Spoken English

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CHAPTER I

LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF SPOKEN ENGLISH

Oh that those lips had language!
(Wm. Cowper: "On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture")

1. Introduction

Much exercised over the grammar of his contemporaries, Robert Lowth, Bishop of London in the 1760s, wrote in his *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) "that the English Language as it is spoken by the politest part of the nation, and as it stands in the writing of our most approved authors, often offends against every part of Grammar". The American grammarian, James Sledd, in wry homage, named his own English grammar after Lowth's and in his Introduction has this to say of Lowth: "it is a little hard to see what was his notion of an error. Perhaps he meant a violation of universal grammar, an arbitrary set of linguistic principles allegedly grounded in the nature of things" (1959).

It is to be hoped that all of us, teachers and students of English, are at last far removed from Lowth's fundamentalism. Certainly there are now appearing a number of hopeful signs which suggest that a revolution in English Language teaching is assumed and the necessary post-revolution reforms accepted as necessary. The English Language Examination Council, troubled by the futility of much that goes on in English Language "O" Level examining, very nearly recommended the abolition of an English Language examination Paper at "O" Level. "We have come very near to that conclusion" (1964). But as their recent Report (published as Report No. 8 of the Secondary Schools Examination Committee) goes on to say, they reluctantly decided that the Language examination must remain on condition that it is reformed. These suggested reforms are one of the hopeful signs in English Language teaching in the 1960s. There are others. The universities are expanding their teaching of linguistics, and often it is linguistics related to the English Language. The seminal teachers' books on the linguistic approach to

English are beginning to appear: Barbara Strang's *Modern English Structure* (1962), R. Quirk's *The Use of English* (1962) and *The Teaching of English* (1959), and in the last two months *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* by M. Halliday, A. McIntosh and P. Strevens (1964). This last book has only just appeared but if only sufficient *teachers* of English can be persuaded beyond the formidable title, it could in itself reshape language attitudes and language teaching in British education. Professor Quirk's sixth form English Language alternative paper is being discussed and will, it is to be hoped, be put into use soon. The SSEC Bulletin No. 1 (on the CSE) is sensible about the Language-Literature relationship and the importance of a Spoken English test for CSE (1963). And D. W. Grieve's Report into English Language Examining for the West African Examinations Council (1963), now accepted, goes one step bolder than the ELEC; he recommends that English Language examining (of the "O" Level type) be linguistically oriented; and in doing so wields a fine combination of examining and linguistic expertise.

But applaud as we may these hopeful signs, and scoff as we do at Lowthian attitudes, we still retain major *action* for export. The main use of the university linguistics courses and of the textbooks mentioned is probably in renewing English teaching overseas. Grieve's boldness is for West Africa. The CSE syllabuses (inspired by the Bulletin) that are actually being drawn up are timid and conventional as far as the linguistic content is concerned. The only real action here is the promised reforms in "O" Level English Language of the ELEC; and, of course, the insistence on a Spoken Test in CSE (described elsewhere in this book).

2. Linguistics and Language

What underlies all these hopeful signs is, of course, linguistics. Just as Meteorology studies the weather and Chemistry studies the basic elements, so Linguistics studies Language, and, as the two examples suggest, it claims to be a *scientific* study of language. It observes, hypothesises, observes again, creates a theory and then tests the theory in explaining how language works and describing how individual languages are made up. There are at least three such theories (or "models" as their originators modestly term them) in circulation; two of the best known ones are the American transformative-generative and the British system-structure. This grossly oversimplifies and it must not be thought that there is any national opposition here. And the protagonists of the different models do, of

course, agree over a very large area. They agree, for example, as to what language is.

What is language? Three types of answer seem relevant: language is behaviour; language is skill; language is speech. Let us take each of these in turn.

First, language is a system of behaviour. By system of behaviour we mean that it is not arbitrary, it conforms, it shows order; it is, in fact, patterned: it consists of patterns, phonological (or containing sounds), grammatical, and lexical (or made up of vocabulary items); we might surmise too that there are contextual patterns but this is still an area of great uncertainty. Like all behaviour systems, then, language is patterned; equally like all such systems it takes place in time and it must be learned. No child is born talking but every normal child is born capable of learning one language, fluently, as it were: this one language can, of course, be *any* language; a Chinese child brought up from birth in England by English speakers learns English as a native speaker and has as much difficulty later on in learning Chinese as any English child. Some people might want to add that, like other behaviour, all speech is made in response to the speaker's situation (or stimulus), what arises from other speakers' utterances, or, if his is the initial utterance, what stimulates in the situation itself. Others might want to bring in ideas of purpose and heredity but it is doubtful if such ideas make the explanations any more powerful. The patterning of language must not seduce us into thinking about *rules*: the patterning of an individual language is both purely conventional, and purely arbitrary: conventional within itself (but permanently changing); arbitrary in relation to other languages (there is no *reason*, in logic or anything else, for the English statement order to be: *Tom is in the house* than for the normal Welsh statement order to be: *Mae Tom yn y ty*, i.e. *Is Tom in the house*).

