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HAVING AN EQUAL SAY: A STUDY OF CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

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Two basic questions are addressed in the study reported in this paper: What kind of discourse practices are employed by a teacher and students in the academic discourse of history lessons, and what, if any, are the constraints that restrict the participation of students in this discourse? The classroom discourse of one teacher and his students in a Dublin post-primary school was recorded. Analysis is based on the transcripts of two lessons given to a junior-cycle class and two lessons given to a senior-cycle class. The theoretical base to the analysis of discourse is provided by the work of Habermas. The most significant discourse practices employed by the classroom participants are identified. The form of intersubjectivity in the lessons of a junior and senior class are compared and contrasted. The authoritative and judicial practices of fixing the issues to be addressed by the discourse and adjudication on what was said are the practices which most clearly distinguished the classroom talk of the teacher from that of pupils. Both teacher and pupil discourse practices changed with the transfer from junior to senior lessons. Compared to the senior lessons, classroom discourse in the junior lesson was dominated by the discourse practices of the teacher while the pupils' contribution was relatively insignificant. The findings suggests that teachers must seek to guarantee the autonomy and responsibility of their students and facilitate the process of self-formation implicit in certain discourse practices.

The study of classroom discourse has received little attention in educational research in Ireland. Many students of education are introduced to the study of classroom interaction through the Flanders Interaction Analysis System, which seeks to highlight the quantity and 'quality' of classroom talk. Quality is measured according to how accepting and

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supportive it is of pupils' contribution to the classroom discourse The most obvious limitation of this method of analysis is the ten categories into which all classroom talk is coded* The categories do not take cognizance of the words of the speakers themselves and capitalize on the initial assumptions of the researcher in interpreting and coding the talk under investigation The system is too crude to deal with the way in which school subjects are understood or articulated, nor can it deal with the linguistic expression of social relations Thus, the reality of the language in the classroom is made subservient to the idealized account of it in Flanders' reductionist model

The kind of detail that is lost using the Flanders model such as the presentation of subjectivity and the formulation of the 'other', the 'you' of classroom discourse, will be the object of attention in this paper The theoretical base to the analysis presented is provided by the writings of Jurgen Habermas of the Frankfurt School of critical sociology (cf 1, pp 11-39) His concern in the social sciences has been to develop a form of analysis which has as its objective the emancipation of the human subject from all forms of constraint and domination The analysis of constraint seeks to reveal what has previously been hidden and in doing so initiate a process of self reflection intended to liberate individuals or groups from past constraints For Habermas, society can be rational only if the autonomy and responsibility of individuals and groups are secured This ideal form of social life, according to Habermas, is prefigured in the structures of speech itself Speech, he argues, is only possible in an interpersonal situation which is itself organized linguistically The features of language which generate the structure of intersubjectivity are referred to as Dialogue-Constitutive Universals Habermas distinguishes five classes Personal Pronouns, Deictic Expressions of Space and Time, Forms of Address and Greeting, of Speech Introduction and Conclusion and Questions and Answers, Performative Verbs, and Non-Performative Intentional and Modal Verbs He suggests that the intersubjective structure which we generate by the analysis of these Dialogue-Constitutive Universals is freed from constraint when for each participant there is an equality of opportunity for the assumption of dialogue roles and a complete

* The Flanders system divides classroom talk into seven teacher categories (Accepts student feelings, Praises, Accepts student ideas, Asks questions Lectures, Gives directions, Criticises) and two student categories (Predictable, Unpredictable) There is also one category for silence or confusion (2)

symmetry in the distribution of chances to express subjectivity, assert or dispute, prescribe rules for the conduct of the discourse, and initiate and continue discussion. The situation which guarantees this interchange of dialogue roles is called The Ideal Speech Situation:

> Pure intersubjectivity is determined by a symmetrical relation between I and You (We and You), I and He (We and They). An unlimited interchangeability of dialogue roles demands that no side be privileged in the performance of these roles: pure intersubjectivity exists only when there is complete symmetry in the distribution of assertion and disputation, revelation and hiding, prescription and following among the partners of communication (4, p. 143).

In contrast to Flanders' system, the Ideal Speech Situation is an attempt to concentrate on the practice of discourse and the roles articulated by the participants. It also seeks to draw attention to those practices in which speakers challenge or call into question the assumptions or opinions of other speakers, and thereby the relations between them.

It might be objected that the school situation can have little in common with Habermas' Ideal Situation, given the difference in age, status, communicative competence, and knowledge between teachers and students. Certainly, Habermas' thinking has been influenced by the therapist/patient relationship in psychoanalysis, which seeks to address the distorted communication of the patient's dreams in a situation that is itself free from domination and constraint and which therefore ensures that the reading of the dream which is finally agreed is the result of a consensus (3). Monologue, the usual form of communication in second-level classrooms, differs very greatly from the dialogue situation in psychoanalysis. Commonsense will suggest that the dialogue model cannot have general application in the classroom, given the way in which schooling is currently constituted. However, the emancipatory possibilities inherent in the intersubjectivity of dialogue is relevant to the classroom and, if teachers are to facilitate the curriculum objectives of personal and intellectual development, then there is a need to examine the operation of unnecessary constraints, especially in those subjects (History and English are obvious examples) where the expression of opinions, judgments, and subjectivity are constituent activities of the subject. In this regard, the choice of history lessons for analysis in this paper is not accidental.

