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ABSTRACT

The great majority of poor readers in urban schools are members of an ethnic minority, a low social class, and a poor family. The simple recognition of these factors, however, is of no help in characterizing the specific sources of language norms among urban minority students or in determining the ways these distinctive norms interfere with reading. Positions set forth in an attempt to define these considerations have tended to assume varying degrees of either language deficit or language difference. The language deficit position is reviewed in this paper. In an attempt to redress a lack of focus in the literature on the underlying social and cognitive forms of language, the deficit position is criticized from sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives. A number of misunderstandings of deictic processes in verbal communication apparent in the language deficit position are analyzed. A counterposition is developed based upon the understanding of a new line of processes, which the author refers to as "cultural deixis", in addition to the already established line, referred to as "discourse deixis". (GC)

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URBAN MINORITY STUDENTS, LANGUAGE, AND READING

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The development of reading skills is crucial for every member of a literate society, for such skills provide access to the complex bodies of information necessary for successful participation in school as well as in the larger society. In addition, the ability to obtain meaning from print, quite apart from pragmatic considerations, can activate particular worlds of esthetic, emotional, and intellectual experience that come from no other source. It may well be that, despite the forecasts that electronic media are moving our society into a postliterate era, our reading skills will be used not only to process increasingly complex bodies of technical information, but also to maintain, in the threatening context of a machine-oriented technology, a sense of our creative selves--thinking, feeling, and aware of holistic form.

Yet the reading skills of great numbers of minority students are poorly developed in our urban schools. The reading problems of these students are particularly disconcerting, for there have been recent signs that reading skills are improving among students in the mainstream population.[1] According to the Report of the Committee on Reading of the National Academy of Education,

> recent restandardization of ... tests show that national averages have been moving upward ..., yet reading deficits in certain minority groups--particularly among poor blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans--[remain] much greater than in the population at large. (Chall & Carroll, 1975:11)

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It is often argued that standardized tests of reading are biased with respect to minority students, since the written materials do not represent adequately their own norms of thought, language, and communication. Yet the fact remains that these tests do represent a reasonable sampling of the kinds of written materials that these students encounter in schools as well as in society at large.

A considerable amount of research has attempted to characterize the major forces that contribute to the reading problems of urban minority students. Researchers such as Stewart and Baratz have tended to stress ethnicity as the primary source of these students' distinctive norms of language use, while allowing for the influence of complex forces associated with social and economic status. On the other hand, researchers influenced by Bernstein have emphasized the primacy of social class, at the same time recognizing that certain ethnic groups are disproportionately represented in the lower social classes. Other researchers, particularly those influenced by the Marxist interpretation of thinkers like Freire and Illich, have preferred to isolate "poverty" as the most significant force operating upon ethnic groups in the lower social classes. In fact, certain of these researchers have argued that ethnicity is relatively unimportant in comparison to poverty. Meier speaks, for example,

> of the large percentage of the poor who never become competent readers. Given this incontestable fact, it is unfortunate that public focus has centered largely on the gap in scores on standardized tests that exists between blacks and Puerto Ricans on one hand and middle class whites on the other. For one thing, it tends to draw attention away from the fact that poor whites have had a similar history of difficulty, while middle class blacks and Puerto Ricans do generally become competent readers. (1973:1)

There has been no conclusive research to determine the relative degree of influence of ethnicity, social class, and poverty on the reading problems of urban minority students. It is clear, however, that the great majority of poor readers in our urban schools are simultaneously members of an ethnic minority, a lower social class, and a poor family.

That poor readers are members of these three groups does not, however, tell us much about the specific forces that contribute directly to their reading problems. In a recent review of research on reading, MacGinitie points out how a general label like poverty masks the more specific forces that are at work:

> Recently 'poverty' has replaced 'lower social class' in some conceptualizations of research. While such a label may in other respects be somewhat more to the point than 'lower social class,' it is still relatively meaningless as a research variable--far less informative than its correlates or components, such as nutrition, time and money spent on travel, space to study, and the influence of community crime rates on children's activities. (1976:30)

By the same token, other highly specific variables could be established that are even more directly related to reading: the availability of written materials in the home; the kinds of language that these materials embody; and the amount of time invested in the use of these materials by parents, by children, and by parents with their children. Such variables would reflect more directly the extent to which parents feel that literate channels should supplement oral ones in the transmission of knowledge and values.

Certainly, "ethnicity," "lower social class," and "poverty" are powerful symbols for evoking the complex set of forces that shapes the distinctive norms of thought, language, and communication of urban minority children, thereby creating dissonance in their interaction with written materials. Yet none of these terms are of particular help in characterizing the specific sources of language norms among urban minority students. From the pedagogical point of view, however, it is not crucial which of these labels is most appropriate for characterizing these sources; rather it is important, first, that teachers understand the ways in which these students' language norms differ from those represented in the reading materials in schools and, secondly, that teachers find ways of helping students understand this difference so that they may become good readers.

Just as it has been difficult to characterize the ways in which forces associated with ethnicity, social class, and poverty create distinctive norms of language use, so it has been difficult to characterize the ways in which these distinctive norms interfere with reading. During the past two decades, the complex relations between these language norms and reading problems have been the subject of considerable research, policy formulation, and program development within the educational community. Although many positions have been set forth, all tend to assume varying degrees of either <u>language deficit</u> or <u>language difference</u>. Cazden has distinguished these two positions in the following way:

> Either [urban minority children] have acquired less language than middle class ... children or they have acquired a different language. The "less language" explanation has been given various names--cultural deprivation, deficit hypothesis, vacuum ideology--all with the same connotation of a non-verbal child somehow emptier of language than his more socially fortunate age-mates. The "different language" explanation is forcefully argued by William Stewart and Joan Baratz .... It states that all children acquire language but that many children, especially ... lower class black children, acquire a dialect of English so different in structural ... features that communication in school, both oral and written, is seriously impaired by that fact alone. (1970:35-36)

A considerable literature has been generated by the debate between proponents of these two positions. Although much of this debate has been useful, some of it has blurred basic issues. It has, at times, been conducted within a strictly linguistic framework not complemented by sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives. In general, it has been tied too closely to a discussion of surface forms of language rather than to their underlying social and cognitive functions. It is therefore important that in reviewing these positions, we adopt, wherever possible, a sociolinguistic or a psycholinguistic point of view. As a consequence of this orientation, our focus will not be so much on overt conflicts between the two positions as on the underlying assumptions of each. In the remainder of this article, we will review the language deficit position and then develop a counterposition. In a separate article to follow in this series, we will examine the language difference position and suggest a number of modifications.

REVIEW OF LANGUAGE DEFICIT POSITION

The language deficit position has had a much greater impact on educational policy than has the language difference position. It has often served as a rationale for educational programs on a national scale. It has been used, for example, as a justification for massive programs such as DISTAR, Operation Headstart, and Project Followthrough. All these programs have reflected, in one form or another, the same assumption: since urban minority children come to school with poorly developed language skills, they must be provided, early on, with language enrichment.

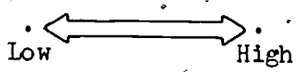
In the educational setting of the late 1960's, the most outspoken advocates of the language deficit approach were Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelmann. They attempted to relate their own approach to the extensive body of sociolinguistic theory that Basil Bernstein was evolving, at the time, at the Institute of Education of the University of London. Bernstein's own thinking was quite complex, involving sociological and psychological components as well as a linguistic one. Furthermore, his thinking was in a constant state of change throughout the 1960's. However, a distinction between two codes of communication was, at all points, fundamental to his approach. And it was these two codes, most commonly referred to as restricted and elaborated, that many researchers, including Bereiter and Engelmann, drew on and often misapplied.

This misapplication was, to some degree, motivated by Bernstein's own choice of labels, for the contrast between the words "restricted" and "elaborated" suggests, at least in ordinary speech, that the restricted code is, in some way, intrinsically inferior. Bernstein had been careful, however, to emphasize that each code was a perfectly natural, well-adapted mechanism for transmitting information appropriate to a particular communicative setting. Indeed, the use of an elaborated code in a setting marked for a restricted one would be just as inappropriate as the use of a restricted code in a setting marked for an elaborated one.

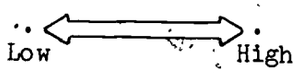
Although Bernstein and his associates characterized communicative settings in a number of ways, they consistently called attention to certain dimensions which may be represented in the following set of scales (the first three scales measure dimensions reflected in the social character of the setting, the second three dimensions reflected in the character of the information transmitted in the setting):

1. Degree of formality in the setting — Low ⟷ High
2. Degree of social heterogeneity among the participants — Low ⟷ High
3. Degree to which the participants do not draw upon common experience — Low ⟷ High
4. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects more than the participants' everyday world of experience — Low ⟷ High

5. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects abstract domains of reference



6. Degree to which the verbalized information reflects an explicit formulation of internal dimensions of experience (values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, etc.)



In general, the more a particular communicative setting reflects relatively high readings on the above scales, the more elaborated the code that its participants use; and the more it reflects relatively low readings, the more restricted the code that its participants use.

In addition, Bernstein and his associates characterized the linguistic features of the two codes in a number of different ways, but, again, a relatively stable set of features may be isolated: the elaborated code reflects a wider range of vocabulary (particularly items with abstract domains of reference); it exhibits greater syntactic complexity (i.e., sentences that encode more extensive bodies of information with explicit markers of coordination and subordination); it makes greater use of cohesive ties between sentences (i.e., lexical and grammatical elements that link sentences explicitly); it depends less on deictically anchored forms of language such as this, that, etc. (i.e., words whose meaning is dependent upon the immediate point of view of the participants in the communicative situation).

Bernstein argued that members of all social classes have access to both codes, but that members of the middle and upper social classes tend to make greater use of an elaborated code. In the first place, their patterns of socialization contribute to this greater use. Elaborate forms of verbal interaction are encouraged between adults and children: for example, parents tend to provide more explicit statements of explanations, reasons, and values in dealing with their children. Moreover, members of the middle and upper classes participate in a much wider range of communicative settings in which exact forms of information must be transmitted (e.g., arranging for air travel by telephone). As a consequence, they become accustomed to drawing upon a code that is, in Bernstein's phrase, "more universalistic and context-independent."

Bernstein argued that, by contrast, the lesser social mobility of members of the lower classes limits the range of communicative settings in which they can participate. They tend to communicate more frequently in settings where they share with the other

participants an extensive body of experience. As a consequence, they become accustomed to drawing upon this common experience in a code that is, to use Bernstein's phrase, "more particularistic and context-dependent." However, Bernstein, unlike certain researchers who claimed to use his approach, was careful to point out that just as members of middle and upper classes tend to use a more restricted code in certain settings (e.g., within the family where a history of shared experience is drawn upon), so members of lower classes tend to use a more elaborated code in certain settings (e.g., on a job interview where there is virtually no such history). Hence Bernstein viewed the two codes as possessing distinct but overlapping patterns of distribution in social space.[2]

In taking over Bernstein's functional distinction between restricted and elaborated codes, researchers such as Bereiter and Engelmann oversimplified it considerably. First of all, they assumed that an elaborated code is intrinsically superior to a restricted one. They did not, like Bernstein, evaluate the codes according to the communicative setting in which they function. Secondly, they overlooked the other aspect of Bernstein's position that we have just noted, namely, that members of all social classes have potential access to both codes. Bereiter and Engelmann, for the most part, applied the distinction between the two codes categorically: urban minority students, as members of a lower class, make use of a restricted code that contrasts with the elaborated code used by members of middle and upper classes. They supported this claim by citing extensive interviews they conducted with preschool black children. Bereiter, for example, claimed that the language of these children consists primarily of "gestures," "single words," and "a series of badly connected words or phrases." He concluded that "the language of culturally deprived children is not merely an underdeveloped version of standard English, but is a basically non-logical mode of expressive behavior" (1966:113).

In a language arts curriculum designed by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), the teacher is advised to proceed "as if the children had no language at all." For example, if the children respond to the question, Where is the book? with the "non-logical" form on the table, the teacher is asked to make them replace it with the "logical" form, The book is on the table. It was claimed that persistent use of such "logical form" in speech would prepare the child for processing the "formal properties [of written language] necessary for the organization of thought" (1966:113).

Such an extreme language deficit approach has been discredited, time and again, for its naïveté. This naïveté need not be belabored here but let us briefly review the major criticisms

of the language deficit position--two sociolinguistically based and one psycholinguistically based--that have been advanced by proponents of the language difference position. Following this review, we will then develop in much greater detail a second psycholinguistically based criticism--one much more oriented toward constructive processes involved in reading comprehension--which has not been set forth, at least not in a highly explicit form, by proponents of language difference.