Second, language is a skill used in communication. This has two almost conflicting implications: first, that everyone does not possess the same amount of skill, second, that everyone has enough for his own needs. It is common sense that people's language skill (and we speak always of their first language) differs. There is, as it were, within the language corpus a set of patterns which, in the total sense, are finite but for the individual speaker are infinite: in other words no speaker ever learns all the possible patterns of his language. But at the same time every speaker performs adequately within his own range of patterns. We might think of walking as a comparable (though much simpler) behaviour system. Some people walk faster

(and so on) than others but nobody, unless he is tired, runs out of walking patterns (or, in this case, movements). And every walker walks adequately for his own needs. Similarly, every normal person speaks adequately for his own needs within his own immediate environment. He may, of course, be illiterate but then literacy is a rather late and highly specialised development. Every language that is known is spoken; not all are written, though, of course, all could be. Only the educated speak and write; everyone speaks his own mother tongue.

And so to the third type of answer: language is speech. Spoken language (unless a contrast is intended with listening, what the listener hears) is a tautology: there is language and there is written language. Language, if you like, is the unmarked member of the pair; or, more simply, speech is somehow more the real language and writing is always some sort of representation of speech. But though everyone speaks some language fluently it is common observation that everyone does not speak the same language; and here we are not making the obvious point that some people speak English and some French, but that all speakers of English do not speak the same English. This common sense observation (that there is a difference of some kind between, say, Cockney and Cumberland, or Indian and American English) leads us on naturally to the methods linguistics employs in the divisions of language.

3. English Language Divisions

There are two such methods for the contemporary language: there is, of course, historical linguistics (philology) but that is not our concern here. The first tells us about the language, the second about the people who use it. The first, as far as English is concerned, is the more generalised; that is to say it has been more fully developed and reached the status of theory. The second is still at the stage of hypothesis, identification and data collection. Our concern is much more with this second method of division, but we shall first briefly look at the first method. This is, of course, the typical approach of descriptive linguistics.

3.1. *Levels of Language*

Language, by itself, is too dense a universe to be analysed as a whole by linguistics. Therefore it is usual to divide a language into its "aspects" or language "levels". A simple way of arranging these "levels" is to say that there are three major ones and two minor or

inter-levels. The three major are Phonetics, Grammar and Lexis; the minor Phonology, which relates Phonetics, unorganised speech noises, into the recognisable sound patterns of a particular language, into Grammar and Lexis; and Context (or Context of Situation, as it is sometimes called), which relates the combined patterns of sound, grammar and vocabulary to the world outside, or, simply, to meaning. Sometimes Grammar and Lexis are included within the same level: this may be advisable because the one shades into the other (e.g. are prepositions part of the grammar of English or part of the dictionary word-list?), and it does not seem possible yet to set up such an inter-level between them as exists between Phonetics and Grammar-Lexis, that of Phonology, which clearly contains both sound contrasts (or phonemes) and grammar contrasts (as in Intonation, which clearly acts as a grammatical system of language just as much as tense, syntax and so on). Such an analysis into levels applies, it must be stressed, to the whole of English: every spoken utterance operates on *all* levels at once; that is to say, every utterance, however short, contains phonology, grammar, lexis and context. (There is one possible exception which will be mentioned later: 3.2.3.)

A Table may make this scheme of levels more clear:

Level of Substance	Inter-level in which Substance becomes Form	Level of Form	Level	Inter-level	Extra-Linguistic Meaning
Phonetics→	Phonology→ (the phonetics of a particular language)	Grammar	Lexis→	Context of Situation	

3.2. *English Language Groups*

The second method of division relates, it will be remembered, to the people who use the language. This is a traditional approach in the descriptive sciences: botany contains both the study of plant growth and so on, and the ecology and geographical distribution of plant life. Appropriately, then, Descriptive Linguistics contains within itself the new branch of Institutional Linguistics. Now with the first method of division, into language levels, there can be little argument: different theorists put different stresses in their various

models but that there are three or four levels is a *linguistic* fact; and any description of a single utterance by level (looking at its phonology, grammar and so on) is a *linguistic* observation. Of this second method of division two warnings must be given. First, as has been said, it is, in its most interesting features, very new and consists mainly of identifying, not of describing: thus we know now that there is political English which has certain features distinct from other varieties of English but it has yet to be fully described; the teacher has still to await the publication of such a description before he can do much more than draw his pupils' attention to its existence and attempt some class field-work; so too has the politician to wait. Second, this method of division is very much on the borderlines of linguistics: its forms can be identified, not so much by linguistic features (i.e. by structural contrasts), as by which groups of people use them when. Such a method of division is as much sociological as linguistic; its work is to set out the varieties of a language, the different sub-languages which, in our case, make up the total language we know as English. At the same time, having used semi-sociological criteria (such as the difference between primary and secondary groups) for the identification of the varieties, the means used for describing the individual variety are entirely linguistic.

This second method has, itself, three major headings. We shall mention each in turn and then, since this is, as it seems to us, perhaps the most immediate and relevant contribution of linguistics to the teaching of English in Britain, we shall examine each more fully. The first is the division into regional groups (or, of course, historical ones, which we shall not deal with), that of Dialect and Accent; the second is the division into professional or occupational or even social groups, that of Register; the third is the division by the type of situation in which speech takes place, and the appropriateness of the discourse, that of Style.