The purpose of a critical analysis of classroom discourse is to deter-

mine whether the constraints on student participation prevent the realization of the aims that schools officially seek to promote and prohibit students from engaging in those discourse practices which are essential constituents of the disciplines which they are studying

Critical theory and practice can also draw attention to the manner in which communication in the classroom is socially constructed and determined, not fixed and natural, though in many cases teacher monologue has acquired the status of unalterable 'fact' (cf 5) The application of the Ideal Speech Situation to the classroom can highlight how the social relations of the classroom have become unnecessarily 'frozen' In discourse situations, where disputation and assertion is unnecessarily closed to some of the participants, the communication is distorted

Habermas' theoretical construct represents a translation of the ideals of truth, justice, and freedom into the language of communication The closer the discourse of the classroom approximates to that of the construct, the closer we come to guaranteeing the autonomy and responsibility of students

METHOD

The study reported in this paper was concerned with examining the discourse practices employed by a teacher and his pupils in the academic and public discourse of history lessons In particular, it examined the presentation of subjectivity in the talk of the speakers in the classroom situation, the study also contrasted the forms of intersubjectivity in the discourse of junior and senior lessons

The material was collected in a Dublin comprehensive, second-level school The method used was one of 'participant observation', that is, I sat in on lessons taking observation notes and making field recordings of each lesson During the visits to the school I was accompanied by Dr Brian Torode of Trinity College, Dublin * When we had finished making our recordings, we divided the material between us

There were two periods of participant observation During the first pilot study, three teachers and eleven lessons were recorded One of the

* For essays by Torode of particular interest to teachers cf 6, 7

teachers was teaching the same history course at both junior and senior levels. This seemed to offer a fruitful area for investigation with a view to carrying out a contrastive study of discourse practices. Furthermore, it appeared from our initial recordings that the discourse practices of this teacher varied according to the level he was teaching. It was these considerations which determined the choice of teacher and material recorded during the second period of participant observation.

The second period was spread over four weeks, during which the chosen teacher's eighteen lessons were observed and recorded, which was the total number of lessons given to a second-year junior-cycle class and a first-year senior-cycle class. Eleven of these lessons involved the senior class, the remaining seven involved the junior class.

At the outset of the four-week period, the teacher suggested that an interesting area of contrast might be the teaching of a self-contained topic to both classes. The topic in question was 'The Causes of the First World War'. In retrospect, the idea of recording a self-contained topic at both levels was more of an intrusion than a facilitating arrangement. This was because it seemed to place the teacher under pressure to complete the topic within the time (four weeks) he had originally said it would take. It seemed to the teacher and to the pupils that this had the effect of making the lessons more rigid in their organization than was the norm. The senior-cycle class felt that the joking side of the teacher-pupil relationship had disappeared. One pupil suggested that it was not as easy to get him (the teacher) 'to waste a whole class'. Another suggested that the teacher had stopped saying words like 'bloody' and 'damn' and that he had become more formal in his style of teaching. The teacher agreed with these observations. He felt that our presence was partly responsible for the new rigidity in the organization of the lessons. However, he suggested that he was consciously 'pushing the class a little harder'. He also remarked that the senior pupils appeared shy of contributing to the discourse while the lessons were being recorded. To overcome this problem, we had a discussion with the senior class at the end of the second week and explained as clearly as we could our purpose in recording the lessons. We offered to come back to the school to read a joint paper illustrating the kind of analysis we were engaged in. This discussion served to assure the pupils that we were not interested in evaluating their contributions in any way. After this, the atmosphere in the classroom became more relaxed and pupil involvement increased.

During the first two weeks of observation with the senior class, we sat at the back of the classroom This, on reflection, was a mistake as the pupils were unable to see our reactions to the numerous exchanges that took place This was possibly another factor contributing to their reluctance to participate in the discourse For the remaining two weeks, we sat in positions where we could be seen and from which we could react, at least by our expressions, with the pupils This strategy was successful in that the social atmosphere of the class improved The main insight granted by our discussion with the pupils and the teacher was that the recordings did not capture the full classroom repertoire of the teacher Neither the teacher nor the pupils considered that the teaching style of the teacher had altered in any significant way because of our presence However, the pupils felt that a certain theatrical or expressive element was missing from his speech performance

These remarks apply to our experiences with the senior class There was no corresponding adjustment problem in the junior class We were, however, somewhat insensitive to the importance of seating patterns in the classroom during our first week with the class The positions we occupied disturbed some friendship groupings On being referred to as 'seat snatchers' by one of the pupils, we became more conscious of our disruptive effect upon these groupings and we were careful not to cause any further upset

In all, I have made use of the transcripts of four lessons All the material was recorded during the second period of participant observation This material is taken from the transcripts of two lessons given to a junior cycle class and two lessons given to a senior-cycle class

The analysis of the transcripts concentrates on a number of discourse practices highlighted by Habermas formulating subjects, prescribing discourse rules, asking and answering questions, assertion and disputation However, it must be emphasized that most of the transcripts consist of the teacher's historical monologue, while the material discussed is that part of the discourse which theorizes (in the teacher's metastatement) or actualizes (in questions and answers) the intersubjective situation In one of the lessons recorded during the pilot study, the teacher made an interesting statement to the senior class which emphasized the distinction between fact and opinion in the discourse world of history and outlined the condition under which students might enter the discourse

T. Right. (...) Now, there's one thing which I want to remind you of today, that what I'm going to be talking about for the next fifteen to twenty minutes is going to be to a certain ... it's going to be opinion based upon fact. If you disagree with me on any of the points that I make, say so, because you (...) must distinguish always between opinion and fact.