Sociolinguistic Criticisms of the Language Deficit Position

Proceeding from a sociolinguistic point of view, proponents of language difference have argued that the language deficit position was based on invalid criteria in its evaluation of the oral performance of minority students in the various domains of their everyday life. Language deficit researchers have tended to observe the children in artificial settings rather than natural ones. Within these settings, the children often perceive that whatever they say might work against them and, as a matter of communicative competence, tend to say as little as possible and preferably nothing at all. As Labov has pointed out with reference to the interviewing conducted by these researchers,

> thousands of such interviews are used as evidence of the child's total verbal capacity, or more simply his "verbality"; it is argued that this lack of verbality explains his poor performance in school. Operation Headstart and other intervention programs have largely been based upon the "deficit theory"--the notion that such interviews give us a measure of the child's verbal capacity and that verbal stimulation which he has been missing can be supplied in a pre-school environment. (1970:158)

Labov's own research showed that the same minority children who were "nonverbal" in an interview setting turned out to be highly verbal when interacting with each other and a trusted minority interviewer in informal settings:

> The monosyllabic speaker who had nothing to say about anything and cannot remember what he did yesterday has disappeared. Instead we have two boys who have so much to say they keep interrupting each other ... And we in turn obtain the volume of speech and the rich array of grammatical devices which we need for analyzing the structure of nonstandard Negro English. (1970)

Secondly, language deficit researchers have not used sociolinguistically valid criteria in evaluating the language used by urban minority children in oral communication. They have viewed the oral language of these children as though it should reflect formal properties consonant with those of written language. Consider, for example, their claim that an answer such as on the table is a non-logical response to a question such as Where is the book? Such a claim clearly denies sociolinguistic reality, for the omission of a linguistic element such as the book is reflects a pervasive feature of oral communication, namely, that a speaker tends not to repeat in a response information that has already been established in a question.

Indeed, such ellipsis is one of the most salient means of realizing the socio-logical form of conversation. The structure of conversation is a social product rather than the work of a single individual. It emerges as one person omits some portion of his or her own language structure, thereby activating an apposite portion of the language structure of the interlocutor. As will be later observed in the psycholinguistic criticisms of the language deficit position, ellipsis, along with deixis, is a fundamental means of signaling that certain contextual information may be assumed as given. It may thus be viewed as a kind of social feedback, a listener's way of signaling that certain information has, indeed, been received and need not be repeated. As the original speaker monitors the listener's elliptical signal, he or she may, in turn, respond in kind, thereby creating the interlocking patterns of ellipsis that constitute natural conversation.

In this sense, the logical bases of everyday conversation and formal writing contrast sharply: in the former, it is elaborated socially; in the latter, it is constructed individually. In the one instance, it is dia-logical and, in the other, mono-logical. As a consequence of this contrast, a certain lack of logic may thus be ascribed to the researchers rather than the children; for it is they who transferred criteria for evaluating language form from written prose to everyday conversation, a domain in which these criteria are not at all applicable. It is as if they were to describe a horse's body as deficient because it does not possess a pair of horns.

Psycholinguistic Criticisms of the Language Deficit Position

Let us now turn to the major psycholinguistically based criticism of the language deficit position that proponents of language difference set forth, the one directed at the assumption that nonstandard forms of language reflect deficient

cognition. Bereiter and Engelmann held, for example, that a sentence such as John don't got none reflects a deficient understanding of the basic concepts of number and negation. The lack of an es (/z/) after do, and the presence of two /n/-initiated markers of negation (n't and none) were taken as indicating a deficient understanding of these concepts.

This form of argument by the more extreme proponents of language deficit is particularly ironic, since certain of the minority speech patterns they call attention to can be perceived as representing more regular linguistic paradigms than the mainstream patterns. Consider, for example, the purported lack of number agreement represented by John do. From the strict point of view of internal consistency in language patterning, it is the mainstream form John does that is irregular. For the (e)s in the third person singular form represents the only instance in English in which the verb is marked for number agreement with the subject. Hence its omission in minority speech may be viewed as representing a more consistent patterning, one which appears in dialects of English in other parts of the world.

Equally naïve from a linguistic point of view is the argument that the nonstandard double marker of negation reflects deficient cognition. This argument makes the claim that nonstandard John don't got none is logically equivalent to a positive predication, paraphrasable in standard English as John has some. An even stronger form of this argument, occasionally sounded in language deficit circles, claims that nonstandard speakers, by virtue of this equivalence, do not manage to express a proper concept of negation even as they communicate with each other.

A number of criticisms have been made of these claims by proponents of language difference. As Labov (1970) points out, if a nonstandard speaker wishes to use a double marker of negation to express the logical equivalence of the standard John has some, he does exactly what the standard speaker does--he places contrastive stress on none:

		Paraphrase in standard English
Nonstandard	John don't got nóne.	→ John has some.
Standard	John doesn't have nóne.	→ John has some.

However, in the absence of contrastive stress on none (used only when it has been already presupposed in some way that John, indeed, has none), the nonstandard sentence is, in fact, logically equivalent to the standard John doesn't have any. In effect, unstressed none in nonstandard English is equivalent to unstressed any in standard English. Each contrasts with some in the corresponding positive predication. In its contrast to some, standard any, as much as nonstandard none, may be considered a marker of negation. Hence the standard sequence not ... any, as well as the nonstandard sequence not ... none, may be considered as realizing a double marker of negation.[3]

Language difference proponents have made a further criticism of the more extreme claim that speakers of nonstandard English fail to express negation properly to each other. It is evident that not only do they express negation quite clearly to each other, but to speakers of standard English as well. In the absence of stress on none, it is difficult to imagine speakers of standard English interpreting nonstandard John don't got none as John has some. For it is clear that speakers of standard English possess a receptive competence with respect to this feature of nonstandard English, just as speakers of nonstandard English possess a receptive competence with respect to many features of standard English. We are not suggesting, however, that the receptive competence of standard speakers for nonstandard speech is well developed in all instances. As we will observe in the article to follow, a major problem that urban minority students face in schools is the failure of their teachers to understand certain basic patterns of their speech.

Having established this brief overview of the major criticisms of the language deficit position by proponents of language difference, let us now turn to a second psycholinguistically based criticism, the one which, as we have already pointed out, has not hitherto been developed explicitly. We will deal with this criticism in much greater detail, for it provides the conceptual base for the counterposition to the language deficit one that we will develop in the second part of this article. In essence, this criticism is directed at the language deficit researchers' use of an inadequately conceived theory of reference in evaluating the language performance of urban minority students. Many proponents of language deficit, whose views are not so extreme as those of Bereiter and Engelmann, have claimed that the communicative code of these students necessarily conveys less meaning because it is more deictically anchored in the immediate context. They have claimed that the apparently greater reliance of urban minority students on deictic forms such as it, one, this, that, here, and now indicates a general inability to formulate and express explicit forms of meaning. In staking out

this position, language deficit proponents have assumed that deictic forms of language, in contrast to lexically explicit forms, convey less meaning because they possess less semantic content. The use of *that*, for example, may indicate "greater distance" (psychological as well as physical), by virtue of its potential contrast with *this*. And it may convey the notion of singularity by virtue of its potential contrast with the plural form *those*. But any more detailed meaning for *that* can only be derived from immediate context. In one context, *that* may refer to some object such as a button in the physical environment:

> Hey, *that's* what I've been looking for.

In another context, however, it may refer to a proposition in the verbal environment:

> My paper is due tomorrow. *That's* why I won't get any sleep tonight.

As a consequence, its meaning is always context-bound and particularistic, limited to the immediate point of view of the participants in the speech situation.

Language deficit proponents have argued, concomitantly, that lexically explicit forms of language possess a more clearly delineated semantic content and consequently may be used to talk about the world with much greater precision. For example, the lexical item *button*, unlike deictic *that*, may refer only to a highly differentiated set of material objects in the real world. The lexical phrase *black button* refers to a more differentiated set, the expanded lexical phrase *big black button* to an even more differentiated set, and so on. It has thus been concluded that the person who uses lexically explicit forms of language is able to render his experience of the world with greater clarity, producing meaning that is context-free and universalistic rather than context-bound and particularistic. It is as if, by virtue of greater lexical specificity, a person is liberated from his own immediate perspective.

Before examining this position in some detail, let us consider two frequently cited examples that show contrast between lexically explicit and deictically anchored forms of language across social classes. We shall first examine material drawn from research by Hawkins (1969) on the ways in which visually mediated information is represented verbally by middle-class and lower-class five-year-old children in London. Within a school setting, members of these two groups were presented with four pictures which showed, in turn, some boys playing with a football

next to a house; the football going through the window; a man gesturing wildly; and the children running away while a woman looks out the window. Hawkins constructs two versions of the stories which he claims are representative of the disparate styles of verbal communication of the two groups. The first version represents the middle-class style, the second the lower-class style.

1. Three boys are playing football and one kicks the ball--and it goes through the window--the ball breaks the window--and the boys are looking at it--and a man comes out and shouts at them--because they've broken the window--so they ran away--and then that lady looks out of her window--and she tells the boys off.

2. They're playing football--and he kicks it and it goes through there--it breaks the window and they're looking at it--and he comes out and shouts at them--because they've broken it--so they run away--and then she looks out and she tells them off. (1969:127)

The middle-class version is, for the most part, lexically explicit; it uses deictic pronominals only where lexical antecedents are clearly established (e.g., three boys/they, that lady/she). The lower-class version, however, is much less lexically explicit. Three boys and that lady are not used at all; rather they and she are introduced without lexical antecedents.

The second set of examples is drawn from research by Hess and Shipman (1966) in the black community of Chicago, in which they describe variations in mother-child verbal styles of interaction across social class. In the presentation of their data, they include recorded excerpts of mothers explaining the same task to their children, one designed "to teach ... how to group or sort a small number of toys." More specifically, the mothers are to teach the children to use color as the criterion for sorting the toys. The following pair of excerpts is presented as representing the contrasting verbal styles of middle-class and lower-class mothers.

1. First of all, you're supposed to learn how to place them according to color. Can you do that? The things that are all the same

color you put in one section; in the other section you put another group of colors, and in the third section you put the last group of colors.

2. All right, just put them right here; put the other one right here; all right, put the other one there. (1966:881)

Again, it may be observed that the middle-class speech is more lexically explicit, the lower-class speech more deictically anchored. It is the kind of contrast represented by these two sets of examples that is generally taken as evidence that members of the middle and upper social classes tend to talk about the world in a more lexically explicit way. It is argued that they are thereby liberated from their own immediate point of view, expressing more universalistic modes of meaning. On the other hand, members of the lower social classes are viewed as talking about the world in a more deictically anchored way. It is argued that they are thereby limited to their own immediate point of view, expressing, as it were, more particularistic modes of meaning. As Hess and Shipman put it, in summarizing the findings of their own study, "the meaning of deprivation is a deprivation of meaning" (1966:885).

The position taken in the above studies, each frequently cited in sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic literature, is, on the surface, a quite respectable one; yet it is based on an inadequate conceptualization of the ways in which information is represented verbally in human communication. A full criticism of this conceptualization requires more space than we have available here. We would like, however, to consider four fundamental characteristics of language that have not been adequately dealt with by the researchers who hold this position (the first two are more concerned with the functions of deictic forms, the second two with the functions of lexical forms).

1. Language functions as only a single channel in a multichanneled oral system that represents information holistically.

2. The form of verbal representation necessarily changes so as to reflect a continuous monitoring of the status of the information it represents.

3. The referential functions of lexical forms as well as deictic forms are established only in an immediate context, whether it is mediated verbally or nonverbally.

4. Lexical forms of language may possess contrasting referential functions characterized as deictic and nondeictic.

Let us consider each of these characteristics in turn. The argument that deictically anchored language necessarily carries less meaning presupposes that the linguistic channel functions alone--apart from the paralinguistic and nonlinguistic ones--when, in reality, these channels together form a holistic system. In order to illustrate this point, let us consider once again responses to the question Where's the book?. A deictically anchored response like right here is rarely given without an accompanying nonlinguistic one. A hand gesture, for example, might signal the book's location with a degree of exactitude not to be found in an act of communication consisting only of the lexically explicit form on the table.

A lexically explicit response, of course, may be accompanied by a hand gesture as well. But it appears that, in general, deictically anchored language is accompanied by a richer array of nonverbal and paraverbal signals than lexically explicit language. Upon using deictically anchored language, a speaker tends, as a matter of communicative instinct, to supply contextual information by means of nonverbal and paraverbal cues; and the listener, upon hearing deictically anchored language, instinctively searches for these cues. Furthermore, it appears that certain information, particularly that which is provided by the immediate physical environment, is represented more efficiently by conjoining deictically anchored language with nonverbal and paraverbal cues. Indeed, an understanding of how deixis links the verbal code to nonverbal and paraverbal codes restores to us the core meaning that the word originally possessed in Greek, namely, "a pointing toward."