3.2.1. *Dialect and Accent*

First, dialect and accent. These are obvious enough. The separation between the two is blurred but, in general, dialect is an affair of grammar and of lexis, and accent of phonology. Different dialects will usually have different accents. Thus what makes British and American English different is partly dialectal and partly accent or pronunciation: in fact, of course, the differences are not nearly as great or many as we sometimes like to think. And these dialectal differences, though mainly lexical (e.g. boot : trunk; college : school,

and all the other hoary ones) are also grammatical (e.g. the American liking for the adverbial particle and the contrast of "how many have you got?" and "how many do you have?"). Within Britain there are similar dialectal differences, but, perhaps because of our peculiar social structure, it is accentual differences that arouse greater interest. Now though, as we have just said, a dialectal difference probably implies an accentual one, the reverse does not necessarily hold. Thus an educated Northerner may retain, say, the short [æ] or the NE glottal stop; or an educated Birmingham person may retain the local characteristic of final [ŋ] always followed by [g]; but both may well have no trace of Northern or Midland dialect. The reason for this is that, in Dialect, Standard English is universally taught and used among educated people; in Accent, Received Pronunciation (or RP, sometimes identified with BBC announcers' accent) is still the mark of a particular social class, with slight regional modification in the South-East. More and more, of course, educated regional accents are modified towards RP. Phonology seems to be the least stable of the language levels, the only one solely dependent on the spoken language. Whether we shall all ever speak RP is doubtful (and probably unnecessary from an education point of view, a question which will be taken up later). Only the phenomenon of social cohesion and social mobility in the upper middle class and its use of the public schools gave it that sense of identity which led to its common use of one accent, RP. It is essential for communication that we should all have one grammar and a common body of vocabulary; but common sense tells us that Glaswegians manage to converse with Liverpudlians; their system of phonemic contrasts may differ, but they are all within the total system of English sounds.

3.2.2. *Register*

Second, Register. Here we are dealing with the varieties of English used by occupational groups and these tend to be (like dialect) part grammatical but mainly lexical and hardly at all phonological. There may be some dispute about this last point. Of course one particular group (or in sociological terms, logical class) such as clergymen or boxing commentators or Hyde Park orators may tend to use one mode of address or discourse in the execution of their occupation and this mode (or as we shall call it Style) may be a necessary element of their Register, but it will be better (more efficiently) dealt with as a separate variable under our next heading, that of Style.

The *fact* of Register is clearly well-known, but, then, so is the *fact* of weather or of illness. The meteorologist wants to do more than simply identify different types of weather (though that is, in itself, useful); and it is helpful, neither to the doctor nor his patient to point out that the patient is ill and not much more helpful to say what sort of illness he has unless the doctor has techniques which enable him to describe that illness (and then, of course, to do something about it). It would be a pity if the very obviousness of Register were to stultify any attempts to describe its varieties and hinder the effort to explain the needs they serve. Of course we all know that politicians have a special sort of English, that lawyers, clergymen, estate agents, sailors, creative writers, cricketers, bridge-players, spies and scientists all have, in some measure, a restricted form of English, some of which is a habitual usage within the general English used by everyone, some a specialised form in which each register uses common English features in a highly distinct way, and some its own invented terms. This is all part of English and, if only at the descriptive level, it would seem necessary to make sure that knowledge of these restricted usages is widespread; not just, in schools, to assume that children come upon them, Topsy-like, by growing. We certainly do not assume that they light upon literature in this way. What is more, of course, we just are not aware to what extent these registers overlap and are distinct. We should; and there should be plenty of creative opportunity in English language field-work in schools for finding out.

Again, the obviousness of Register often suggests that the distinctions are entirely lexical. That they are mainly so is, of course, true and inevitable; grammar is a closed system, that is to say it is finite and not easily expandable, while lexis is the open system (or set) of language, and one which is not merely too large as it stands for any one speaker to comprehend (who knows all the items in the NED?) but also one in which it is possible for anyone (and very easy for an occupational group) to invent completely new items. Thus a single example of lexical differentiation is the use of *frame* by a carpenter, gardener, painter, policeman and programme learning expert (where it means a step or item in the ordered sequence of the argument).

But there are grammatical distinctions too; and two will be mentioned here. The first is from cricket. In "I saw John's first maiden over" we know immediately that we are in the register of cricket: this is partly the use of the lexical item *maiden* and partly the lexical collocation "*maiden over*" but also the special grammatical

use of the word "*over*" in the grammatical group "*first maiden over*". If we added "*in Bristol*" ("I saw John's first maiden over in Bristol") the cricket register is now indicated entirely by the grammatical signal, part group but also part intonation and stress. That the alternative is unlikely because John may know a *girl* but never, these days, a *maiden* in Bristol is immaterial: we might now be in the register of Folk Song.

The second example comes from engineering. Here is the beginning of a description by an engineer of how a turbine starts: "The starting of the turbine is effected by rotation of a handwheel" where the non-engineer would probably say something like: "The turbine is started by turning a handwheel" (Herbert, 1963). The important point here is the combination of the lexical item *effected* with the passive voice where the layman would use the active. The engineer or scientist regularly uses the passive in describing his work. This is typical of his register and in doing so he regularly makes use of a very small range of lexical items in those verb positions. Why does he do this; is it done in all scientific expression; and quite as much in spoken scientific usage as in written? What other special features are there of the scientific use of language. This would seem a fruitful field to explore and a useful link in schools between English Language and science, between the Arts Sixth and the Science Sixth.

