences could be eliminated by restructuring the learning environments. Others believe, for example, that the scores on

intelligence tests reflect a genetic source of variation of major significance for educational achievement. Certainly the extreme forms of the latter view can be shown to be untenable: we can devise means for enhancing (or reducing) scores on intelligence tests and we can devise programmes for accelerating the progress of low SES children. Many such were mounted in 1960's and 1970's. We have already noted that we do not know how many teachers have what kinds of beliefs and values relevant to this issue. It is perhaps helpful to quote two of the many pertinent studies. The first involves gender rather than SES, but it is neat and to the point. Palardy (1969) studied two small groups of teachers: the first group believed that girls and boys did not differ in their capacity to learn how to *read*, the second group believed girls to be superior to boys. Controlling for initial competence across groups Palardy found that by the end of the year, the teachers' beliefs had become reflected in the reality.

Here we have two groups of teachers distinguished by contrasting beliefs about gender and competence at reading. Which groups has the more valid belief? On the basis of their own past experience probably both can draw supportive evidence from the professionals. The ones who believe in female superiority could in fact also cite a research literature to support their position. However, an analysis of the classroom practice could reveal to them that they were distributing their time and actions unequally (G6). If this were done, would they change? They might well do so. Given that they subscribed to a superordinate value about the propriety of enacting some version of the «equality of opportunity» principle, they might adjust their behaviour quickly. (I heard a very interesting seminar on this topic in which videos of their lessons were replayed to teachers who were surprised at the inequalities of their interactions and changed these very quickly to more equal distributions.) I would suspect that this kind of intervention could be successful in many cases. Teachers are just unaware of the way they distribute their actions.

If I turn to G7, I could refer to Brophy and Evertson (1976) and their study of «effective» teachers of primary school children. To expose their results more powerfully, they found it

necessary to divide their sample of teachers according to the socio-economic status of the pupils. While there were important similarities among all effective teachers, relative to effective teachers of middle SES children, effective teachers of low SES children were more didactic, providing more highly structured programmes broken into smaller steps. They asked questions that evoked a higher percentage of correct answers that could be confirmed and praised and they consolidated learning more thoroughly before moving on.

These teachers also differed from ineffective teachers of low, SES children, both in beliefs and behaviour. They saw themselves primarily as teachers and not as mother substitutes or caretakers. They saw themselves primarily as teachers and not as mother substitutes or caretakers. They believed low SES children could make progress and they devised strategies to this end. They did not view «poor home backgrounds» as an impediment to children's learning; neither did they complain about lack of resources. (The ineffective teachers did attribute their children's low rate of progress to home background and poor resources).

In this study all teachers were categorising their pupils, and the identified characteristics were linked to beliefs about learning. An absence of faith went with ineffective teaching and little pupil learning. Greater faith went with greater learning, provided that the teaching strategies matched the capacities and dispositions of the children.

From this study, and from other directly interventionist programmes, it would appear that categorisation of pupils linked to valid beliefs and practices which match those children is *necessary* for effective teaching. Fair differential treatment is necessary and defensible. To assume that all children are culturally identical if they are not, is as invalid a form of «stereotyping» as any other. What is crucial in education, if there is to be some form of a policy of equality of opportunity, is for the teachers to be familiar with the sub-cultures of the children in their charge and to match their teaching to these.

That this is not so hardly requires systematically accumulated evidence to support it. Teachers, like other human beings are likely

to be more familiar with their own sub-culture than they are with other sub-cultures (Goodacre, 1968). They are an In-group both professionally and culturally and are as subject to the Tajfel/Turner theory (1979) as any other In-group. They too need to maintain a positive social identity by differentiating themselves from out-groups, and, in the process, may disvalue relevant out-groups. (Academics and even social psychologists are not immune from their theories either). It is perhaps then not surprising that many teachers are prone to be discriminatory towards non-middle class children (some appropriately so, and others inappropriately so).

I have not yet referred here to the many studies of teachers' perception of pupils in which the language use of pupils may figure as a social marker linked to inaccurate, exaggerated or perhaps sometimes valid beliefs (see Robinson, 1979).