Let us now turn to our second point, namely, that the form of language is continuously modified in order to signal whether the information that it represents is to be viewed as "old" (i.e., the sender of the information assumes that it is already present in some form in the communicative setting and that the receiver is in a position to retrieve it) or "new" (i.e., the sender of the information assumes that it is not present in the communicative setting--at least not in a form that can be retrieved by the receiver). This monitoring of the status of information would appear to be one of the most basic functions of language (and, for that matter, of any information-processing system), for all natural languages possess abundant resources for fulfilling it. Although these resources are highly varied, they may, in general, be considered as expressions of either ellipsis

or deixis. Some portion of the linguistic signal may be reduced to "zero" (i.e., the process of ellipsis) or to a kind of "dummy element"(i.e., the process of deixis). Just as we may omit the book is in responding with on the table to the question Where's the book?, so we may say right here rather than on the table, when the table is immediately before the speaker and the hearer. In each instance, a reduction in the linguistic signal is stimulated by contextual information. In the case of on the table, information is located in the verbal environment; the book is is present in the preceding question. But the further reduction of on the table to right here signals that the speaker is assuming that he or she shares with the listener even further information, namely, the sensorially mediated information that the book is, indeed, on the table right before them.

In summary, the sender of a message uses the processes of ellipsis and deixis to reduce the linguistic surface in order to signal to the receiver that the information being transmitted is, in some sense, old. Upon receiving an elliptical or deictic signal from the sender, the receiver, in turn, is required to contextualize it in order to retrieve information already present in the communicative environment. In this sense, ellipsis and deixis function as highly cohesive processes in verbal communication: They force the receiver to integrate continuously emerging information with information that has already accumulated.

Just as it was earlier claimed that elliptical forms of language are highly motivated in certain communicative situations, so it will now be claimed that deictic forms are equally highly motivated. Indeed, the failure to use some kind of deictic element to signal the presence of old information may be just as unnatural as the failure to omit the book is in responding to the question Where's the book? Consider, for example, the following two sentences:

> My wife got sick. My wife's getting sick is why I couldn't come to your party.

Given our notions of how sentences fit together, the relation of the second sentence to the first is highly unnatural, for just the reason that it fails to exploit the presence of old information. Deictic that would naturally occur in place of my wife's getting sick in the second sentence:

> My wife got sick. That's why I couldn't come to your party.

By the same token, deictic forms of language are equally motivated when they represent information clearly accessible in the physical environment. Just as the first example above is unnatural, so it would be unnatural, in most situations, simply to say on the table in response to the question, Where's the book?, when the book is lying in full view on a table immediately before the speaker and the hearer.[4] In this instance, the speaker is motivated to use some kind of deictic expression, whether in isolation (e.g., right here), or as part of a lexical phrase (e.g., right here on the table). In fact, we can observe such compounding of deictic and lexical forms in the examples of middle-class speech given earlier. In the middle-class version of the story given by Hawkins, the woman looking out the window is represented as that lady rather than a lady. From the strict point of view of information monitoring, the middle-class children represented her in the same way as the lower-class children who used she. Both groups signaled by their choice of language that the identity of the woman could be taken as established, the first group using deictic that and the second using deictic she.

In presenting the information represented by boys and man, however, the middle-class version and the lower-class version do differ. The middle-class version introduces these participants as representing new information, the lower-class version as representing old information. This difference is not, however, a matter of more versus less meaning; it is rather a matter of whether or not a speaker decides to use language reflecting the fact that the listener too has access to the information he or she is representing verbally. Now it is clear that both the middle- and lower-class speakers had acquired the communicative competence by the age of five to use deictic forms in order to signal such access by the listener. Moreover, it is clear that they all knew that the person listening to their stories had such access. He was, after all, the person who was presenting the task of describing the pictures while they talked. In addition, he was physically present while each child talked and thus was in a position to observe what was in the pictures. The primary difference in the two communicative codes, then, would seem to lie in the different ways in which children in the two groups constituted the task. The middle-class children were apparently more aware that lexically explicit forms of language are preferred for the kinds of tasks constructed in a school setting. In other words, they had more access to school norms of language use, for one of the major characteristics of the school use of language is that a teacher seeks to elicit information that he or she already has. As the speech act theorist John Searle is fond of pointing

out, many teacher questions are not real questions at all: From an illocutionary point of view, they are merely "exam questions." The student knows that the teacher already knows the answers. The student, nevertheless, accepts the conditions of the task and agrees to offer the answers himself or herself.

The description of a set of pictures in a school setting presents a similar situation. A student may be expected to treat the pictures as if they represent information that the teacher does not have, even though it is clear that the teacher does have it. Students not accustomed to this school norm, however, may instead exercise the communicative competence they use in everyday speech. They would thus use deictic forms of language to represent information to which the listener has clear access. No matter which strategy they choose, they do not necessarily sacrifice any meaning.

Indeed, the question may be raised as to whether, in certain instances, a lexically explicit form of language might carry less meaning. In the sample of speech by a middle-class mother taken from Hess and Shipman, the language was quite complex, particularly given the fact that an appropriate use of deixis could have simplified it. (Such complexity is quite commonly displayed by a middle-class mother when there is an adult audience or when her child's competence is in some way called into question.) Moreover, the language, in spite of its complexity (or perhaps because of it), did not represent the real world situation accurately. For example, the mother first says, "the things that are all the same color you put in one section," and then she says, "then in the other section you put another group of colors." There are three pieces of misleading information in her use of purportedly explicit language (each has been underlined). First, "the things that are all the same color" is a way of characterizing what goes into each of the sections, not merely one section. Her use of "one section" potentially stimulates a misleading inference, namely, that a separate group of objects, unlike in color, should be placed in another section. Secondly, the use of "the other section" in reference to the second section presupposes that there are only two, when, in reality there are three; "another section" would have been a more accurate way of talking, although "the second section" might have fit better with the mother's larger pattern of discourse, since she uses "the third section" in the following sentence. Thirdly, she speaks of "another group of colors" when she intends to delimit a group of objects sharing another color. In other words, the mere fact that a mother is using lexically explicit forms of language with her child is no guarantee that she is talking about the world in a precise way.

It may, of course, be argued that such imprecisions would not have confused the child. In the first place they would have been accessible only in a highly refined semantic universe, one, no doubt, that the child did not yet possess. Moreover, even if he had had access to these imprecisions, he could still have managed to construct what his mother intended to say. For such imprecisions abound in everyday speech, and an essential aspect of receptive competence is knowing how to construct what a person intends to say, even when a particular choice of words may be misleading. Just as contextual information is activated in order to process deictic elements so it is activated in order to suppress misleading information; and the mother, no doubt, provided a great number of nonverbal and paraverbal cues that provided a context for what she was saying. It might be counterargued, however, that the receptive competence for such contextual information is less developed in children than in adults, for, in general, children are much more prone to follow misleading cues generated by the localized verbal context and thereby to draw inferences not warranted within the larger context that the communicative situation provides.

It may also be argued that the middle-class mother was, at least, trying to use language in a way that would lead her child to focus on the purpose of the task. In effect, she was pointing out the underlying principle on which the sorting was to be based. But then it may be counterargued that her explicit verbalizing merely deprived the child of the opportunity to arrive inductively at what the purpose of the sorting was. Given our limited knowledge of how learning takes place, we cannot be certain that it is not this kind of deprivation that Hess and Shipman should have studied. As Bruner points out, members of the middle class have been conditioned to believe, by virtue of their commitment to formal schooling, that learning takes place "out of the context of action, by means that are primarily symbolic." As a consequence, they may develop an excessive reliance on verbal mediation in learning tasks in everyday life, when such mediation is, in fact, often quite cumbersome. A great deal of everyday learning takes place in a context in which actions are more important than words. Yet middle-class styles of communication rely heavily on creating a context for learning by means of highly explicit talk, even when a sufficient context could be established by other means (e.g., observing a set of events or performing a sequence of actions). With respect to middle-class speech habits, Labov has rightly sounded the following note of caution:

> Before we impose middle class verbal style upon children from other cultural groups, we should find out how much is merely stylistic--

> or even dysfunctional. In high school and college, middle class students spontaneously complicate their syntax to the point that instructors despair of getting them to make their language simpler and clearer .... Is the elaborated code of Bernstein really so "flexible, detailed and subtle" as some psychologists (i.e. Jensen, 1969) believe? (1970:163-164)

There is one last argument to be raised with respect to the contrast in verbal styles reflected in the example drawn from the research by Hess and Shipman. Whether or not the middle-class mother's style is viewed as potentially "dysfunctional," it may still be argued that the lower-class mother's use of deictically anchored language is excessive. The speech that we have excerpted included three short sentences, and except for the verb put that occurred in each of the three, it contains no lexical forms. Rather it contains only pronominals such as them and the other one, locatives such as right here and there. In order to evaluate the degree to which these deictic forms are functional, it would be necessary to make further observations about what actually happens in the mother-child interaction. Ideally, two patterns of interaction should be observed:

1. what the child does in response to his mother's diectically anchored speech; if he does what she asks, then presumably he understands what she intends to communicate;

2. what happens between the mother and child after he has sorted the toys; if she manages to elicit from him what the purpose of the task was, her earlier use of deictic forms could be viewed as quite functional. For this initial lack of specification on her part would have permitted the child, after performing a series of actions, to verbalize for himself what the purpose of the task was.[5]

Within the domain of pedagogy, deictically anchored language may be used effectively by a teacher in order to preserve for the learner the task of explicit verbalization. As we have already pointed out with respect to the middle-class mother's verbal style, her child was deprived of the opportunity of verbalizing on his own what the purpose of the task was. The lower-class mother at least preserved, by virtue of her deictically anchored language, this opportunity for her own child. It is important to remind ourselves that we cannot evaluate the degree to which deictic

forms of language are functional, unless we consider the total pattern of human communication--actions as well as words--of which they are a part.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that everyday life does provide a continuous stream of deictically anchored language that is dysfunctional. In a great number of communicative situations, one person erroneously assumes that another has access to certain information. In effect, a person often speaks to another as if he were speaking to himself. As Vygotsky, the great Russian psycholinguist, was fond of observing, a person already knows, in his inner speech, what he is going to say: The very texture of human consciousness is to anticipate, at one moment, what will be present at the next. As a consequence, what a person says to himself is continuously represented as if it were already known and thereby is necessarily reduced in its fundamental structure.[6]

In the harried and preoccupied texture of everyday life, a person often assumes, when speaking to others, that they have access to what is at the center of his or her own consciousness; and so he or she inadvertently transfers certain reductive processes from inner speech to the social domain where they may not be at all appropriate. If a child, for example, has frequently talked to his mother about his efforts to run one hundred meters in less than fifteen seconds, he may return home from school one day, after having told his mother that morning he would be running the one-hundred meters race during gym class, and exclaim, "Well, mommy, at last I've done it." The mother, preoccupied with cooking supper, reading to his sister, and helping his brother with homework, may look up and ask in bewilderment, "Done what?" The child has assumed that his mother shared with him, by virtue of their parting conversation that morning (and, of course, the endless talks that preceded it), a shared focus on his efforts to run one hundred meters in fifteen seconds. Indeed, the child's use of deictic done it may have been an attempt to establish symbolically the world of personal intimacy that he continuously seeks with his mother. For he may persistently use these forms as a means of signaling publicly that he views her as having continuous access to what his own personal concerns are. He badly misjudged, however, just what his mother's state of awareness was at the moment of his return. She was busily caught up in another world, one in which his one-hundred meter race was not particularly salient.

There is a well-established body of research in social psychology providing evidence that children are, in fact, less able than adults to take into account their interlocutor's point

of view in verbal communication (cf., Glucksberg, Krauss, & Higgins, 1975, for a thorough review of this research). For example, when two persons are placed on opposite sides of a solid screen and are required to communicate about various placements of an array of objects which they each possess, children are more prone than adults to use deictically anchored language inappropriately.

Glucksberg, Krauss, and Weisberg (1966) report the following kind of conversation,

> where preschool children attempt to communicate with one another without visual contact:
>
> Speaker: It's a bird.
> Listener: Is this it?
> Speaker: No.
>
> Neither speaker nor listener in this case seemed to display any awareness of an important characteristic of their mutual situation--they could neither see one another nor see what they were each talking about. (1975:320)

Proponents of the language deficit position have cited certain studies within this body of research (Baldwin & Garvey, 1970; Heider, 1971; Krauss & Rotter, 1968) as providing support for their own claims that urban minority children, as members of lower social classes, are particularly dependent on their own point of view in verbal communication, are thereby more inclined to use deictic and elliptical forms of language inappropriately, and are thus prone to communicate "less meaning." However, as Glucksberg, Krauss, and Higgins observe in their review of this research, there are just as many studies that do not show social class differences as there are those that show them. For example, studies by Brent and Katz, 1967; Cowan, 1967; Higgins, 1973; Rackstraw and Robinson, 1967; and Ruth, 1966 have not, in general, shown social class differences. Moreover, as Glucksberg, Krauss, and Higgins caution with respect to any of these experimental findings,

> observed differences in communication skills associated with group membership can derive from a variety of factors that are irrelevant to the intrinsic abilities of speakers. Among them are differential familiarity with the stimulus materials employed, the reactive nature of experimental settings, and so on. Given the rudimentary state of our knowledge of the components of communication abilities,

> it should be clear that observed differences must be interpreted with great caution. (1975:325)

Let us now turn to the last two points in our critique of the theory of reference assumed by proponents of language deficit, those which are concerned more directly with the referential functions of lexical forms. These final criticisms are directed at a view of lexical forms which was, in general, not consciously worked out by proponents of language deficit. It was rather a view which they merely assumed, indeed necessarily assumed, given the simplistic way in which they contrasted the referential functions of deictic and lexical forms.