3.2.3 *Style*

Third, Style. Dialect, Accent and Register divide language users on historical or biographical principles, as it were. You speak like this because you come from, because you belong to. Style divides according to situation and appropriateness. At its simplest the manner of discourse (the speech) appropriate in one situation is not appropriate in another. And all native speakers of English exercise a delicate control over their manner of discourse: in their *customary* situations their speech is appropriate. As with Register the apparent obviousness of this division may be a snare. Of course I speak differently to my wife and to my doctor and to my grocer. But the effect of our refusal to investigate further is to let the inertia of conformity dictate to us (and through us to the children we teach) that there is only one scale of usage, that of good and bad. In fact there are several such scales. M. Joos in his illuminating monograph *The Five Clocks* says, "A community has a complex structure with variously differing needs and occasions. How could it scrape along with only one pattern of English usage?" (1962, p. 10) and he sug-

gests four such scales, those of Age, Style, Breadth and Responsibility; of the last two we shall say no more. The Age Scale, with its five points or ranks of Senile—Mature—Teenage—Child—Baby might be a useful system of reference for us when we become so engrossed with teenage usage that we forget the deposits in our own, deposits abandoned by time: thus "motoring down" and "wireless" and even the absurd arguments between "It's me" and "It's I" and between "can" and "may" could perhaps be resolved by the use of the Age Scale.

But it is the Style Scale which concerns us here. Joos has five ranks again. They are: Frozen—Formal—Consultative—Casual—Intimate. Let us attempt an example by saying the same thing at each rank of the Scale and then look at each more closely. In each case it is the situation that changes: this probably implies a change of person addressed, that is a change of relation; but within two or three ranks of the Scale it might simply imply a change of attitude to the same person. Thus these five ways of asking the time might be suggested:

1. Frozen: I should be glad to be informed of the correct time.
2. Formal: I should like to know the time, please.
3. Consultative: Do you have the time on you please?
4. Casual: What's the time?
5. Intimate: Time?

This example does not ring true and cannot because the constraints imposed on us by situation direct us towards not only attitude and relationship but also to the content of what we say. Thus, in the example, (1) is impossible and (2) unlikely; the Formal Style is reserved for addressing strangers or for getting over the barrier of formality (as in lectures): true, you might ask a complete stranger in the street for the time but you would be likely to impose on him a lower (more personal) rank of Style, say, Consultative, because of the very urgency of your request. And the Frozen Style is reserved entirely for writing: the example (1) given here is, in effect, a highly formal one; the point of there being a rank higher than Formal simply means that here we go into communication through writing.

To Joos it is the Consultative Style that is the norm of spoken English. This is the Style we generally use for coming to terms with strangers or for speaking to colleagues, friends, and so on, when there is some important information to convey. In the first Transcription which follows (3.2.4) the two speakers are colleagues, well-known to

one another, but since they are trying to work out a difficult conceptual problem it is the Consultative rather than the Casual Style that is employed. The two main characteristics of the Consultative Style are the supply of background information which the listener does not know (e.g. about the Physical Education experiment) and the continuous participation of the listener. This participation takes two forms: first there are the listener code markers such as "yes", "of course" "that's right", and the non-lexical "mm" and so on; second there is the change over when listener becomes speaker, often marked by an introductory "well". In the Casual Style it is still public information which holds the centre of attention; (otherwise the speakers relapse into jokes or silence) but the participants are friends, members of a primary group (in sociological terms) and its characteristics are Ellipsis or abbreviation (as in "have two lots", instead of "well the thing to do is to have two lots" l. 31) and Slang. Slang, as we all know is ephemeral; its use restricted to the Casual Style where it marks inclusion within and acceptance by the social group. For the Intimate Style Joos has the defining characteristics of Extraction and Jargon. If my wife (and the Intimate Style is generally reserved for two members of a group) says to me, while we are sitting by the fire at night: "cough", with no intonation (and here we come to that exception mentioned in 3.1), this is no ellipsis, for its grammar and intonation are entirely understood between us, and I know that the only linguistic level left to it (the lexical item) asks whether I have heard one of our children cough. The same applies to the code grunts between husband and wife at regular times of the day which call to supper or suggest a night-cap. This then is Extraction. The Jargon of the Intimate Style may be fossilised Slang, but, unlike slang, it is permanent and has significance only for the members of the intimate group. In the Intimate Style there is, of course, no passing of information. If I tell my wife what has gone on during the day I necessarily use the Casual Style.

In each of these three Styles there is constant and immediate listener participation. In the other two there is none. In the Formal Style (Joos' characteristics here are Detachment and Cohesion) there is information to convey: this is the Style of the lecturer or public speaker. (It is also, of course, the Style of formal introductions and greetings.) The material is prepared beforehand: the public speaker whose material is badly organised finds himself slipping, to the unexpected embarrassment of his audience, into the Consultative Style without the necessary audience reinforcement essential to that Style.

The Frozen Style is the style of writing (and, at its best, of literature) or, Joos says, of declamation. A simple way of distinguishing Frozen and Formal might be to think of a lecture read from a printed paper which has been written for publication and a lecture read from fairly full notes or from a text, fully written out but designed for speaking aloud. Hence the apologies in collections of lectures for their lack of "frozenness".

Now to give some slight illustration of the middle way, the central rank of these five Styles, here is a transcription, in graphic script, of a discussion recorded between two educational psychologists. This is, as we have said, in the Consultative Style: its register is that of educational psychology. But the speakers, especially the first, are not far at any time from the Casual Style. The second speaker's remarks are italicised.