5. G4 AND EDUCABILITY

Teachers will not need speech of students to make judgments about the gender of their pupils. They may not need to use it to identify SES membership. However, that they can do so is well demonstrated. No one has yet written about a society where social stratification was not marked by speech, especially in accent (pronunciation) and or dialect. Lambert once suggested that the depressed performance of low SES pupils might be more parsimoniously explained by teachers making assumptions about their likely academic prowess on the basis of their speech and then heating them according.

Initial studies of teachers did not focus on accent per se. Frender, Brown and Lambert (1970), Seligman, Tucker and Lambert (1972) and Frender and Lambert (1972) varied prosodic features of rate, pitch and range of intonation. Slow speech at a low pitch with relatively flat intonation in young primary children was judged by teachers to be predictive of school failure. The second study showed that a small sample (N=19) of trainee teachers assigned more predictive validity of success to voice than to photographs or compositions and drawings. The final study showed that compared with

their more successful SES peers, unsuccessful low SES pupils used a lower pitch, lesser volume and less appropriate intonation. These results might be taken to offer a «kernel of truth» linkage between performance, personal characteristics, and speech features *within* an SES group.

Between SES groups, one of the more comprehensive sets of U.S. studies are those of Williams (1976). It is quite clear that teachers in fact assessed SES (and accurately so) from speech variables such as the incidence of silent pausing, the pronunciation of particular phonemes and certain specific deviations from standard grammar. These features were also seen as symptomatic of a lack of confidence and eagerness.

Similar results were obtained by Eltis (1978). The three levels of Australian accent (cultured, general and broad) were strongly linked in teachers' judgment to predicted success in school. Voice was more important than appearance as a source of judgments, and than the form and content written work, at least for the least experienced teachers. Experienced teachers relied more on written work. All the types of teachers, however partitioned in terms of experience, sex, subject taught and type of school were able to agree very closely to which of 12 streams (tracks) the owners of voices should be assigned. Asked how *confident* they were that their judgments were reliable and valid, they were generally very confident. In fact their mean judgments correlated positively with the known intelligence test scores of the pupils, but their judgments significantly *exaggerated* the actual correlation.

In summary the empirical evidence is that samples of teachers studied generally can identify accurately SES from speech features. Some in fact use such identifications as well. On the basis of certain speech features teachers can and do draw inferences about personal characteristics likely to be predictive of academic success and failure, and they are prone to *exaggerate* the true correlations. This is also true of their judgments made from voice through SES to academic competence. These judgments are not just casual reports of cultural images; they are confident assessments. Taken together they fit the story.

But are these results surprising in fact? I think not.

Consider a teacher who aspired to meet Popper's ideal of a scientist (1969). This teacher would seek to ensure that each and every belief explicitly or implicitly underpinning his or her teaching has been personally and systematically subjected to tests of falsifiability. Only when these beliefs have been through such evaluation should they serve as tentative and temporary premisses for action-promoting decisions.

Immediately we can see the psychological absurdity of this for a teacher who is obliged to teach perhaps 150 different pupils for six hours each working day. Literally thousands of beliefs underpin these actions: beliefs about the status of what is taught, beliefs about the psychological law of teaching and management, as well as general and particular beliefs about the characteristics of pupils being taught.

With several thousand actions per day and an information-processing capacity of $7 \neq 2$ bits, the most efficient chunking of accumulated wisdom would create a burden of mental processing that is impossible. And here I am referring only to actions, not the monitoring of their appropriateness.

May I suggest there is not a lot spare capacity for a continuous questioning of beliefs in a Popperian manner? May I further suggest that there is not a lot of spare capacity for teachers to behave even as «bad» scientists looking out for confirming instances to support invalid inductive inferences. «Getting through the day as well as they can» may be the prime objective for many teachers.