The significance of the metastatement lies in the fact that it paves the way for a teacher-pupil dialogue to develop, because of the way in which the teacher understands the discourse world of history (opinion based upon fact) and because of his willingness to encourage student participation in this discourse. It is the willingness of the teacher to see dialogue develop which makes an analysis of the constraints on the communication all the more interesting.

DISCOURSE PRACTICES IN JUNIOR–CYCLE LESSONS

The teacher's discourse practices

In the two junior lessons, a great deal of the teacher's talk consists of straightforward narrative. The teacher frequently punctuates this narrative with explanations of words which might be expected to occur quite commonly in historical discourse. For instance, in the extract that follows, the term 'revolution' is explained by the teacher and the term 'passive resistance' is the subject of a number of teacher-pupil exchanges:

T. Remember I said that a revolution doesn't necessarily mean that you have to use guns and so forth. You can use different means. A revolution is something that brings about sudden change, ehh, maybe in people's lives. The, emm, Austrians decided to use passive resistance. Tell me, Hazel, what do we mean by passive resistance? (6 secs) Do you know, Hazel?

P. No.

T. You don't know. Anyone? Passive resistance.

$P._1$ To use words and arguments, ehh, not to use guns or anything.

T. Right. Would it ... shh ... would it go further than just using guns ... ehh ... words? Might it go further than that, passive resistance? Ehh, Vivienne.

P_2 Well it's not using much force at all

The use of the verb 'to know' is important in this extract and in the discourse of the junior lessons as a whole The 'you' of the teacher's talk is rarely formulated as a potentially knowing and independent subject The relationship of the 'I' subject of the teacher's talk and the 'you' of that talk is an asymmetrical one in terms of the flow of information When the flow of information is reversed, it is the knowing subjects of the teacher's talk (the 'I' and 'we') who adjudicate on the appropriateness or inappropriatness of the pupil's contribution I will discuss these points at greater length below

What I have referred to as the teacher's narrative has, of course, built into it analyses and interpretations of historical events The teacher is careful to check that the pupils follow the implicit arguments in the narrative and frequently checks that the 'you' see the point being made

T Franz Josef, and he realized that Hungary, now that they were weak ( ) might fight for independence, and so he decided that he had better comprise a little in other words, give them some of what they wanted because if he didn't give them something of what they, what might they do?

T They might revolt and breakaway all They'd break completely Do you see what I'm getting at?

Given the formulation of the 'you', it is not surprising that the fact-opinion distinction, which underlies the discourse in the senior lessons, as evident from the metastatement of the teacher referred to earlier, is not as prominent in the discourse of the junior lessons The teacher does, however, on one occasion mark the expression of an opinion in a very clear manner

T But fortunately or unfortunately, whatever you want, I would say 'unfortunately', William the first Second was determined, being a rather ambitious young man, that he was going to take over the running of the country himself

The practice of making thematic the distinction between fact and opinion is a rare phenomenon in the teacher's talk in these two lessons When the teacher invites the pupils to express an 'opinion', the invitation does not

open the possibility of dialogue. In these two lessons, the idea of 'expressing an opinion' is introduced by the teacher as a means of encouraging the pupils to attempt to answer the questions posed by the teacher, even if the appropriate answer is unknown to them.

T. Think. Remember I'm asking for your opinion now. Nothing you say is stupid. (1 sec) And this is terribly important to understand: some of you won't contribute because you think what you say is going to be wrong. When I'm asking an opinoin, when we're doing it for the first time, I don't care whether it's wrong. (1 sec) Think. What would you do if you were in Bismark's position (...) Have a guess, Mandy. Remember what we said? (1 sec) I'm not going to, leave you till I get an answer. I don't care if it's wrong or not.

If a pupil does express an opinion, the appropriateness of the opinion will be adjudicated by the teacher; thus 'expressing an opinion' is a limited form of discourse practice for a pupil, especially when compared to the teacher's practice. In the latter case, the subjects formulated in the talk of the teacher are presumed to know what they are talking about, which is not the case when the pupils are invited to express their opinions.

The 'I' subject of the teacher's talk not only informs the 'you', but also tests the 'you's' knowledge of previously passed-on information and adjudicates on the appropriatness of the contributions solicited from the pupils. The discursive relationship of the 'I' to the 'you', as formulated by the teacher, is asymmetrical and the basis of the asymmetry is the knowledge accredited to the 'I' subject. The following examples illustrate the nature of this relationship:

T. Do you know what I mean by a warmonger?

T. I know you know it, that's why I say can you put it another way?

T. Well I'll tell you what he said about history. He said: history is bunk.

The reoccurrence of the verbs 'know' and 'tell' help us to recognise that the 'I' subject is formulated as knowing one, upon whom the 'you' is dependent for knowledge. At two other points in the discourse, the 'I' is formulated as an adjudicating subject and one invested with authority:

I I'm not going to leave you till I get an answer I don't care if it's wrong or not

2 When I'm asking an opinion and when we're doing it for the first time, I don't care whether it's wrong

In contrast to the authoritative and knowing 'I', the 'you' is formulated as being in possession of little independent knowledge Even when an apparently open question is asked of the 'you', the most appropriate response has been decided on by the teacher and the reply of the pupil is adjudicated in terms of this response Thus, the openness of the question is evaporated

T Now, she's beaten France What do you think that Germany's greatest fear is going to be after this, after 1870?