The first of these two points can be stated briefly: The proponents of language deficit tended to ignore the fact that lexical forms as well as deictic ones are dependent on immediate context for establishing meaning. In ignoring this dependence of lexical form, they were guilty of the ancient error of nominalism, locating meanings in words rather than the situations in which they are used. The meaning for any linguistic form, whether deictic or lexical, can be established only in a specific context. Consider, for example, the word table as opposed to the word that. Although table may refer potentially to a much more restricted set of entities than that, its actual referent is nevertheless determined by the situation in which it is used. It may, for example, refer to an entire class of entities:

> Does he know how to make a table?

or to a single one within that entire class:

> Sit down at the table.

In fact, if table is used in a situation in which it may refer to more than one entity, it alone cannot refer clearly to any one of them. Further information must be provided, whether mediated verbally (e.g., by saying the table next to the far wall) or non-verbally (e.g., by making a hand gesture) in order to identify just which entity is being referred to.

It is, of course, true that a lexical form possesses a more restricted semantic content than a deictic form. But this more restricted content does not mean that a lexical form is necessarily used with any greater precision. For as we have already suggested with reference to the middle-class mother's speech, a lexically explicit verbal style often reflects, when it is evaluated carefully, a great deal of imprecision. Such

imprecision is not at all surprising; for it would appear that the more restricted the semantic content of a particular word, the more difficult it is to use that word in an exacting way.

Our final criticism of the theory of reference assumed by the proponents of language deficit is closely related to the preceding one. Not only did they fail to recognize that lexical forms are referentially dependent on immediate context; they also failed to recognize that such forms may reflect a contrasting set of functions that depend on whether or not the participants in a particular act of communication make use of their own immediate point of view. Indeed, linguists often describe these contrasting functions for lexically explicit forms of language with the terms "deictic" and "nondeictic." This more technical use of "deictic" in describing certain referential functions for lexically explicit forms should not be confused with the more general use of "deictic" that has been reflected in the article thus far, namely, as a term describing linguistic forms such as that. At the same time it is important to recognize that the word deictic does signify, in each of these uses, that participants are dependent upon their own immediate point of view in verbal communication.

In order to illustrate this distinction between deictic and nondeictic functions for lexical forms, let us borrow from Charles Fillmore an analogy based on contrasting modes of representing the human figure:

> Consider the difference between a sculptured representation of a human figure, set up in the middle of a courtyard, and a photograph of a human figure. The sculpture does not represent any particular observer's point-of-view, but the photograph does. The photograph does because the camera had to be positioned at a particular place in front of, or to the side of, above or below or on the same level as the model. (1975:16)

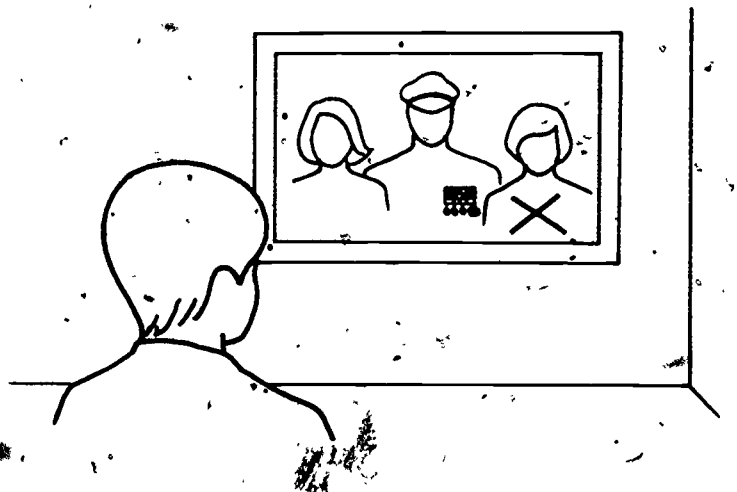
The sculptural representation may be viewed as nondeictic, the photographic representation as deictic.[7]

Fillmore goes on to point out that a lexical form such as left

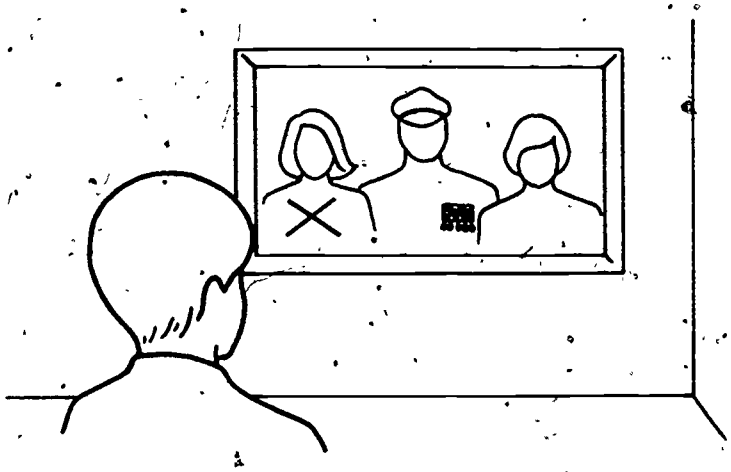
> can have both non-deictic and deictic functions ... in a sentence like "My sister stood at the general's left side," we have an example of the non-deictic use of the word "left" .... Knowing what it means to

> stand at the general's left side requires knowing something about how a general's body is designed; it requires no special understanding at all about where the speaker is when he talks about it .... The situation is quite different for a sentence like "What's that shiny object over there, just to the left of the cypress tree?" In this second case, the location in space of the participants in the conversation is absolutely essential to an understanding of the question. (1975:16)

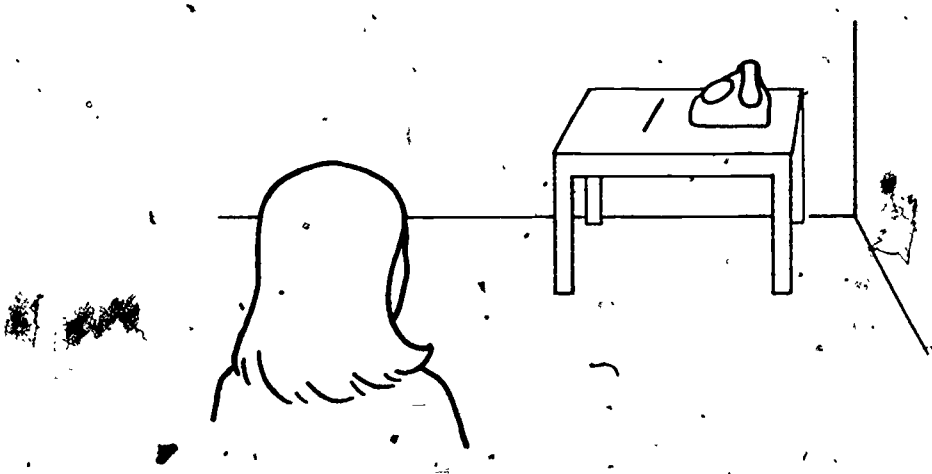
In certain instances, however, the lexical item left is used in a spatial construct that may be processed either deictically or nondeictically. Consider, for example, the sentence My sister is to the left of the general, one in which the spatial construct contains no 's-marking. The spatial construct may be processed nondeictically; that is to say, its referential function may be determined by a left-right axis not dependent on the participants' (i.e., the left-right axis in the general's body, the entity designated as the reference point in the spatial field):



or it may be processed deictically; that is to say, its referential function may be determined by the participants' own left-right axis (i.e., the participants construct a spatial field in which the entity functioning as a reference point, the general's body, is viewed as reflecting a left-right axis parallel to their own).[8]

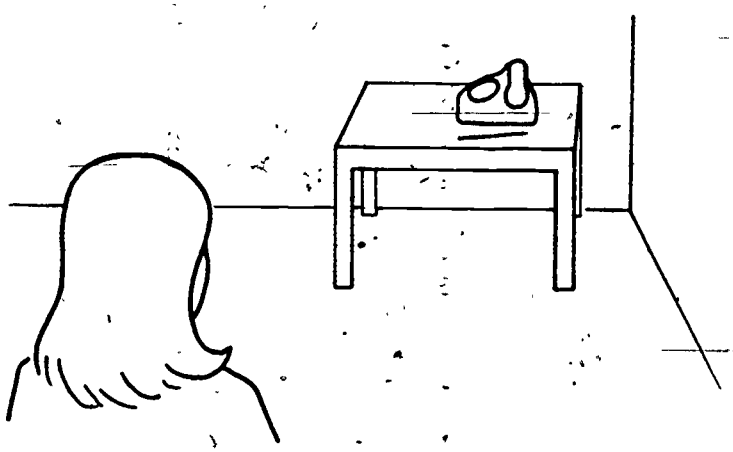


Other lexically explicit spatial constructs reflect this same potential for deictic and nondeictic functions. Consider, for example, a spatial construct such as in front of the telephone. Such a construct may function nondeictically; that is to say, with its referential function determined by a front-back axis independent of the participants' own front-back axis (i.e., the intrinsically marked front-back axis of the telephone itself):



Is that your pen in front of the telephone?

or it may function deictically; that is to say, with its referential function determined by the participants' own front-back axis (i.e., the participants construct a spatial field in which the entity functioning as reference point, the telephone, is viewed as reflecting a front-back axis opposed to their own).[9]



Is that your pen in front of the telephone?

This potential contrast between deictic and nondeictic functions for lexically explicit forms of language is widespread in all natural languages, particularly in spatial and temporal constructs (Bennett, 1976). Consider, for example, the temporal construct in an hour or so in the sentence I'll finish the work in an hour or so. It may be processed as measuring a durational field not initiated in the now, the speaker's locus in time i.e., as representing a certain length of time that may begin at any point). Such nondeictic processing of the construct responds, as it were, to the question how long? On the other hand, the temporal construct in an hour or so may be processed as measuring a durational field extending from the point in time at which the participants are located (i.e., as representing a temporal field initiated in the now of the speech situation). Such deictic processing of the construct responds, as it were, to the question when?

Research has recently been conducted to determine the degree to which minority and mainstream students in metropolitan New York ascribe deictic functions to certain lexically explicit forms of language (Hill, Donnell, Pearsons, & Aronowitz, in

preparation). Both groups of students were given tasks in which linguistic constructs were subject to deictic or nondeictic interpretations. The findings of this research cannot be reported in any detail here. In general, however, they are much like the findings of the research on use of immediate point of view in verbal communication reviewed by Glucksberg, Krauss, and Higgins: There appear to be no major differences in the degree to which members of the two groups respond with deictically anchored interpretations (i.e., those based on their own immediate point of view). Indeed, the differences that did emerge suggest that it may well be the mainstream students, not the minority ones, who are more inclined to deictic interpretations, at least on certain tasks, of lexically explicit forms of language involving spatial and temporal relations.

Even if further research were to establish that mainstream students do tend to make greater use of their own immediate point of view in processing certain lexical forms, this finding would not, of course, indicate that they are thereby communicating "less meaning" (the degree of meaning they communicate depends upon the degree to which their interlocutors have access to their code). Nor would it mean that these students make greater use of their own immediate point of view in other uses of language. As Ouspensky has pointed out in his classic studies on language use and point of view, there are so many different ways in which a participant in an act of verbal communication reflects his or her own immediate point of view (particularly as it manifests affective states) and since these manifold ways are, at present, so poorly understood, there is almost no reliable research on the ways in which immediate point of view is reflected in language use.

By the same token, if further research established that urban minority students do tend to make greater use of deictic forms such as <u>that</u>, this finding could not be used to support the claims of the proponents of language deficit that these students are more dependent on their own immediate point of view in verbal communication and thereby communicate less precise forms of meaning. To make these claims, it would be necessary to show that these students made greater use of deictic forms in communicative settings where the listener(s) did not have access to appropriate information for interpreting these forms. Once again; it would be more just to ascribe a certain lack of precision to the researchers rather than the students; for it is they who have failed to understand the complex ways in which referential functions are established for deictic forms in verbal communication.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, even if further research were to indicate that urban minority students do tend to

make greater use of deictic forms in communicative settings where they are, in fact, not warranted, educational programs such as those prescribed by Bereiter and Engelmann would still not be appropriate for these students. As we have already pointed out, these programs force children to adopt a highly artificial kind of verbal communication, one in which they must attempt to avoid deictic and elliptical forms of language altogether. Such communication forces these children to ignore one of the most salient functions of language, the continuous monitoring of the status of information in the communicative setting. If the information that language expresses is "new," then the processes of ellipsis and deixis can be dysfunctional; as a consequence, they may legitimately be avoided. But if the information is "old" then any avoidance of these processes, as we have already shown, may itself be dysfunctional. Indeed, learning how to make appropriate use of deictic and elliptical forms may be considered just as fundamental to the development of communicative competence in children as learning how to make appropriate use of lexically explicit forms. For as children develop communicative competence, they learn not only to provide listeners with what they need to know, but also to avoid giving them more than they need to know.