I do not wish to exaggerate the situation, but that many teachers hold suppositions about the characteristics of children that are little more than *adsorbed* beliefs stuck on to a collage of pragmatically directed guidelines for action does not surprise me. Psychology has yet to provide them with the bases of theoretically sound pedagogies linked to adequate theories of child development. Social psychology has yet to provide them with adequate descriptions and explanations of human behaviour relevant to their classroom practice. The education service has yet to provide them with opportunities to consider and evaluate what we can make available to them. When we have made more

progress in these directions, we may find that «prejudices» *per se* associated with self-fulfilling prophecies become residual problems of minor importance only.

This is not intended to minimise the unfairness of current practice. While some discriminatory actions by teachers are both necessary and desirable, many are unnecessary and undesirable. False beliefs about the educational potential of members of certain social groups are endemic. In Britain the school performances of girls, working class children, children whose cultural heritage is different from those of their teachers, for example, are lower than those of middle class boys of long British descent. These performances are linked to differences in treatment by many teachers. These in turn are linked to beliefs that many teachers hold about the educability of these categories of children and speech and writing are major mediating variables. My own prejudice is that these false beliefs largely derive from ignorance rather than more complex psychological processes. It will be time to examine these latter when we have acted to eliminate the application of this hypothesis.

REFERENCES

- Bar-Tal, D. & Guttman, J. (1981). A comparison of teachers', pupils', and parents' attributions regarding pupils' academic achievements. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51: 301-311.
- Bennett, S.N. (1978). Recent research on teaching: a dream, a belief and a model. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 48: 127-147.
- Bernstein, B. (1971). *Social class, codes and control*, vol. I. *Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language*. London: Routledge.
- Brophy, J.E. & Good, T. (1970). Teachers' communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 61: 365-374.
- Brophy, J.E. & Good, T.L. (1974). *Teacher-student relationships*. New York: Holt.
- Brophy, J.E. & Evertson, B. (1976). *Learning from teaching*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Corson, D. (1985). *The lexical bar*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Edwards, J. (1979). *Language and disadvantage*. London: Arnold.
- Eltis, K. (1978). *The ascription of attributes to pupils*. Ph. D. thesis, Australia: Macquarie University, NSW.
- Frender, R., Brown, B.L. & Lambert, W.E. (1970). The ade of speech characteristics in scholastic success. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 2: 299-306.
- Frender, R. & Lambert, W.E. (1972). Speech style and scholastic success. *Monographs in Language and Linguistics*, 25: 237-271.
- Goodacre, E.J. (1968). *Teachers and their pupils' home backgrounds*. Slough: NFER.
- Hake, R.L. & Williams, J.M. (undated manuscript). *Style and its consequences: do as I do, not as I say*.
- Katz, D. & Braly, K.W. (1933). Racial stereotypes of one hundred college students. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 28: 280-290.
- Moscovici, S. (1972). Society and theory in social psychology. In *The context of social psychology* (J. Israel & H. Tajfel, Eds.), London: Academic Press.
- Nash, R. (1976). *Teacher Expectations and Pupils Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Palardy, J. (1969). What teachers believe — what teachers achieve. *Elementary School Journal*, 69: 370-374.
- Popper, K. (1969). *Conjectures and refutations*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson, W.P. (1978). *Language management in education*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Robinson, W.P. (1979). Speech markers and social class. In *Social markers and speech* (K. Scherer & H. Giles, Eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, W.P. (1984). Social psychology in classrooms. In *Progress in applied social psychology* (G.M. Stephenson & J.H. Davis, Eds.), Chichester: Wiley.
- Robinson, W.P. & Taylor, C.A. (1986). Auto-estima, desinteresse e insucesso escolar em alunos do ensino secundário. *Análise Psicológica*, 1(V): 105-113.
- Seligman, C.R., Tucker, G.R. & Lambert, W.E. (1972). The effects of speech style and other attributes on teachers' attitudes towards pupils. *Language in Society*, 1: 131-142.
- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J.C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In *The Social psychology of intergroup relations* (W.G. Austin & S. Worchel, Eds.), Monterey, California: Brookes/Cole.
- Williams, F. (1972). *Explorations of the linguistic attitudes of teachers*. Rowley, Mass.: Newburg.