3.2.4. *Transcription 1*

a streamed school um will have a particular kind of headmaster broadly speaking . . . and he will tend to employ a particular kind of staff . . . the whole thing is built in in interactions . . . this is why . . . I'm saying *do we know that though I mean or is that just an assumption we're making . . . in fact* well . . . um . . . I think I could quote a number of studies here not many where where this is known um study of physical educationwhere we're trying to compare or they were trying to compare children who'd been trained by movement training PT people . . . and people trained in the traditional PT way . . . but the whole atmosphere of the school reinforced the effects of these two because the three movement trained . . . teachers were in what you would regard even if you didn't though know noth nothing about their physical education . . . and now there more or less um . . . um democratic child centred schools . . . I don't know how what words words to put in here. . . . that the three traditional PT people belonged to three schools you've described without knowing thing about the PT as traditional authoritarian . . . schools . . . (We cut the text here and take up the speaker at a later point.)

I'd start by saying that the primary variable in in the school is teacher personality her view of . . . children her view of her role and things of that sort *mm* the only thing about the structure of the school I would take into account is er well the first form would be size of class . . . in relation but not second form the

view the teacher has of what children are and what her role is and so on . . . I wouldn't start with gross features of education like er the structure of the school I think I'd make that subsidiary to what goes on in the classroom so I'd start with teacher personality *but then you're making you're making an assumption* that's my assumption yes *well the thing to do is to have two lots of research going on one working on your assumption* mm *and one working from the structural structure of the school assumption* yes *and to see um which would give you now which would you regard as the most the better experiment the one that brings you what* in consequences of *mm* of findings *yes what* the right *yes what yes of findings and which* will exams be able to explain the structure of the school er er er my view my start would be better than the start taking the structure of the school as given because I would be able to explain why the structure of the school has arisen *no you you might simply be explaining why that sort of teachers are in the next school because that that type of personality may be attracted by that structure in fact I think that's what happens isn't it* I agree with you yes *really so it's er a chicken and egg argument* but the other argument.

4. Some Features of the Spoken Language

The passage (sect. 3.2.4) contains several common features of everyone's speech (in any Style below Formal) which we often ignore or are embarrassed about because we tend to think of the spoken language in written terms. There are (1) gaps (indicated by dots); here the speaker pauses while he thinks: this is obvious but is not always indicated in *written* conversation (e.g. in novels); there are (2) hesitations (er l. 38; um l. 1; half begun words such as "noth" l. 13); there are (3) stabilisers (I mean l. 4; in fact l. 5; well l. 24; yes l. 36); there are (4) listener code markers (yes l. 33; mm l. 23); there are (5) initial markers (well l. 31; but l. 30); there are (6) repetitions (you're making you're making l. 30; that that l. 42); there are (7) renewals (which would give you now which would you regard as l. 34; the most the better l. 35); there is (8) anacoluthon—possibly (ll. 10-15); but it is highly significant that in such an intense consultative situation the total structure never really breaks down (e.g. first paragraph); there are no sentences to literate eyes. The speaker finishes a grammatical pattern (unless he is interrupted by a colleague whose very interruptions—mm yes—are themselves part of the total grammar and, of course, part of the Consultative Style), finishes it

and lapses into silence or immediately starts another. These are all regular features of speech: when talking about the spoken language we must accept them as necessary elements of the Style, of the Grammar and of the Context.

What this passage does not show is that rather curious feature which Joos might perhaps include as a special class in his Formal Style. This is the class of greetings, and, in English, of empty interchange about the weather. Malinowski (1923) includes within this "phatic communion" such registers as idle gossip and the technical language of some sporting pursuits (see ch. II. 4). This is but another method of classification, of course; for us sport and gossip and so on are registers: greetings belong to the Register of gossip and to the Formal Style.

Several of the features may be subsumed under the heading of Redundancy, the transmission of superfluous information, which we see at its most obvious in the simple lexical repetitions, in the grammatical renewals in the passage (3.2.4). But the listener code markers, indicative of addressee participation, also convey no additional information (something needs to be done to show that the listener is listening, but *what* he says is irrelevant and he could use some non-linguistic code such as a smile, nod and so on). The concept of Redundancy is helpful too on the Style Scale, with Consultative as probably the most redundant, curving off normally in both directions to Formal/Frozen and to Casual/Intimate. The Formal Style is designed to convey as much information as possible; it is planned and ordered and repeats as little as possible. The Casual Style (and even more the Intimate) has little need to repeat: so much can be taken for granted. But when the Formal Style is used in introductions it takes on a greater redundancy and the Styles then range from: "Mr Jones, may I introduce to you Mr Tom Smith?" (Formal) through "I don't believe you've met Smith, Jones: just back from Malaya *oh* and pretty good on SE Asian politics" (Consultative) to: "Met Smith?" (Casual; with intonation) and "Smith" or "Tom" (Intimate; without intonation). Redundancy can, of course, function at any of the levels of language.