P_4 That France

T Shh Barry Please, I entreat you Shh

P_8 France ( )

T And? Come on, what do you mean why do you mention France?

P_8 She's beaten her

T And so? What (she's beaten her), so (1 sec) Come on What might France want? What would she obviously want to get?

P_8 Alsace-Lorraine

T Alsace-Lorraine back number one She's going to want is that true? She's going to want Alsace Lorraine back? What's France also going to want back more than Alsace Lorraine? She wants to get Alsace Lorraine back, certainly But she wants something else as well

P_4 Her honour back

T She wants her honour back

On a number of occasions the teacher phrases an utterance in such a way as to suggest that he is engaged in dialogue:

T. Now that was ok, but in 1888 something happened which changed ... changed the whole course of not only German history which it did, but it changed ... it was the beginning of a change (1 sec) of European history and, in fact, I would go so far as to say that it began to change world history.

Implicit in the phrase 'I would go so far as to say' is the assumption that 'you' might say differently. However, given the formulation of the 'you' in the talk of the teacher, I think one must look elsewhere for the potential dialogue partner of the teacher's 'I'. In this case a suitable other might be found in the writings and opinions of some historian.

Another subject also appears in the talk of the teacher, the 'we' subject. This subject is used in factual, descriptive statements:

T. Now, we were talking last day about the names of the Austrian empire. Just very quickly, we said that it was made up of a large number of, eh, different ethnic groups.

T. Now, we'll leave that for a moment and go back to something I had started to do some time ago, and we'll now go back to it again.

In these statements, the 'we' subject is formulated as a knowing and collective subject. However, the question arises as to referent of the 'we', or whether this 'we' is purely a construction of the teacher's talk. If this collective subject has an 'imaginary' referent, then it is the talk of the teacher which guarantees the validity of the teacher's statements and not the knowingness of the 'we' subject. This view of the 'we' as an imaginary construct may gain support from the fact that there is no equivalent collective subject formulated in the talk of the pupils, although the obvious referent of a collective subject in the classroom situation would be the teacher and pupils together.

On one occasion the 'we' subject appears in a different context from the descriptive one of the previous examples. In this new context, the 'we' subject fixes the issues to be addressed by the discourse:

T All right, richer people could, but we're talking in this case about the country that where the sales were greatest at first, would be what? (Tell me the name)

The practice of formulating an authoritative 'we' subject lends to the talk of the teacher an authority lacking in the talk of the pupils I will return to the question of discursive confidence in the discussion of the senior lessons

The pupils' discourse practices

For many of the pupils in these two lessons, participation in the academic discourse is limited to answering questions posed by the teacher These questions practically all involve recall, that is, they have as an appropriate answer the recall of some piece of information previously given by the teacher This pattern is consistent with the discursive relationship of the 'I' subject to the 'you' of the teacher's talk The teacher's narrative is frequently punctuated by a series of these recall questions The most common form of answer is a simple sentence or a noun phrase

T We said that the Austrian empire was made up of a large number of what kind of groups did we call them?

P_1 Ethnic

T Ethnic groups

T What's an 'ism'? Hands up What's an 'ism'? Barry

P_1 An idea

T But what was the name of the treaty?

P_7 The Treaty of Frankfurt

The most significant answer from a discursive point of view is one given in response to a relatively open question, one for which there could be no 'correct' answer without making nonsense of the question itself The pupil's reply is a very sophisticated one which leads to a discussion of the personality of the German chancellor Bismark The answer is significant in as much as it suggests that the teacher's practice of formulating closed questions in nearly every other instance in these two lessons leads to an

unnecessary closure of the discourse for, at least, one pupil:

T. Tell me something about Bismark as a person. (...) Christine. Tell me something about him.

$P._1$ He got what he wanted. If he went out to get something once he got it, he stopped. Eh, he ... once he got what he wanted, that was it.

T. Right. Now do you know what I mean by the word a warmonger? (...)

Quiet please. In fact, Michelle, was he (Bismark) a warmonger?

$P._3$ No, he wasn't.

T. Why would you say he wasn't? I mean, after all, he fought three wars.

$P._3$ He only fought them to get what he wanted.

The final pupil reply in this exchange is a direct result of the reply made by the first pupil speaker and is, as far as I can determine, the only instance where a pupil reply is dependent upon an earlier pupil contribution to the discourse. While it must be acknowledged that most pupils would not possess the knowledge to make contributions of equal discursive value, it must also be recognized that the practice of asking closed questions hinders pupils from making similar contributions.

Twice in the course of these two lessons, a pupil enters the discourse to challenge what the teacher has said. In one case, the challenge of the pupil is met by an authoritative and knowing 'I'; in the other case, the challenge is met by an authoritative 'we'.

T. The first time Henry Ford made the motor-car, he was belting hell for leather and he was ... he reached twenty-five miles an hour. ((laughter)) (...) Twenty-five miles an hour, and when he got out he said: 'Whew: I'll never go through that again.' ((laughter)) ((many comments))

$P._6$ A bike would go faster than that. ((more comments)).