Certainly it is pedagogically desirable to make children aware of inappropriate uses of deixis or ellipsis in their verbal communication. Moreover, communication games that teach children the skills required in adopting the other's point of view can be of considerable value in an educational setting (e.g., games in which a solid screen is placed between the interlocutors as in the experiments described above). But using such games as part of a larger program is vastly different from an educational program that forces children, as a matter of principle, to avoid deictic and elliptical forms of language in circumstances where they are, in fact, warranted. It is as if these programs force children, when they speak, to pretend that a solid screen is always present between themselves and their listeners. In effect, the children are required to play a game in the absence of appropriate props. Moreover, they are required to play this game over and over, even though it breaks the rules of the conversational games they play in everyday life.

Summary

Before attempting to develop a counterposition to the language deficit one, let us briefly pause and review what our major criticisms of this position have been. We first pursued

two lines of sociolinguistic criticism, already established by language difference proponents:

1. proponents of the language deficit position have used invalid criteria in evaluating the oral performance of urban minority students in school settings (i.e., they have applied norms of written discourse in judging as deficient these students' patterns of oral response);

2. they have failed to investigate the actual repertoire of verbal skills that urban minority students exercise in everyday communication.

We then followed two lines of psycholinguistic criticism, the first one, like the previous two, already established by language difference proponents. However, the second line, which we pursued in much greater depth, has not been developed in any detail in previous criticism. We argued that, in general,

1. proponents of the language deficit position have assumed that nonstandard forms of language reflect deficient forms of cognition;

2. they have also assumed an inadequate theory of reference in evaluating the language of urban minority students. More specifically, they have not taken sufficient account of the following properties of language in this evaluation:

    a. oral language functions as only a single channel in a multichanneled system that represents information holistically;

    b. the form of language necessarily changes so as to reflect a continuous monitoring of the status of information it represents;

    c. the referential functions of lexical as well as deictic forms of language are established only in an immediate context;

    d. lexical forms of language may be considered as possessing deictic and nondeictic functions.

COUNTERPOSITION TO THE LANGUAGE DEFICIT POSITION

Having ended our critique of the language deficit position with a rather detailed analysis of certain misunderstandings of deictic processes in verbal communication, let us now attempt to broaden our understanding of these processes so that we might develop a different perspective on certain dimensions of reading problems among urban minority students. We believe that a wide range of processes that may be viewed as deictic could provide, if they were properly understood, substantial insight into certain reading problems of urban minority students. We shall consider these deictic processes along two lines, one a new line of departure and the other briefly touched upon at an earlier point. The new line is one which we may call cultural deixis, the already established line is one which, following Fillmore, we may call discourse deixis.

Cultural Deixis

Let us establish what we mean by cultural deixis by returning, for a moment, to a criticism that we made earlier of the proponents of language deficit, the one directed at their failure to recognize that lexical forms as well as deictic forms function referentially only in an immediate context. At that point, we defined context along two dimensions of external reality, the physical environment and the verbal environment. But context also includes internal dimensions of reality, all the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and expectations that make up the cultural identity of the participants in any act of communication; and this cultural identity functions as a context that determines meaning just as much as the physical or verbal environment does.

Although the cultural context impinges in powerful ways upon a particular act of verbal communication, it is difficult to specify just what these ways are. In general, the participants' location in "cultural space" cannot be identified in the same way that their location in physical space can. In the first place, cultural space is so much more fluid and various than physical space. Moreover, it is interior and thus not directly observable. Yet the cultural space the participants occupy provides, just as the physical space they occupy, highly particularized points of view which are necessarily encoded in language.

Within a multicultural society, there are particular reasons why these cultural points of view are so difficult to establish for an act of verbal communication. In the first place, the same

surface forms of language can mediate more than one cultural point of view; that is to say, within a multicultural society, members of various groups may use the same words to express different meanings. Indeed, when two persons belonging to different cultures talk to each other, they often resemble the two children whose talk to each other across a solid screen was reported in an earlier part of this review. Just as the first child anchored his speech in a spatial point of view to which the second had no access, so one person may speak from a cultural point of view to which a second has no access. And that second person, much like the second child, may nevertheless interpret what has been said from his own vantage point, assuming that he has understood what the first person intended to say. Thus lack of communication (and, even worse, a concomitant lack of awareness that there has been a lack of communication), so clearly apparent across a barrier in physical space, results from a barrier in cultural space as well.

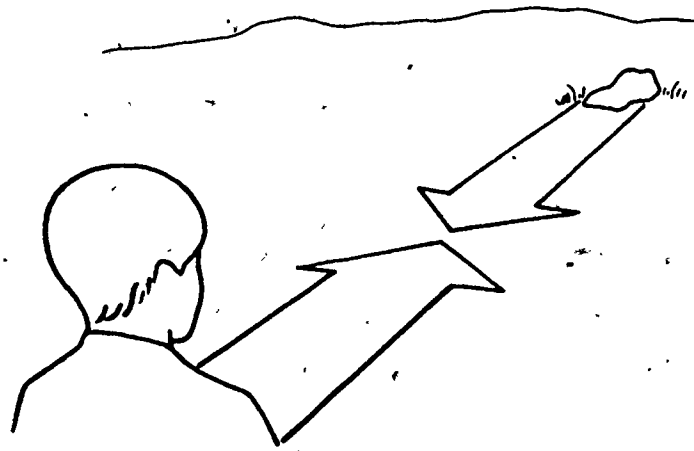
The second reason that cultural points of view are so difficult to establish in verbal communication is that they activate highly subtle distinctions in meaning, many located in the affective domain, which are extremely difficult to specify in any satisfying way. Not only do we lack an adequate set of methodological tools for eliciting these distinctions, we also lack an adequate theory of meaning for describing them. We do, however, possess some methods, limited as they might be, of establishing culturally variant frames of reference for language use. In order to obtain results that may be comparable, many of these methods necessarily deal with linguistic constructs in isolation. For example, word association techniques have been used by a number of researchers in order to elicit culturally variant frames of reference (Belcher & Campbell, 1968; Davis, Soriano, Siojo, & Haynes, 1974; Entwisle, 1966a, 1966b, 1966c, 1968a, 1968b; Entwisle, Forsyth, & Muuss, 1964; Entwisle & Greenberger, 1968; Hall & Freedle, 1975).

The research of Entwisle and her associates has been particularly significant in revealing these frames of reference for individual words. For their research suggests that not only do these frames of reference differ significantly for black and white children in a particular urban setting, but that the frames of reference used by the white children in this setting are much closer to those used by white children in a suburban setting. In effect, their research isolates the powerful forces of "ethnicity" at work in the culturally variant frames of reference for individual words.

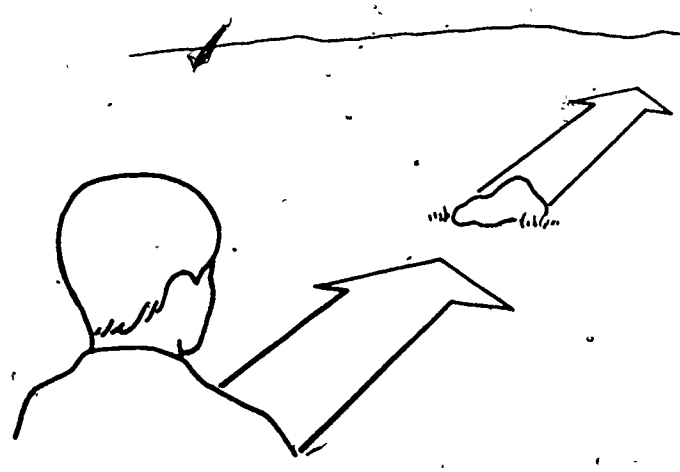
A similar pattern of cultural variation along ethnic lines was established in the research mentioned earlier on spatial and temporal deixis (Hill, Donnell, Pearsons, & Aronowitz, in preparation). This research included an additional component in which the locative construct in front of was used in reference to objects that possess no intrinsically marked "front." For example, the construct was presented in a context such as the following:

Which stick is in front of the rock?

Since a physical object such as a rock is not conceived as possessing an intrinsically marked front, the referential function of the spatial construct is necessarily established deictically; that is to say, with respect to the front-back axis of one of the participants in the speech situation. As we have already observed, this deictic function may be established in contrasting ways. A spatial field may be constructed in which the rock is viewed as oriented toward the participants (this strategy may be described as participant-oriented):

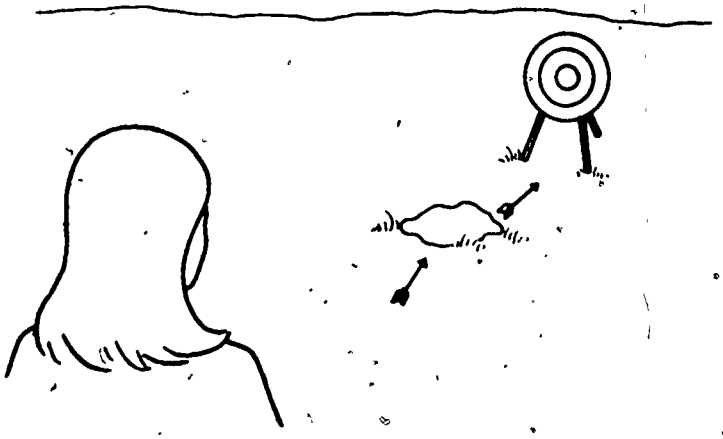


or a spatial field may be constructed in which the rock is viewed as aligned with the participants (this strategy may be described as participant-aligned):



Previous research has indicated that the distribution of these strategies for processing spatial relations contrasts across cultural boundaries. In static domains of experience, for example, speakers of standard English (and other standard forms of Western European languages) ordinarily use a participant-oriented strategy, whereas speakers of standard Hausa (and other standard forms of West African languages) ordinarily use a participant-aligned strategy (Harris & Strommen, 1972; Hill, 1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1976; Kuezaj & Maratzos, 1974). The research among

students in metropolitan New York suggests that students whose ethnocultural heritage lies in West Africa reflect a stronger tendency than mainstream students to use a participant-aligned strategy on tasks like the above one.[10] Moreover, on a task where features were embedded in the spatial field so that a participant-aligned strategy might be stimulated, the black students in metropolitan New York were more responsive to them. Consider, for example, the following task:



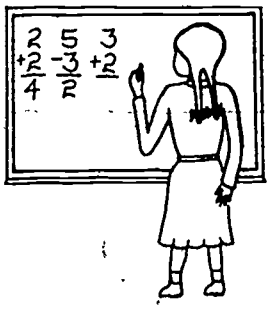
Which arrow is in front of the rock?

The presence of the arrows and target stimulates the construction of a field in which the rock is viewed as aligned with the participants. In this instance, both minority and mainstream students made much greater use of the participant-aligned strategy, but the minority students made even greater use.

The research methods briefly outlined above for eliciting culturally variant frames of reference in language use need much further development. In general, these methods reflect the same limitations that most standardized tests do. They limit sharply the respondents' freedom of choice so that their responses might be compared with some degree of reliability. As a consequence, these methods do not, in general, allow a sufficiently extensive context to be established for the words and phrases whose referential functions they are designed to measure. In the absence of an extended context grounded in natural patterns of language use, it is difficult to assess what kinds of context an individual might be required to construct in order to make a meaningful response to a particular task. Nevertheless, the

methods used in the kinds of research described above do represent a much needed movement toward understanding cultural differences in language use with respect to semantic functions rather than to surface forms.

This same concern for semantic functions has been reflected in the efforts of certain researchers to evaluate the ways in which culturally variant frames affect urban minority students' responses on standardized tests of language skills (Breland et al., 1974; Cicourel, 1974; Flaugher, 1970; Jennings & Jennings, 1974; MacKay, 1974; Meier, 1973; Nix & Schwarz, in press; Sullivan, 1974; Williams, 1971). We do not have sufficient space to review the work of these researchers in any depth, but let us consider briefly a pair of standardized test items that illustrate some of the ways in which these culturally variant frames may determine individual responses. We shall first consider an item from a reading achievement test for students at a third grade level: This item is identified by Meier (1973), along with a number of others, as providing particular difficulty for urban minority children:



below the blackboard
before the blackboard
beside the blackboard
behind the blackboard

This item is of particular interest in the light of the research described above on culturally variant frames for locative predication, since the target response before the blackboard requires that verbal and pictorial stimuli be combined in characterizing the spatial relation between two entities, a girl and a blackboard, from a particular point of view. Before we consider certain reasons why this item may be particularly difficult for urban minority children, let us first observe, from the general point of view of language development, that it is difficult for children of the age for which it was designed, no matter what their cultural background may be; and even apart from any developmental considerations, the item presents certain linguistic

complications, to be described below, that make it difficult for an adult to respond appropriately.