It may be useful here to make a distinction between the spoken and the written language. Clearly they are not the same: advertising in newspapers and on television may have the same motive but could not bear transfer of medium. Telegrams and headlines are entirely written; shaggy dog stories, garden fence gossip entirely spoken. Literature is a special variety of the written language, a special

register; and in Joos' terms the supreme example of the Frozen Style, permanently fixed: alter one item of the text and you alter the whole work; this is just not true of any of the other Styles. This is what makes folk-song collecting so difficult: all those variants! But in education we tend to talk of the spoken language as if it were a poor relation of the written, and to talk of it, often enough, in literary terms. If we want to make any headway with teaching the spoken language, both for its own sake and for the sake of a more realistic approach to teaching the English Language (and it should be plain by now that it is the firm attitude of this chapter that teaching English *means* above all teaching the spoken language), then we must take speech on its own terms, in the terms of the Institutional divisions we have mentioned, especially those of Register and Style, abandon the narrow blinkers of the literate approach and make use of the varieties and scales that exist and are in use. This does not, of course, imply a soft acceptance of how anybody speaks as somehow sacrosanct: anything goes! This often-made criticism of linguistic objectivity normally assumes an acceptance of how one section of the community speak (e.g. how secondary school children in Carlisle speak to their teachers). This is not so: what the linguist says is: this is how one group speak in one situation; there are many other groups and other situations (for those Carlisle children as for everyone else). At the same time the linguist does not talk of standards (qua linguist): what he would suggest, of course, is a vast expansion of these children's knowledge of and tolerance over other registers, other styles. But here we are concerned with this literary approach to the spoken language: what follows is, first, a graphic transcription of part of a tape recording made of children talking to their teacher, simulating as near as possible the actual speech situation (to do this properly a phonological transcription would be essential, of course); the second, a more usual presentation of what such conversation is generally thought to be like, suggesting the sort of standards that we, quite unrealistically, often set up. The Style of the first passage varies somewhat between Consultative and Casual:

4.1. *Transcription 2* (the teacher speaks first)

Something dear to your own hearts . . . parents opinion of youth . . . is it wrong . . . is it biased . . . are we old squares because we understand what we are talking about . . . well . . . (B1) *er . . . er . . . well . . . er . . . I'd think that they have a wrong understanding of the younger people do do do mu do music is supposed to be wrong with the*

younger people the style the way they the way they dress the way they do things they they never used to do that when they when they was young an we give more trouble I don't think there is it's it's just the same there they they don't seem to understand us (B2) they say er . . . er . . . we dont understand you your music's wrong and all this . . . their mothers said it to those to the to our parents . . . our parents I should say our parents say it to us and their parents used to say it to them (B3) *exactly the same . . . they don't understand us . . . the music . . . the clothes . . . the dress . . .* (T) are you going to say it to your children (B3) *probably will yes* (T) Gloria (G) *I think we should try to understand their opin I think we should try to understand their opinion.*

(T=teacher; B1, 2, 3=three boys; G=girl)

It should be noticed that since this was an organised class discussion there is a strong tendency towards the Formal Style (Joos says that this is inevitable when there are more than about six in the group), marked particularly here by the lack of continuous listener participation.

4.2. *Transcription heightened* (by Dorothy Atkinson)

Teacher: Something dear to your own hearts. Parents' opinion of youth. Is it wrong? Is it biased? Are we old squares because we understand what we are talking about? Well?

Boy 1: Oh well, I think they have a wrong understanding of the younger people. Music is supposed to be wrong with the younger people, their style, the way they dress, the way they do things. They never used to do that when they were young. And we give more trouble. I don't think there is a difference. It's just the same. They don't seem to understand us.

Boy 2: They say "We don't understand you; your music's wrong." And all this—their mothers said it to them, to our parents, I should say. Our parents say it to us, and their parents used to say it to them.

Boy 3: Exactly the same. They don't understand us, the music, the clothes, the dress.

Teacher: Are you going to say it to your children?

Boy 3: I probably will, yes.

Teacher: Gloria?

Girl: I think we should try to understand their opinion.

5. Correctness

Community attitudes to the spoken language, even among the neo-Lowthians, are less rigid than to the written: correctness looms

smaller; but it still looms. We are still unsure about our acceptance of some fragments of English, partly because they may be specially characteristic of one depressed part of the community, partly because doublets (or more) exist and we are unsure which one is more "correct". This habit of language uncertainty is widespread: everyone seems to feel that his language can be located at some point on a class scale relative to others above and below: does this language diffidence apply even to the Queen in her usage of her English? It is time we stopped calling some usages incorrect (or good, bad, better), and looked at them for their appropriateness, for what situations they exist to serve. Correctness worries us at each of the language levels. How do you pronounce *controversy* or *Doncaster* or *often* (Phonological—and normally resolved by purely social criteria: whose accent do you want to use, RP or a local variety?); how do we choose between *shall* and *will*, between *who* (did you ask . . .) and *whom* (did you ask . . .) and between *you* and *me/I* (Grammatical); what do we do with words like *get*, and how distinguish between *disinterested/uninterested* and *imply/infer* (Lexical); and do we keep finding new expressions for those difficult contexts sex and defecation (Contextual)? It is interesting that in *all* these cases there are choices: this is probably inherent in the idea of Correctness: you *can't* be correct unless you've made some sort of choice. Therefore we would expect the main battleground of the Correct to be Grammar; for phonology the clash is really between different systems (e.g. RP and Lancashire) and for lexis the choice is so wide anyway (the whole dictionary, as it were, or better, Thesaurus) that it ceases to chafe; for Context the two areas mentioned are tricky but are probably the only ones except for religion. Now in Grammar we are all, since we are all educated, within the one major system of Standard English. The argument therefore is between exponents of Standard English about little corners of their shared territory. They are arguments about such uncertainties as interrogative *who* ("who did you ask?") and often relative *who* too; about the concord of *is* ("One of those who is . . ."); about the position of *only*, *merely*, *hardly*, *just* etc. ("I only came yesterday" "I came only yesterday"); about the double participle *showed* and *shown*; and so on; about *like* and *as*, about *it's me* and *it's I*, about *owing to* and *due to*.