T I know, but they hadn't got a bicycle that went as fast as that at that time

T The first time Henry Ford made the motor-car he was belting hell for leather and he was he reached twenty five miles an hour ( )

P_9 The first, em, car race in the the cars went at a maximum of seventy five miles an hour

T That is true but what we're talking about these were, of course, specially, what do you call it

P_{10} Tuned up

T Tuned-up cars and so forth and they were shaped like rockets and things like that but (this was for) the ordinary family

The teacher's reformulation of his utterance in the second example may lesson the validity of my argument but, notwithstanding this formulation, one can see how the 'we' subject is being used in the talk of the teacher In neither case does the teacher call into question the correctness of what the pupils say However, the voices of the 'I' and 'we' subjects call into the question the relevance of the pupil's contribution for present discourse purposes, and, as the course of the discourse illustrates, the teacher's verdict is upheld Implicit in the teacher's statement in extract one ('they hadn't got a bicycle that went as fast as that at that time') is the assumption that 'that time' is the period under discussion in the discourse What lessens the discursive effectiveness of the pupils' contributions is the teacher's practice of adopting an authoritative position and fixing the subject matter to be addressed by the discourse

The asking of questions might be regarded as an important discourse practice for the pupil which might enable him or her to influence the direction of the discourse Surprisingly, for me at any rate, the pupil's questions have little discursive significance and only slight influence on the issues addressed by the discourse The kind of questions asked by the pupils are check questions, that is, questions which seek clarification on some point of information, and there are very few of them

T So he gave them a degree of independence, as a result in 1867 an event called the Ausgleich ( )

$P._3$ When was it?

T. This was in 1867.

T. Franz Joseph, if you want it in English. Franz Josef. (spells the second name) JOSEF or you can spell it EPH if you want. Franz Josef.

$P._4$ Sir, was Franz Josef a Hapsburg?

One of the most striking features of the pupils' talk, when compared to the talk of the teacher, is the absence of subjects formulated in that talk. In all there are only eight occasions on which a pupil formulates a subject. These subjects appear for the most part in descriptive contexts and in less academic contexts than the subjects of the teacher's talk. These subjects do not possess discursive significance in the discourse world of history in that they are not formulated in order to put forward an opinion nor do they call into question the assertion of another subject. They are purely referential.

In the three other examples, the 'I' subject formulated in the talk of the pupils has some discursive importance and approximate more closely to the subjects formulated in the talk of the teacher. In the first example, a pupil formulates a knowing 'I' in response to persistent questioning by the teacher. This knowingness is acknowledged by the teacher and the teacher suggests that it is because the pupil knows that the questions are being posed.

T. Em, (2 secs) could you put that another way? ((laughter)) (3 secs).

P. (I know it.)

T. What? I know you know it, that's why I say can you put it another way.

In the second example, a pupil formulates a knowing 'I' in order to have an answer heard as a valid one but, in this case, the knowingness of the formulated subject is not acknowledged in the same way as the previous example and the subsequent statements of the teacher imply that the pupil's response has not been an appropriate one.

T What would she ((Germany)) want to do with France? ( )

P_3 To keep friendly with France

T Well yeah, but do you think that France is going to want to get friendly with her?

P_3 I know, yeah, but if Austria gets friendly with France

T All right, so what, so what can anyone answer me, I think, answer the question that has been asked what does she want to do with France?

In the final example, a pupil formulates a subject to mark the opinion status of a statement he contributes to the discourse 'he was a French man, I think'

DISCOURSE PRACTICES IN SENIOR CYCLE LESSONS

The teacher's discourse practices

As in the junior-cycle lessons, a large part of the teacher's talk is taken up with the narration of historical events This narrative is, however, less concerned with fact than the narrative of the junior lessons Historical events, as for example the colonization of Africa, are not merely narrated There is also an attempt to account for the occurrence of these events This has the effect of widening the field of discourse in a number of directions and of highlighting the fact-opinion distinction which underlies most historical discourse In the extract that follows the teacher presents some motives for the British colonization of Africa

T Now, I'm going to bring in another thing here There was a feeling, of course due to the teaching of Darwin, that the white man was superior I mean, one man, Cecil Rhodes, said 'I would annex the planets if I could' What he meant was that he believed that, you know, you could take it that as far as people from the English point of view that they would take over the world, the planets, if they could This was, if you like, an extreme view of imperialism But there was also the view that that the white man was superior, and therefore that, in fact, you were actually doing the natives good that by by conquering them You were civilizing them

This kind of discourse encourages the speaker to make thematic the fact-opinion distinction. The teacher marks this distinction in an explicit manner on three occasions:

T. So, eh, now ... that was one idea that, in fact, became very strong in Russia. Personally, the whole idea – and Gladstone said it as well – was completely a load of rubbish, you know, this idea of all the Slavs.

T. Now this is one of the causes of the first world war, at least, many historians say it is. Personally, I don't think in fact that it was one of the ... the major causes of the first world war, but that's another story.

T. ... they have a reservation, but, certainly, there's no ... there's very little thought, real serious thought, being given to the (1 sec) feelings, if you like, I think its true to say, of the Indian.