If the target response before the blackboard is selected for appropriate reasons, a complex set of cognitive operations is necessarily involved. In the first place, the point of view from which the girl and the blackboard are represented pictorially must be established as the one to be used in describing verbally their spatial relation to each other. In addition, the side of the blackboard on which the girl is writing must be established, by virtue of its characteristic functions, as oriented toward the girl (i.e., the side of the blackboard on which she is writing must be viewed as the "intrinsically marked" front). These two operations would lead to choosing a response such as "in front of the blackboard," which according to Meier, many children insisted was the most appropriate one for the picture. Since in front of the blackboard, however, is not included as one of the possible responses, before, a term whose field of reference is primarily temporal, must be established as parallel to the spatial phrase in front of in representing the relation between the girl and the blackboard.

There are two major ways in which before can be used to represent a spatial relation, one much more frequent in everyday communication than the other. The more common use of before in a locative construct may be illustrated by the following example:

> Look! Isn't that Sarah before Gardenia in the lunchline?

In this instance, both Gardenia, the locating entity (i.e., represented by the nominal following before) and Sarah, the entity to be located (i.e., represented by the nominal preceding before) are aligned toward some further point in space, the place where their lunch will be served. Furthermore, their particular alignment, consonant with a much larger pattern of alignment formed by the other people in the lunchline, suggests movement toward the place where the food is located. This movement, in turn, suggests a temporal frame, one in which Sarah, by virtue of her more forward position in the line, will arrive at the place where the food is before Gardenia does.

Now this particular use of before, quite common in everyday speech, is obviously not describing the situation represented by the picture in the test item. In the first place, the girl and the blackboard are not aligned in the same direction; rather, they are oriented toward each other. Moreover, since the blackboard is viewed as a static object, no pattern of allied motion toward a further point in space can be suggested.

There is, however, a second use of before to represent a spatial relation, which is seemingly much more restricted to literate forms of discourse than the use we have just considered. This more literate use of before in a locative construct may be illustrated by the well-known verse:

Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before the king?

This use of before in a locative construct appears to depend upon the locating entity possessing some capacity for interacting with the entity to be located. In the above example, the king obviously possesses a capacity for consuming the dainty dish. This use of before in a locative construct would appear then to depend upon an "animate" entity, one capable of initiating some form of interaction, functioning as the locating point, a condition not reflected in the standardized test item under consideration. There are, however, uses of before in which a nonanimate entity functioning as the locating point is conceived as interacting with an animate entity functioning as the point to be located, as illustrated by the following example:

I stood before the mirror in amazement; my nose operation had really worked!

In this example, the mirror is conceived as interacting with the "I," even though the mirror is, in the strict sense, not animate. In the same sense, a blackboard, even though it is a nonanimate entity, might be conceived, in certain instances, as interacting with a person. Consider, for example, a sentence such as the following:

I stood before the blackboard for five minutes, but I just couldn't solve the problem.

In this instance, the blackboard, much as the mirror in the previous example, can be more easily conceived as interacting with the person who is "before" it, since it functions as the medium transmitting the difficult problem that the person is attempting to solve.

In the picture used in the test item, however, there are no cues to indicate that the girl is experiencing any particular difficulty with the arithmetic problems. She has apparently solved two correctly and is busily working on a third. If these cues call for any particular locative construct, it would appear to be a semantically neutral one, such as "The girl is working at the blackboard." Yet such a choice is not available, so before the blackboard remains the best among the possible choices, even

though the picture does not provide sufficient cues for the particular kind of context in which the use of before would be semantically motivated.

Now there are, at least, two possible reasons for the particular difficulties that the urban minority children experienced in selecting the target response before the blackboard for this item. In the first place, since the second use of before that we described appears to be highly marked for literate forms of discourse, urban minority children, by virtue of their particular cultural experience of language, would appear to have less access to this use.

Moreover, as we have already observed, urban minority children tend to experience a particular form of cultural dissonance in using locative constructs that identify spatial relations along a frontal axis. Since the use of the temporal term before to identify spatial relations along this axis only increases such dissonance, they may have been particularly motivated to avoid the use of the frontal axis altogether in responding to the item. Hence they would opt for a response such as beside the blackboard.

These students could have used two different strategies in selecting this response. First, they could have shifted the point of view away from the center of the classroom to a point where the girl could be viewed as located along the sagittal axis of the blackboard.[11] Or they could have used beside not as a marked term for identifying spatial relations along a sagittal axis, but rather as an unmarked term for identifying any spatial relation between two entities, whether that relation is located along a sagittal axis, a frontal axis, or some combination of the two. Certainly the term beside is, at times, used in everyday conversation in this more general way. And it is often difficult for these students, many of whom are inexperienced at test-taking, to be sufficiently aware that test-makers may draw upon such everyday norms of language use (which they presumably consider as somehow less precise) in constructing the choices that will function as "distractors" on a multiple choice item.

The second example that we have selected for illustrating the ways in which culturally variant frames affect urban minority students' responses to standardized test items is more representative of the typical conditions under which reading takes place: for all the information is transmitted by means of verbal symbols rather than by a combination of verbal and pictorial symbols. This example is drawn from recent research by Nix and Schwarz (in press) in which they administered standardized reading

comprehension items to urban minority students at the high school level and then interviewed these students in an effort to understand what strategies were used in responding to the individual items. They report culturally variant strategies on a number of items, one of which is the following:

> That summer we bought electric fans, drank gallons of ice water, and spent most of our time by the river, but nothing worked. We simply had to resign ourselves to being
>
> A. hot B. tired C. poor D. sick

The target response "hot" requires that a reader process all three activities represented in the first sentence--buying electric fans, drinking gallons of ice water, and spending time by the river--as simply efforts to escape heat. But certain urban minority students processed these activities as representing the restricted choices available to poor people for escaping from the heat, as opposed to the choices available to rich people--buying air-conditioners, drinking soda, and spending time by the swimming pool. These students, acutely aware of their own poverty, selected poor rather than hot as the word that represents most aptly the situation to which the persons, represented by the we in the passage, had to resign themselves.

Now it can be argued that these students made a response which was, to use the idiom of proponents of language deficit, "personalistic and culture-bound." But then it can be counterargued that certain features in the particular passage legitimately motivate a personalistic and culture-bound interpretation. In the first place, the use of deictic we, our, ourselves, without any identification of their intended referent, signals that the passage represents a kind of direct speech in which the speaker assumes that the listener(s) know to whom these deictic forms refer. But it is not only the personae of the passage that are represented deictically but its temporal and spatial worlds as well. For example, the passage opens with "that summer;" signaling that the speaker assumes the listener(s) know which summer he is referring to; and "river" is represented as the river rather than a river, signaling that the speaker assumes the listener(s) know which river he is referring to.

If urban minority students, in processing these deictic cues, view the passage as representing a kind of direct speech in which the speaker assumes that he and his listener(s) possess a great deal of shared knowledge, they may then respond to these cues by casting themselves in the role of listener. In taking up this role, they may legitimately assume that the speaker is using a we

with an "inclusive" referent rather than an "exclusive" one (i.e., the we includes rather than excludes the listener(s) in its field of reference).[12] Then having established the we as referring to themselves in the role of listener(s), they may then draw upon their own experience in interpreting the passage. Indeed, in the light of the foregoing analysis, it would seem that the selection of poor rather than hot represents a highly imaginative way of reading the passage. Not only are the deictic cues in the passage processed with great sensitivity, but also the lexical items electric fans, ice water and river. These words are viewed not as an arbitrarily selected group of words, but as a semantically unified series symbolizing the conditions of poverty that make it difficult for members of urban minority communities to escape from the heat. In effect, these words were processed as representing the restricted choices available to poor people for escaping from the heat as opposed to the choices available to rich people--buying air-conditioners instead of fans, drinking cold beer or soda instead of ice water, and spending time by the swimming pool instead of the river. This powerful way of reading the text would appear to depend, in large measure, upon having personally experienced such conditions of poverty. It is for this reason that urban minority students apparently have so much more access to this interpretation than mainstream students do.[13] As already pointed out in the earlier critique of the proponents of language deficit, lexical forms as well as deictic forms obtain their meaning from the immediate context in which they are used; and as has been suggested at some length in this section, the cultural identity of the participants in a particular act of verbal communication may provide a substantial proportion of that context.

The research just described offers one distinct advantage over the research based on word-association techniques in approaching the reading problems of urban minority students. In word-association research, culturally variant patterns of meaning are established for lexical forms in isolation. In research based on actual passages, culturally variant patterns of meaning are established for lexical forms as they function within an extended body of propositions. In effect, culturally variant patterns of meaning are elicited by a specific verbal context for lexical forms such as electric fans, ice water, and river, words which, when presented in isolation, might reflect a relatively stable semantic content for members with different cultural backgrounds. In effect, this research focuses on culturally variant patterns of meaning that emerge in the actual reading of a text.

Discourse Deixis

It is at this point that we can direct our full attention to discourse deixis, the second line of deixis to be considered in developing a perspective on certain reading problems of urban minority students. There are, however, two general points that need to be established before we can consider discourse deixis in any detail. First of all, in directing our attention to discourse deixis, we will still be concerned, in the larger sense, with cultural deixis. For we will consider how certain processes of discourse deixis engender culturally variant frames of reference, which, in turn, engender certain reading problems for urban minority students. Secondly, in our consideration of discourse deixis we will not be concerned with only deictic forms (such as we, our, that, and the in the passage considered above) which presuppose that certain information may be viewed as already established. We will rather be concerned with the ways in which all linguistic resources, whether deictic or lexical in form, continuously presuppose that certain information is already available. Just as we earlier posited that lexically explicit forms possess referential functions that are deictically anchored in the participants' immediate point of view, so we would now like to posit that the referential functions of such forms are deictically anchored within the verbal context as well. As Halliday and Hasan put it,

> without our being aware of it, each occurrence of a lexical item carries with it ... [a] textual history, a particular ... environment that has been built up in the course of the creation of the text. (1976:287)

Consider, for example, the uses of the lexical item deixis (and its adjectival form deictic) within the present text. An increasingly complex "textual history" has been gradually built up for this lexical form. When the word deixis was first introduced, it was immediately defined with reference to linguistic forms such as this and that whose referential functions are radically dependent upon their users' immediate point of view. Then deixis and ellipsis were linked together as representing the two fundamental processes of reduction, by means of which a language user signals that he views his interlocutor(s) as having access to certain information. Next the word deixis was used in describing certain referential functions of lexically explicit forms which are dependent on the immediate point of view of participants in a speech situation. These functions were then illustrated in the domains of space and time. And then finally the domains of culture and discourse have been introduced; and deixis is now

being used to describe the ways in which the referential functions of linguistic resources are anchored, more generally, in culture and, more specifically, in the immediate discourse in which they occur. In effect, the word deixis has been used in the present discourse to refer to language forms, to the referential functions they signal, and to the psychological processes that underlie these linguistic forms and functions.

Having established these more general points, let us draw upon a broader conceptualization of discourse deixis provided by Fillmore. In his Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis, he defines discourse deixis as referring to the relations of a "particular utterance to the matrix of linguistic material within which ... it has a role, that is, the preceding and following parts of the discourse" (1975:40). The use of the word utterance necessarily limits the applicability of this definition to oral discourse, but by replacing utterance with a word such as proposition, we may establish a definition for discourse deixis that would be applicable to writing as well as to speech.

Yet it is precisely in the deictic relations of an individual proposition to its linguistic matrix that written discourse can be distinguished most sharply from oral discourse. Within written discourse, the information necessary for understanding an individual proposition is, in general, provided to a much greater degree by the verbal context than it is within oral discourse. Or, to put it the other way, within oral discourse the information necessary for understanding an individual proposition is provided, to a much greater degree, by the nonverbal dimensions of what anthropologists and linguists have traditionally called the context of situation (cf. Firth, 1934-51; Halliday, 1973, 1974; Hymes, 1962, 1971, 1972, 1974a, 1974b; Malinowski, 1923).

From the point of view of information theory, the context of situation can be described as a complex network of information sources. These sources may, at times, provide the same information that is presented in the verbal context, but they often provide information that expands, refines, or even contradicts that which the verbal context provides. We do not have sufficient space for a detailed characterization of these information sources (cf. Hymes, 1972 for such characterization), but let us briefly consider two major ways in which they are patterned.