First, let it be said that this region of uncertainty is small. There can't be more than about 40 items which are in dispute. Second, that it is much more a problem for the written language where we are concerned with a much more restricted, more conservative set of

conventions; at the same time, of course, it can be made perfectly clear to children that in the written language these 40-odd items are in dispute and that, in each case, this and not that is the one normally used. At the same time let us be quite clear that "normally" means normally in practice and not normally in our imaginations. (If we, say, choose—for teaching the written language—the unique position of the modifier *only* are we sure that this *is* the practice of the "best" writers; have we looked?)

Where an attitude of correctness (what J. Warburg calls a "transcendental" standard of language, a "doctrine of original linguistic sin") (1962) does affect the spoken language it rarely adduces reasons for its preferences: where they are given they tend to be an appeal to some external and irreproachable source (Fowler; Latin; aesthetics—it's ugly!). We must be honest and cease pretending that such notions have any firm grounding in the facts of the language. That such choices (choices which, unlike real grammatical choices, do not signal difference of meaning) exist equally indicates some sort of need for both: or, in the crudest view, some sort of language change. Both forms are used; we all know people, educated and fluent speakers, often our best friends, some of whom use one and some the other, or indeed both, on different (or possibly indiscriminate) occasions. Both are correct in the sense that both communicate. But it would be more sensible to abandon the notion of correctness altogether for this area. If, of course, a teacher wants to make sure that his pupils are not hindered *socially* by some of these choices that they habitually make then he will want to guide them to what he considers (and has probably observed) are the socially superior choices: thus he may feel that an interviewer would prefer to hear: "I left school at 15 as my father did" rather than "like my father did". But he must make it quite clear that the choice is a *social* one.

This sort of correctness is quite different, of course, from dialectal correctness, from the relation between Standard English and the various sub-standard varieties in Britain and other varieties in the English speaking world. Thus "Us have lived in this house what you was talking about" contains (at least) three grammatical mistakes which are not incorrect but just plain wrong, i.e., not Standard English. But it is doubtful if, in grammar, school leavers still make many such mistakes (unless, of course, the Casual Style of their social group demands a sub-standard: their mistake then in using this variety in the wrong situation, e.g. to an interviewer for a job, is a

Style mistake, not a grammatical one). Certainly in phonology, in intonation and in grammar, school children are able to select and work within most of the available systems of their language by the age of 9 or 10. And by "their language" here we mean the language of their immediate social group. If that group speaks a sub-standard variety then it is the job of education to teach the Standard (so far as the grammar is concerned: and this applies to the grammatical system of intonation as much as to the other grammatical systems). As to the lexis this is obviously very much a question of learning different groups' registers, the technical jargons of English.

6. The Role of the English Language Teacher in Britain

A number of references have been made in passing to what can be done in education to teach the English Language. At the moment we suffer from a paralysis of indecision, not knowing what to teach, unsure of how to set about it, and not agreeing anyway whether our own language needs teaching. Attitudes by teachers to the English Language mirror the attitudes among the general public to education: we've been through it, we all use it, we know everything about it because it is ours. But as was indicated in the first section of this chapter, there is a growing momentum against this inertia. Teachers are coming more and more to feel that the language must be taught; want to know what there is in it which should be taught; and would like help in setting about it. The main purpose of this chapter has been to show something of what language is and to reinforce the feeling that the native language must be taught. The last two sections attempt to explore how it can be done, very briefly, because this whole approach is set out very fully in the new Halliday, McIntosh, Strevens book already noted (1964); and here the writer leans very heavily on their ideas. The scheme for a systemed method of language teaching comes from the formulations of W. Mackey (1953-5). These two sections will, it is hoped, act in the way of conclusion to the chapter, drawing together the various features of the language, which, it has been suggested, should be taught, and indicating in what ways they can be taught.

6.1. *Prescription*

For the native language there are three main types of teacher approach: prescription (and proscription); description; and production. Where English Language is taught at all as a subject in

British schools the approach is often the prescriptive one: do this; and its corollary, proscription, don't do that. Where this is employed to put over the *standard* grammar then all well and good and necessary. But so often it seems to be the only approach, in which the teacher, year after year, repeats the same hallowed stock of pre- (more often pro-) scriptions, with absolutely no effect at all, on the spoken language at any rate, so that on leaving school the child is left with nothing more than a vague feeling of insecurity about his usage. Back to the correctness chimaera! At its most absurd the prescription approach seeks to put over uni-situational English, the teacher trying to make his pupils speak like himself in class *all* the time. This is seen at its worst when the teacher tries to persuade all his pupils into imitating his accent, RP or not: it is doubtful if we should ever make any effort at all to change the accent of our pupils. No, save for rescue operations from sub-standard dialects, pre- and proscription must be abandoned for description and production.