These statements reflect an awareness that alternative interpretations or opinions exist or may exist and, in this way, an intersubjective dimension is added to the discourse. Consistent with this dimension is the fact that the verbs 'think' and 'mean' displace the 'know' of the junior lessons as the most common accompaniment to the 'I' subject. Consequently, the 'I' subject of the senior lessons is a less consistently knowing subject than the 'I' of the junior lessons.

T. ... the German people, reading about the ... the ( ) acquiring colonies by France and Britain, began to ask: well, why aren't we as a people acquiring colonies? This is what I mean ... I mean by the prestige value of colonies.

T. I personally think its rather pathetic, I don't know what you think.

P. Sir, then what's the point of having land there, if they're not going to take some of the people there?

T. I don't quite, I don't quite understand the, the –

The discursive relationship of the 'I' and the 'you' of the teacher's talk can no longer be characterized in terms of the flow of information with the knowing 'I' passing on information to dependent 'you', as was the case in

the junior lessons The 'I' subject of the senior lessons is formulated in a more dialogic manner and the opinions expressed by this subject are not always readily accepted by the pupils The teacher also formulates the 'you' in a dialogue manner On two occasions the 'you' is formulated as an independent and knowing subject, capable of presenting arguments of equal validity to those of the 'I' and capable of adjudicating on the opinions of the 'I'

T but will you wait till we go on a bit further?

P (Yeah) ((laughter))

T (you will?) and get a bit more detail before you decide that its a load of codswallop?

P OK

T Will you accept that?

T I'm simply just pointing drawing your attention, as in the hand out there, that these are some of the factors I agree with you that they may not buy that much

In the first example, the teacher's question 'Will you accept that? ' acknowledges that the 'you' has a right to decide and is capable of deciding how a disagreement can be resolved and the discourse continue In the second example, the phrase 'I agree with you' shows the teacher accepting the pupil's argument and endorsing that argument The 'you' formulated by the teacher in the senior lessons has a greater discourse potential than the 'you' of the junior lessons The following metastatement presents the 'you' as a potentially knowing and dialogic subject

T There's too much waffle and at honours level you mustn't do this, if you're going to put forward a good argument, a good cogent argument You must base it on fact and you must try and take one side or the other

The teacher is the only speaker to formulate a 'we' subject in the senior lessons and the formulation of this subject leads to a closure in the discourse The 'we' subject admits of no calling into question This subject appears when the teacher selects issues to be addressed or fixes

the subject-matter of the discourse. The 'we' subject is also used when the teacher wishes to close a teacher-pupil exchange.

T. Personally I don't think, in fact, that it was one of the ... the major causes of the first world war, but that's another story. We'll look at it when we get closer to 1914.

T. Well certainly a number of ... I'd say that a couple of thousand went ... settled there.

P. But that's not much out of a 180 million.

T. No, and neither are we saying that people went from every country, not every country colonized. We're making a statement: the population increased.

T. If ... (1 sec) what happened was, again it's a slow process, if, when the colonists did come they got people, some of the natives say, to work, all right, 'some', we're only talking about some, we're not talking about clothes for the African population.

In the second example, the use of the 'we' appears to have an authority attached to it which does not allow any other formulation of the issue. In the third example, the subject matter of the discourse is fixed in a manner which does not invite disagreement. The authoritative characteristic of the 'we' is shared by the formulation of this subject in both the junior and the senior lessons. However, there is one difference between the junior and senior lessons. Given the greater intersubjective dimension to the senior discourse, it is possible to view the teacher and the pupils as the referent of the 'we', a possibility that does not arise in the junior lessons.

There are a number of other persons formulated in the talk of the teacher who contribute arguments that in some way bear upon the subject matter of the classroom discourse.

T. Personally the whole idea – and Gladstone said it as well – was completely a load of rubbish, you know, this idea of all the Slavs. They were as suspicious of one another as anyone else.

T Now this is one, this is one of the causes of the first world war, at least many historians say it is Personally I don't think in fact it was one of the the major causes of the first world war, but that's another story

T Now in this first paragraph there, he talks about, in the first paragraph, he's talking about the increasing population and he says 'in the first centuries before the 1800, the European population has increased very slowly' So we're talking then about the increase in population

The introduction of these subjects places the classroom discourse within the wider world of historical discourse In the third example, the arguments of the 'he' become the issues to be addressed by the discourse It is, however, the teacher who selects the writings of this particular historian as being relevant for the classroom discourse The teacher is the speaker who, in general, selects issues to be addressed and fixes the subject matter of a particular phase of the discourse These two practices constitute an important means of controlling the direction of the discourse In the senior lessons, these practices mark the most significant asymmetry between teacher and pupils in the employment of discourse practices In the following examples, the teacher can be seen directing the discourse, while, at the same time, directing the pupil to the features of the narrative or argument that he wishes to highlight

T All right, what I want to do, I'm going to spend today, it has to be done, anyway, I'm going to spend part of today's class looking at this because I want you to look at this

T So we're talking about the increase in population

T But again there were other reasons It became a kind of ( ) prestige issue which we'll definitely be looking at later on

T Now, the next point or heading we'll discuss for the moment is the economic factor

The use of the 'we' in three of the examples lends an air of authority and knowingness to the utterances. The issues selected by the teacher will be addressed. These choices are not open to discussion. The 'you' are not invited to express their opinions on the choices of the teacher. The pupils do not employ any similar practices in their talk, but, nonetheless, they can indirectly influence the course of the discourse as we will see when I discuss pupil practices.