As we have already suggested, the most common pattern of oral discourse is face-to-face dialogue in which the participants' expressive behavior provides an enormous variety of

nonverbal and paraverbal sources of information. This information provided by these sources can be exceedingly complex, particularly as it reflects the participants' attitude toward what they are saying. Tone of voice, for example, can readily communicate a speaker's disbelief toward a particular proposition, as illustrated by the following pattern of intonation:

The president has said he supports the bill.

If this proposition were to be expressed in writing, such disbelief would ordinarily have to be encoded in a separate proposition:

The president has said he supports the bill,
but it is questionable whether he really does.

As Whitehall put it long before the terms "nonverbal" and "paraverbal" became fashionable,

> from the code of speech, the language of formal writing is something of an abstraction ..., lacking clear indication of the bodily gestures and meaningful qualities of the voice which accompany ordinary conversation. (1951:1)

Apart from the nonverbal and paraverbal sources of information located in expressive behavior, there are abundant sources of information located in the participants' shared experience. This information may arise from some momentary experience or from some history of shared experience. A speaker may, for example, use the in signaling that the listener has access to some entity in the immediate setting, even though it has not been previously identified in the verbal context:

Could you please hand me the knife?

By the same token, the speaker may draw upon some history of experience he shares with his listener(s) in using the to refer to some entity not immediately identified in the verbal context. If a speaker, for example, says,

Can you meet me at the library?

he assumes that the listener(s) know which library he is referring to, even though it is not immediately present. Moreover, he may make this assumption, even where a number of libraries are located in the larger physical setting (e.g., on a university campus). He

may do so precisely because shared experience with his listener(s) assures him that they know which library he is referring to. In both of the above instances, the referential function of the nominal phrase initiated by the may be described as exophoric; that is to say, the information that identifies the referent for the nominal introduced by the resides in nonverbal dimensions of the context of situation rather than in the verbal context itself.

The context of situation in which written discourse ordinarily takes place precludes any dependency on the sources of information that have been outlined above. In the first place, a writer and his or her audience are not ordinarily located in the same physical space. Moreover, they do not ordinarily share the same temporal frame. As a consequence, they cannot draw upon the nonverbal or paraverbal sources of information located in expressive behavior nor upon the sources of information provided by their shared experience of a physical setting. Secondly, they cannot, in general, draw upon sources of information located in any particular history of shared experience; for such a history is not ordinarily available, though, in certain instances, it may be. Consider, for example, the common body of personal experience that a person may draw upon in writing a letter to a friend. If such a letter is read by someone lacking this experience, it is often quite unintelligible. By the same token, consider the common body of intellectual experience that may be drawn upon by the writer of an article for a learned journal. If an article on, say, the phonological processes of sandhi and haplology is read by someone lacking knowledge of linguistics, it is, for the most part, unintelligible.

Indeed, in one sense, all human discourse, written as well as oral, presupposes, at a highly general level, a certain history of shared experience. In the first place, any speaker assumes, by the very act of using language, that his audienoe possesses, to a certain degree, a common linguistic code. But apart from this, written discourse, in its fundamental structure, may presuppose that the audience possesses general knowledge also anchored in that history of shared experience. Consider, for example, the way in which a writer, having referred to a car, can then, at a later point, use the in introducing motor, as illustrated in the following:

> One of the major problems in buying a used car is that it is difficult to ascertain just what state the motor is in.

In effect, a writer can assume that he and his audience share a certain experience of a car that enables them to know that it necessarily possesses a motor and, for that matter, certain other parts such as a windshield or a steering wheel. On the basis of this highly common body of knowledge about cars, a writer, having referred to a car, can then use the to introduce motor, windshield, steering wheel, or any other part which may be taken as ordinarily present.[14]

Even though such a use of the introduces a nominal not already present in the verbal context, its function may not be described as exophoric; for it does not presuppose information provided by the context of situation. Rather this use of the may be described as endophoric, for it presupposes information provided by the verbal context, even though this information is not totally explicit (i.e., it involves a certain inference based on "inalienable possession"). In this sense, the verbal context may be considered as including information sources which are not immediate (e.g., a car ... the motor) as well as immediate (e.g., a car ... the car) just as nonverbal dimensions in the context of situation, as we earlier observed, provide information sources which are not immediate (e.g., the library) as well as immediate (e.g., the knife).

Indeed, a great deal of current psycholinguistic research has focused on the active role that a reader plays in supplying information not immediately available in the verbal context.[15] This research has assumed that reading comprehension is largely dependent on information that the reader himself supplies, a point of view that Frank Smith has expressed in the following way:

> The information that passes from the brain to the eye is more important in reading than the information that passes from the eye to the brain. (1971:4)

This psycholinguistic point of view has been particularly useful in reorienting pedagogy as well as research in reading, a field dominated for so long by a behavioral ethos that had largely precluded serious consideration of the processes of comprehension. No matter how great the heuristic value of this point of view in reading pedagogy and research, it should not be allowed to blur the fundamental contrast that we have just outlined between the sources of contextual information ordinarily used in processing oral discourse and those used in processing written discourse. In the processing of oral discourse, the information that passes from the brain to the ear takes its source, to a great extent, from nonverbal dimensions in the

context of situation. In the processing of written discourse, however, the information that passes from the brain to the eye takes its source, at least in principle, from the verbal context alone, even though the degree to which that information is present in explicit form varies considerably from text to text. In summary, we may describe the processes of comprehending oral discourse as centrifugal as well as centripetal (i.e., they are deictically anchored in the nonverbal dimensions as well as the verbal dimensions of the context of situation); the processes of comprehending written discourse as centripetal (i.e., they are deictically anchored in the verbal context itself). In contrast to oral discourse, written discourse may be considered as elaborating a relatively autonomous form, one in which the information necessary for understanding an individual proposition is present within the text itself.

Given this greater autonomy of written discourse, an individual cannot in an act of reading, at least not in one intended to extract only that information which the writer has actually encoded, draw upon sources of information beyond the verbal context in the same way that he does when engaged in oral discourse. Yet for an individual whose primary experience of language is oral, the crucial information for understanding what words mean is located beyond the verbal context as much as it is within it. Indeed, from an experiential point of view, he is not used to distinguishing between these two kinds of information. They form, as it were, a seamless web in his everyday experience of talking to others. As a consequence, such an individual is inclined in the act of reading to draw information not only from the verbal context, but from a larger domain, much as he is accustomed to doing in everyday talk. Hence, as a reader, he may be considered as transferring strategies for information processing from a dia-logical frame of interaction (in which nonverbal dimensions of the context of situation provide powerful sources of information) to a mono-logical frame (in which the fundamental sources of information are provided by the verbal context).

It is at this point that we wish to make explicit an assumption that has surfaced time and again throughout this particular discourse. Urban minority students are, in general, more immersed in oral experience of language than their mainstream counterparts and, as a consequence, are more prone, while engaged in reading, to transfer strategies for information processing which they are accustomed to using in dialogic frames of interaction. In order to illustrate how this transfer may take place, let us turn, once again, to the research by Nix and Schwarz in which they examined responses of urban minority

students to standardized items used in measuring reading comprehension. We shall consider the following item, for which certain minority students selected the response pay him rather than the target response depend on him.

> The postman always comes, regardless of the weather. We can always
>
> A. write to him B. pay him C. depend on him D. hear him

In selecting depend on him, a student is required, at least if he follows the strategy envisioned by the testmaker, to view the passage as reflecting a discourse frame we may characterize as monological. In effect, there is first a proposition that expresses a generalization about some pattern of physical events:

> The postman always comes, regardless of the weather.

Then a proposition follows that expresses a generalization about some human attitude congruent with that pattern of events:

> We can always depend on him.

The second proposition closely parallels the first; the second merely makes explicit a certain attitude toward the postman that results directly from his consistent behavior that the first reports. We may describe this kind of discourse frame, so characteristic of writing, as reflecting a monologically parallel sequence of propositions, one that contrasts sharply with the dialogically opposed sequences that characterize everyday conversation.

The students who selected pay him, however, viewed this passage as reflecting a dialogically opposed sequence of propositions. When these students were asked to give the reasons for their choosing pay him, they reported that, in their view, the first sentence represents the point of view of someone (whom they themselves viewed as a kind of straight guy) who says the predictable thing about a postman. The second sentence, however, represents the point of view of someone who really knows what is going on. He tells it the way it is--the postman, like everybody else in an official-looking uniform, is really just out to get money. In effect, they viewed the passage as embodying a dialogical frame of interaction rather than a monological one. Indeed, when they were asked why they did not select depend on him, they answered that selecting it would have meant just saying

in another way what had already been said. It appears, then, that they had access to the monologically parallel discourse frame envisioned by the testmaker, but rejected it in favor of a dialogically opposed one, a frame much more congruent with their own experience of how language is actually used.. In effect, it appears that they were transferring strategies for information processing from the dialogical frames of interaction to which they are most accustomed.

Now it may be argued that, even if one grants that these students used a different discourse frame, they still selected a response which resulted in a proposition not cohesively related to the first. Yet one of the most characteristic norms that govern cohesion in everyday talk is that, whenever one person brings up a particular subject, a second is then in a position to draw on whatever information he or she possesses about that subject. Given this dialogic norm, the second person's response may be viewed as sufficiently cohesive as long as it is connected in some way to the topic at hand. Hence the choice of pay him, which, at first glance, may appear to create a proposition not cohesively related to the first, does not necessarily violate the norms of cohesion that govern dialogic interaction.

Moreover, as we pointed out above, within a dialogic frame of interaction the cohesive relations between individual propositions are not necessarily monologically parallel. Rather they may be dialogically opposed. In effect, one person says something and another counters it. Given this pattern of dialogic interaction, the choice of pay him results in a sequence of propositions that may be related in a highly cohesive manner. For the first proposition represents a straight claim about "the postman" and the second represents an ironic rejoinder to this claim. In effect, the second cohesively presupposes the content of the first, namely, the postman always comes, by providing an ironic comment on it--the reason that the postman always comes is to get his payoff.

In fact, the cohesive irony to be found in the second proposition is marked, in particular, by the presence of always ("we can always pay him"), the very word used in the first proposition to mark the postman's persistence. Such dialogic repetition of a particular word, often marked by rising-falling stress, is a common means of expressing irony in everyday speech.[16]

The passage provides cues other than the repetition of always which may have motivated the urban minority students' use of a dialogic frame of interaction. In the first place, the construction of the test item itself may have contributed to their using this frame. The first proposition was given in complete form, the second in only partial form. In effect, the students themselves had to complete the second proposition, much as, in a dialogic frame of interaction, they have to create their own response to the verbal act of another.

Moreover, the second proposition was initiated by we, a deictic form whose powerful effects on the interpretation of another passage we have already considered. In addition, the first proposition is initiated with deictic the, which may have signaled for these students a dialogic frame similar to the one used for the other passage; in effect, one in which the sender of the message is viewed as assuming that its receiver(s), on the basis of information provided by nonverbal dimensions in the context of situation, possess knowledge of the situation he or she is talking about.

In this instance, the construction of such a discourse frame on the basis of the initial the alone is probably not warranted; for it appears to be functioning generically; that is to say, it is introducing a nominal, postman, that represents all members of the class to which that nominal potentially refers, much as lion refers to all lions in a sentence such as The lion is the king of animals. It should be noted, however, that this generic function of the appears to be particularly marked for written discourse; and so, once again, these students, by virtue of their particular cultural experience of language, might possibly have had less access to this generic function, tending therefore to interpret the as initiating discourse deictically anchored in nonverbal dimensions of the context of situation.

We do not have sufficient space for any further characterization of the ways in which strategies for processing information within oral discourse are used in processing information within written discourse. Nor do we have space to discuss what pedagogical approaches might be appropriate in dealing with such transfer. We will discuss pedagogy much more fully in the article to follow. We would like, however, to note that, given the problems outlined above, oral reading by students can be pedagogically useful, contrary to what certain reading specialists sometimes claim. For it may reveal intonational patterns that provide crucial evidence for understanding the discourse frames that students use in interpreting written prose. If, for example, students in reading the above passage, were to pronounce always

in the second sentence with a certain rising-falling stress, a teacher might then be in a position to understand that they were viewing the passage as embodying a dialogic frame of interaction, one in which the second proposition functions as an ironic rejoinder to the first.