6.2. *Description*

The two may well go together. The teacher describes in order to produce. But is it the teacher's job to describe? In theory it is not; unless, of course, he is a trained linguist; and in any case he does not have the time. But the fact is that in some areas English is not yet fully described. Work is proceeding along several academic fronts, on grammar under Dr Halliday; on usage under Professor Quirk's Survey of Educated English Usage (1961); and there are other inquiries into such registers as the political and scientific, and into lexical collocation, and others too. While we await these definitive studies the teacher must compromise, and he can do this in two ways, first by using what tentative descriptions have been published, such as Professor Strang's (1962), (which she herself says is an interim document); and second by attempting his own descriptions, a possibility we shall look at under the heading of Production. But there remain the widely charted areas, fully or partially described; phonology (D. Jones, 1956; and many other books); intonation (R. Kingdon, 1958), lexis (NED, Roget, etc.). Here let us be clear what the teacher is about: he is describing to the class what they can, in all cases except the lexical, already do with ease: there is nothing futile about this: every child can drink a glass of water, turn on the electric light, ride in a motor car, watch television, or grow his own seeds. This does not prevent us from analysing these processes and deliberately teaching about them in schools. As to the description of the lexis of

the more obvious registers, this is probably widely done already ("For homework make a list of all the words connected with . . ."). Just how worth-while mere lists of technical words used by pilots or miners or chefs are is uncertain. Certainly such lists are wholly unreal unless linked to the grammar and the intonation of their registers.

6.3. *Production*

This is where the production side of language teaching starts. First, in getting the children themselves to find out, as their own small-scale research, just what is the total language use of near-at-hand registers: and this must be done in real life situations, as it were, not through literature, which, since it is itself a special restricted register, puts enormous constraints on the writer's use of the real register he is simulating. The register of a game, of domestic science lessons, of bus conductors, of bingo halls, of clergymen, of disc jockeys: the list is endless. Here the teacher is making no judgments (though he may want his pupils to make some, later on, about the possibilities existing within these registers). Second, production consists in helping the children to use registers which may be unknown to them: the register of Youth Employment Officers is one example: others are the register of country children—for the town child—and vice-versa; the register of politics, of advertising, of librarians, of lawyers, house agents, income tax officials, civil servants. It is no use assuming that children know all these. Do they? Let us try to find out, first what the register is, second how far it is restricted within and how far it differs from general central usage; third, how much of it children know already.

But these two aspects of production teaching are less important than the third. We can, perhaps, get by in communication with a few large registers and with being able merely to identify others. But we must all be capable of continuous, effortless Style switching in appropriate situations. What we do not know is how far children are aware of this need for appropriateness and how much they are capable of making the immediate and necessary switches. The main burden of description-production then should go into Style: not bus conductors' usage in general, but what differences are there between bus conductors talking to one another, to passengers of different kinds, to their family (one child's parent may well be a bus conductor); how do clergymen speak, not in general, but to one another, to parishioners, in church, to young people (if a bishop, in a TV interview with a pop singer, asks if the singer would like the church to

"chat you teenagers up", is this expression appropriate to a bishop in this situation?).

6.4. *Teacher and Tester*

English is there, in use all the time, by different groups, in a variety of situations. Let us show children what there is: and, showing them, help them to a wider control and a greater tolerance over other registers, other styles. And let our description and production deal with the real facts of the real language. It seems to us unhelpful (because untrue to the facts) for the University of London Schools Examinations Committee examiners in Spoken English in their recent Report (quoted in the *Times Educational Supplement* for 13th November 1964) to say of their candidates for this exam: "they seemed to think that conversation was a series of brief undeveloped answers to questions. Their conversation lacked vigour and their vocabulary was sometimes very limited being marked by slang, clichés, or gap-words such as 'you know', 'sort of' and 'like'." These features, as we have seen, are of the very stuff of certain styles of discourse. We are tempted to ask if the examiners have examined their own responses in conversation at what can only be the Casual rank of Style: every oral examination, unless it deliberately sets out to pass on information, must take place at the Casual rank. And this rank, as again we have seen; is characterised by Ellipsis and Slang (3.2.3). These are the very criticisms made by the examiners. It would seem that relevant tests of the spoken language (particularly those which employ the interview type method) must take into account this need for exchanging information at any Style rank above the Casual; and that, in fact, a useful and valid test would seek to range over the whole Style scale, making the necessary adjustments for the information need at certain ranks. Otherwise a "conversing" test can only test effectiveness (however that is defined) at the Casual rank. And this must imply testing the use of such features as Ellipsis and Slang, gap-fillers and hesitations.

7. Systematic Language Teaching

Having decided on his approach, on necessary prescription (towards Standard English), on wide description and on informed production projects, how does the teacher arrange his programme? A scheme has been suggested by Mackey and Mackin (and is fully set out in the Halliday, McIntosh, Strevens book) which starts with Selection (e.g. which dialect or register is to be taught), passes

through Grading (which parts come in which order), and Presentation (how is it to be put over? what aids are to be used? what is the plan for the project work?) and ends with Testing (how do we make constant checks that progress is being made and how do we discover what gaps there are in our pupils' knowledge and proficiency?). No more need be said of this systematic approach here; the interested reader can consult Halliday etc. And in any case we have arrived at Testing, to which some later chapters of this book will be devoted. When we know what we want to teach, when we have set it out in considerable detail, and when we are sure it refers at every point to the real language and to the children's real needs, then we can proceed to test this corpus. But testing can also help us to know what we should teach, of course. How to set about the testing of the Spoken Language is dealt with in Chapter IV-VII.

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