Despite the intersubjective nature of the discourse, the teacher does not ask any open questions. The questions which are posed all have as an appropriate answer a noun-phrase or a yes/no response. This form of question does not create any space for the pupil to enter the discourse in any other than the most perfunctory of ways. Apart from the question 'Will you accept that? ', to which I have previously referred, there is only one other question which takes the form of an open question:

T. What do you think that the thought that was going through their minds was?

$P._1$ That he was a traitor?

T. No, not necessarily a traitor. What do you think the mind would be going through if you were reading that the French were acquiring colonies, the British acquiring colonies, Jackie? (2 secs). What do you think?

$P._2$ Why aren't we acquiring colonies.

T. Exactly.

The expression 'what do you think' is not used by the teacher as an invitation to express any opinion, but rather as an invitation to come up with an answer already decided upon by the teacher. Thus, the first pupil reply is rejected and the second accepted. As a rule, the questions posed by the teacher do not give the pupils an opportunity to present their subjectivity or to formulate subjects in their talk.

The pupils' discourse practices

Perhaps the most common practice associated with a dialogue situation is the formulation of an 'I' subject and the consequent self-presentation of subjectivity. In all, there are four examples of this in the course of the

senior lessons

T The handout on imperialism (3 secs) How did you find it, Clare? The handout on imperialism

P Hard

T Hard

P I found it difficult

T Em, I mean (2 secs) what (1 sec) do you see the contradiction, though, in your own mind?

P Well they had land there, but unless they were going to put people there, you know

T but they did in many cases

P Well, that's what I asked you, did they?

T It became a kind of prestige issue, which we'll definitely be looking at later on (1 sec) but there are other things implicit in this as well, you see, when we're talking about the increase in population

P Sir, all I'm saying is that the population increase is really is a load of codswallop

T Therefore, if you convert a couple of hundred thousand people to wear clothes, there's a ready market for you You could sell your finished produce back to the Africans So you can't separate you can't really separate the different factors Yeah?

P Most of the people in Africa were, I would say, less wealthy than that They didn't have any money How did they buy clothes?

In the first of the examples, the 'I' is formulated by the pupil in response to the teacher's question The 'I' is descriptive in character, and, from a

discursive point of view, is not of great significance.

In the second example, the pupil formulates a confident 'I' in order to obtain a teacher response to a question posed by the pupil and which he feels has not been answered in a satisfactory manner. An interesting feature of the phrase 'that's what I asked you' is the way in which it fixes the relationship of the 'I' to the 'you', and draws out the obligation of the 'you' to provide a proper answer to the qeustion which has been posed. The teacher acknowledges this obligation and attempts to give an appropriate answer.

At a later stage in this lengthy teacher-pupil exchange, the pupil formulates an 'I' subject while upholding his right to hold an opinion that differs from that of the teacher. The teacher has argued that the increase in population in parts of Europe was one of the reasons for the colonization of Africa. The pupil rejects this argument as 'a load of codswallop'. The pupil's mode of argument reveals his awareness of the intersubjective nature of historical discourse and he upholds his right to hold an independent point of view on the issue. In response to the pupil's remarks, the teacher requests that the pupil keep an open mind on the matter until 'we get a bit more detail'. Implicit in this remark is the suggestion that the pupil is not in possession of sufficient knowledge to formulate the kind of confident 'I' subject that appeared in his remark. 'All I'm saying is that the population increase (...) is a load of codswallop'. The pupil has no way of deciding on the knowingness of the 'I' subject he has formulated, yet still wishes to retain his right to formulate an independent subject. This is clear from the somewhat ironical remark he makes to the teacher, 'I'll trust you', which at once upholds his independence while complying with the suggestion of the teacher.

T. No. You think its a load of codswallop? But will you wait till we go a bit further?

P. (Yeah) ((laughter))

T. (You will?) And get a bit more detail before you decide that it's a load of codswallop?

P. OK

T. Will you accept that?

P I'll trust you

In the fourth example, a pupil interrupts an argument being made by the teacher and offers his own opinion, which calls into question what the teacher has been saying The pupil is aware that his view of the matter may not be shared by all, but, upholding its validity, he asks if the poverty of the natives might not undermine the teacher's opinion on the matter The teacher replies at length to the pupil, accepts the pupil's view and goes on to endorse it The phrase 'I agree with you' is the clearest indication in these lessons that some of the teacher pupil exchanges are truly dialogic in nature

The three occasions on which the pupils formulate a 'you' in their talk are of discursive interest

P If they had a war with England, why would they want to trade with England? You said that the main country they'd be trading with would be England

T Oh, did I?

P Yeah

P You said that Russia wanted to be on good relations with the Balkans If they wanted to be on good relations, why should they take them over?

T What in fact Russia tried to do was to become a kind of father figure

T But will you wait till we go on a bit further ( ) and get a bit more detail before you decide that it's a load of codswallop?

P OK

T Will you accept that?

P I'll trust you

In the first example, the pupil questions what has been said by the teacher. The teacher has made two points which appear to be logically inconsistent. The pupil interrupts and questions the teacher on these points, making the 'you' accountable for what he has said. In this way, the pupil takes on the task of adjudicating on the reasonableness of the teacher's argument. The teacher's reformulation bears witness to the teacher's acceptance of the pupil's self-designated role as adjudicator.

In the second example, the same pupil raises the question of the logical relationship between two of the teacher's statements. In this example, as in the first, the teacher takes account of the pupil's comments and attempts to supply a satisfactory explanation to the pupil. In this way, the pupil exercises a limited control over the direction of the discourse and indirectly selects the issues to be addressed by the discourse at this point in the lesson.

These two questions and the formulation of the 'you' which they contain are very significant in the context of pupil involvement in the discourse. The pupil adjudicates on the acceptability of the teacher's arguments and calls into question some elements of the teacher's talk. These two practices reflect a greater pupil involvement in the discourse than was the case in the junior lessons.

DISCUSSION

In the two junior lessons, the classroom discourse was dominated by the discourse practices of the teacher. The formulation of knowing subjects, the asking of closed questions, the fixing of the issues to be addressed, the formulation of the 'you' all ensured that the teacher exercised a control over the development and direction of the discourse.

In contrast to the teacher's contribution, the pupils' contributions seemed relatively insignificant. The discursive weakness of the subject formulated by the pupils ensured that there was no true intersubjective dimension to the academic discourse of these lessons. In short, there was a very great asymmetry between the teacher and the pupils in the discourse of the lessons. In the lessons, the 'I' and the 'we' subjects of the teacher's talk were characterized by their knowingness and authority. In contrast to this, the 'you' was portrayed as being without knowledge and therefore the 'you' was not extended dialogue rights by the teacher. The 'you' was not invited to enter the discourse as an independent subject

capable of making a meaningful contribution to the discourse

In the senior lessons, the 'I' was portrayed in a greater variety of states of-being The formulation of the 'I' was more dialogic in manner than in the junior lessons In keeping with the dialogic formulation of the 'I', the teacher formulated the 'you' on a number of occasions, as an independent and knowing subject, and thus, the relationship of the 'you' to the 'I' was not marked by the same fixity that characterized the relationship in the junior lesson

In both junior and senior lessons, the 'we' was formulated in an authoritative manner This subject was formulated when the teacher wished to fix the issues to be addressed by the discourse or close a teacher pupil exchange The practice 'belongs' very much to the teacher, and, together with the practice of asking closed questions, was one which featured in both senior and junior lessons

For many pupils (in both classes), their only contribution to the discourse was to answer closed questions However, in the senior class, a small number of pupils made contributions which showed them to be, at particular phases in the lesson, very nearly equal dialogue partners with the teacher

Both teacher and pupil discourse practices changed with the transfer from junior to senior lessons A small number of pupils in the senior lessons employed many of the same practices as the teacher, though never with the same frequency What pupils did not do (with one exception) was to adjudicate on what the teacher said or fix the issues to be addressed by the discourse It is these authoritative and judicial practices which, above all else, distinguished the classroom talk of the teacher from that of the pupils The judicial 'we' formulated in the talk of the teacher did not represent a rational consensus arrived at by the 'Is' of the discourse The judicial practices of the teacher were mostly responsible for the asymmetry between teacher and pupil participation in the discourse, which characterized these lessons

These judicial practices inhibit the participation of students in the discourse and make it difficult for individual students to be accepted as a subject capable of making meaningful contributions to the discourse The asymmetrical character of the discourse relations in the classroom is a reflection of the social relations whereby teachers are invested with

authority and of the difference in knowledge and discursive competence between teacher and pupils. Given that the majority of classroom situations are characterized by asymmetry, it is unlikely that teaching can aspire to anything closely approximating the Ideal Situation of Habermas. The Ideal Situation is a formal description of the form of communication concomitant with a rational society seeking to guarantee the autonomy and responsibility of its members. It is a version of Utopia.

However, teaching can seek to bring about the conditions in which students can participate as autonomously as possible, given the limitations of their knowledge or understanding, and through this participation increase their discursive competence and confidence. For example, the practice of asking closed questions in the junior lessons did not allow the pupils to employ any of the discourse practices necessary for the creation of dialogue. This was an unnecessary constraint on the participation of pupils in the discourse. Equally in the senior lessons, the practice of fixing the issues of the discourse called into question the competence of the pupil to interrupt the discourse in an appropriate way, despite the metastatement which legislated for such an interruption; furthermore, the employemnt of an authoritative 'we' subject to close teacher-pupils exchanges tended to diminish the discursive space open to the pupils.

Given the fact/opinion distinction that underlies historical discourse and the discourse of many other school subjects, the employment of discourse practices which lead to unnecessary constraints on the participation of students denies them the opportunity to engage in these discourse practices which constitute the subject. Furthermore, students are denied the opportunity to employ these discourse practices which are important for their self-formation. If teaching seeks to assist in the self-formation of students and to provide opportunities for students to study in a meaningful way, then it must seek to create situations of inter-subjectivity in the classroom, even if the dominant mode of communication continues to be monological. The failure to do so will raise many questions about the assumptions and presuppositions implicit in the practice of teaching.

CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TRANSCRIPTS

1	( )	Marks something which was said but could not be identified clearly
2	(he)	Marks probable, though not certain transcription
3	( )	Marks editing out of passage from the transcript
4	(9 secs)	Marks the numbers of seconds of silence between utterances
5	((laughter))	Marks the comments of the transcriber
6	he it	Marks a re formulation of utterance by the speaker
7	–	Marks cut off point of utterance or turn to speak by the next speaker

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