Moreover, much more attention needs to be directed to the functional interrelations between the expressive resources that are characteristic of oral and written discourse. As we have already shown, there are ways of expressing certain information in written form that is ordinarily realized by nonverbal or paraverbal means in a speech situation. A pedagogical approach to reading comprehension that is sensitive to problems of oral interference would naturally attempt to deal with these functional interrelations. For example, the use of what has been traditionally called figurative language in written discourse, drawing, as it does, upon connotative rather than denotative meaning, may express the particular kind of information often realized by nonverbal or paraverbal means in a speech situation.[17]

Summary

In order to conclude the second part of this article, let us briefly reconsider the major lines that we have followed in developing a perspective on certain reading problems of urban minority students, a perspective that has been designed to counter the one held by proponents of language deficit. After ending our critique of their position with an extended discussion of deixis, we first employed this concept in describing the general relations of language to culture. Drawing upon various bodies of research, we developed the notion that all verbal communication is necessarily deictically anchored in the cultural space that its participants inhabit, much as it is deictically anchored in the physical space they inhabit. We then applied the concept of deixis in the more specific domain of discourse, claiming that oral and written modes differ fundamentally in the degree to which an individual proposition is deictically anchored in the verbal context. We claimed that within written discourse the information necessary for processing an individual proposition is, in general, provided to a much greater extent by the verbal context. It was then posited that urban minority students, by virtue of their greater immersion in oral culture, reflect a strong tendency to transfer strategies for information processing from oral discourse to written discourse. Some of the ways in which such transfer takes place were then illustrated by analyzing

the strategies certain urban minority students used in responding to a standardized passage item of reading comprehension.

As a means of providing a general conclusion for this article, let us recall a certain view of reading that was expressed in the opening paragraph. At that point, we defined reading not simply as a pragmatic activity that human beings engage in so that they may obtain particular bodies of information, but rather as an activity that engages the imaginative faculties of the whole person. Given this larger view of the activity of reading, it is important that urban minority students' capacity for imaginative interpretation of written prose, exemplified in some of the responses that we have examined, not be diminished while they are in the process of acquiring mastery over certain interpretive norms that govern the use of information provided by verbal context in written discourse. Indeed, as indicated by certain of these students' responses in the above examples, their reading problems are engendered, contrary to what proponents of language deficit have claimed, by what might be considered an "excess" rather than a "deficit." Drawing upon the strategies for information processing to which they are accustomed in dialogic frames of interaction, they generate more information than the verbal context in written discourse can support. As they acquire certain techniques for delimiting the amount of information they can draw from verbal context in processing written discourse, they must not lose the capacity for total engagement of their imaginative faculties in the act of reading. Indeed, their educational experience, ideally, should provide them with a sense that multiple frames of reference can be legitimately used in obtaining complex forms of meaning from print. As a consequence, they would not be left with a sense, as they so often are, that, in the act of reading, they must reject their own cultural frames of reference. Rather they would view their own cultural frames as complementary to other frames, useful in garnering the multiple possibilities of meaning that a text can engender. For, in the final analysis, the most complete act of reading is one which involves judicious discrimination among the various possibilities of meaning that a particular text can offer.

NOTES

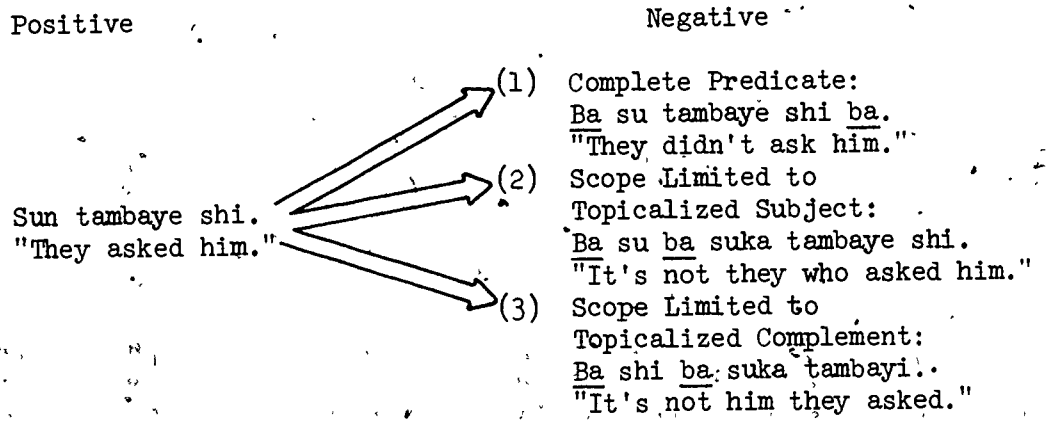
1. Given the highly general framework of a review article, the terms "mainstream" and "minority" will be used, as a matter of stylistic economy, in their popular sense. "Mainstream" will be used as a means of identifying members of a wide range of ethnocultural groups whose background is primarily European, "minority" as a means of identifying members of a wide range of ethnocultural groups whose background is not primarily European. The use of these terms is not intended to suggest that the various "mainstream" groups, taken individually, cannot be considered as cultural minorities as well. Nor is it intended to suggest that, either among "mainstream" or "minority" students, there is not a wide range of cultural knowledge, attitudes, and values that determine, in quite different ways, the kinds of meaning obtained from print. Such detailed analysis of cultural difference is, however, beyond the scope of a review article.

2. The preceding characterization represents Bernstein's position at the time that language deficit researchers such as Bereiter and Engelmann drew upon it. Since that time his position has changed considerably. Perhaps the most fundamental change is that he now makes a distinction between "codes" and "speech variants," the latter reflecting the constraints of particular communicative contexts such as the "regulative," the "instructional," the "interpersonal," and the "imaginative." Within an interpersonal context, for example, an "elaborated code" may be realized as a "restricted variant." Hence Bernstein no longer posits continuous switching of "codes" as a person moves from one communicative context to another.

3. This double marking of negation, usually discontinuous in form, is an extremely common feature of languages throughout the world; and it is quite common that the two markers, as in the case of nonstandard English where both are /n/-initiated, resemble each other in surface form. In early forms of written English, for example, two or more markers of negation were /n/-initiated, as illustrated in the following sentence from Chaucer: "He never yet no vileynye ne sayde ...."

Such discontinuous marking appears to be motivated by the fact that the scope of negation is highly variable in natural languages; that is to say, the element(s) actually subject to negation may vary in a particular predication. Hence what is subject to negation may be enclosed by two markers, thereby creating a more precise expression of the scope of negation, as illustrated by the following examples from Hausa, a widely

spoken language in West Africa (the two markers of negation are each realized as ba):



4. A speaker might utter the phrase on the table with a certain tone of exasperation, signaling that the listener should have been aware that the book was, indeed, on the table.

5. It should be noted that Hess and Shipman did in fact provide statistical data indicating that children in the lower-class group in the study performed the sorting tasks less well. This lower standard of performance cannot, however, necessarily be accounted for by the less explicit verbal style of interaction between lower-class mothers and children. Any adequate explanation of their lower performance would have to take account of a number of factors, perhaps the most fundamental of which would be their apparently greater unfamiliarity with the nature and purposes of the task they were engaged in.

6. The reductive processes that operate on inner speech are, of course, much more radical than those that operate on public speech. They appear, at times, to produce a kind of "pure predication," in which the subject is continuously rendered obsolete, by virtue of the fact that it is always known. Since the sender of the message is also its receiver, a subject is, in one sense, already old at the actual moment of its encoding.

As Vygotsky observed, the most exacting characterization of the radical reduction of inner speech has come from literature rather than from science. The search for an adequate means of representing this reduction, which Vygotsky noted in the work of nineteenth-century writers such as Gogol, has been advanced considerably in the work of twentieth-century writers such as Joyce.

7. Although the analogy is an apt one, it should not obscure the fact that an external point of view is ordinarily signaled, at least to some degree, in a sculpted figure as well. Consider, for example, the external point of view consistently signaled by the decidedly frontal bias in human figures within Greek traditions of sculpture.

8. As illustrated by the research reviewed by Glucksberg, Krauss, and Higgins, the participants do not necessarily share the same point of view in a particular act of verbal communication. As a consequence, the deictic processing may be based on the left-right axis of only one of the participants. Indeed, the speaker and hearer may be so placed that deictic processing anchored in one's point of view would be directly opposed to deictic processing anchored in the other's. As a matter of stylistic convenience, however, the more general term participant, contrasting with field, will be used rather than the specific terms speaker or hearer.

9. It may be observed that deictic strategies contrast for the processing of to the left of and in front of. In the former, the participants construct a spatial field in which the entity functioning as reference point is viewed as possessing an orientation parallel to their own. In the latter, the participants construct a spatial field in which the entity functioning as reference point is viewed as possessing an orientation opposed to their own. As we will observe later, the strategy in which a parallel orientation is ascribed to the reference point is predominantly used by members of certain cultures for processing locative constructs that represent spatial relations along the frontal axis as well as the sagittal one (i.e., the left-right axis).

10. It may be noted that students in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, demonstrated an even greater use of the participant-aligned strategy, reflecting, as it were, an even stronger influence of the ethnocultural heritage of West Africa. It should be observed, however, that a participant-aligned strategy for processing locative phrases that include lexical items for "front" and "back" is by no means evidenced only in West Africa. On the basis of pilot research with students from different parts of the world, it appears that this strategy is normative in a great number of languages in Africa, the Middle East, and possibly in certain parts of Asia. Moreover, the distribution of these strategies among members of a multicultural speech community illustrates

the different ways in which a linguistic resource can be used in a single setting. For example, a recent research project carried out in a secondary school on an Israeli kibbutz revealed significant differences between the strategies of students with a European cultural background (Ashkenazik) and those with a Middle Eastern cultural background (Sephardic). The students with a Sephardic background made much greater use of the participant-aligned strategy on tasks like the above one (Aronowitz & Hill, in preparation).

11. In our research in the New York metropolitan area, we discovered that a significant proportion of primary school children, no matter what their cultural background, are not necessarily constrained by the given point of view that a picture necessarily reflects. Whether this lack of constraint is particularly characteristic of minority children and, if so, what are the cultural reasons, are questions that need to be addressed. Certainly the interpretation of a pictorially mediated point of view can vary from one culture to another. We have discovered, for example, that Hausa-speaking children in English-speaking schools in Nigeria may experience confusion in interpreting the terms "foreground" and "background" with respect to a picture. In their own description of a picture with no intrinsically determined axes of orientation (i.e., a natural landscape) they may identify, in speaking Hausa, the space represented as "farther away" with the term gaba da "to the fore/front" the space represented as "nearer" with the term baya da "to the back." Thus the participant-aligned strategy described earlier is operative in interpreting the orientational properties of "symbolizing space" as well as those of "symbolized space."

12. These are the terms used by linguists in describing the two forms for we that many languages possess. For example, in Fulfulde, a widely spoken language in West Africa, "inclusive we" is represented by eden jaha, "exclusive we" by min jehi. A similar distinction is realized by intonation in certain dialects of spoken English. This intonation is a particularly potent tool for social interaction among members of the black speech community, particularly when they are communicating across cultural boundaries that they wish to keep firmly established.

13. The responses of these students might have been motivated, to a great extent, by their own urban experience. By contrast, minority students in rural areas might be considerably less disposed to this particular way of reading the passage, even though they, too, may have personally experienced poverty. On the

basis of their rural experience, such students might be less inclined, for example, to oppose a swimming pool and a river as symbols of wealth and poverty.

14. The relationship of car to motor is one of "inalienable possession," as opposed to one of "alienable possession," illustrated in the relationship of, say, a person to a car (e.g., That's Sarah's car). In the morphological structure of certain languages, these two kinds of possession are obligatorily represented in contrasting ways, just as, in the discourse structure of English and other languages, they are represented in contrasting ways, at least with respect to the ways in which deictic elements such as the are used to signal that certain information may be considered as given.

15. Bransford, Barclay, and Franks, 1972; Bransford and Franks, 1971; Bransford and Johnson, 1972, 1973; Brown, 1973; Carroll and Freedle, 1972; Chafe, 1972, 1974; Clark, 1975; Craik and Lockhart, 1972; Davis, 1971; Dijk, 1972, 1973a, 1973b; Franks and Bransford, 1972, 1974; Frederiksen, 1975; Freedle, in press; Gentner, 1976; Grimes, 1972, 1975; Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Harris, 1974; Haviland and Clark, 1974; Johnson, Bransford, and Solomon, 1973; Just and Clark, 1973; Kintsch, 1972, 1974; Kintsch and Dijk, in press; Kintsch, et al., 1975; Kintsch and Keenan, 1973; Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Moeser, 1976; Offir, 1973; Paris and Carter, 1973; Paris and Lindauer, 1976; Perfetti, 1973; Rieger, 1976; Schank, 1973; Schank and Colby, 1973; Simmons, 1973.

16. It should be noted that these students do not necessarily believe that a postman always gets a payoff. Rather they may have been engaging in a certain kind of rhetorical play, one in which a certain proposition is used to counter another, even though neither of them is necessarily believed to be true. Indeed, since the first proposition may have contradicted their own sense of how a postman behaves on a job, it may have encouraged a certain rhetorical flourish in their selection of a response. This kind of dialogic interplay among urban minority students has been frequently noted, particularly in research by Abraham (1970, 1972), Kochmann (1969, 1972), Mitchell-Kernan (1972), and Labov (1973).

17. In La Revolution Poetique Julie Kristeva makes a similar point in analyzing the radical transformation of poetic expression in the historical transition from oral culture to literate culture. She views the literate poet as

having been faced with the need to discover some means for transmitting in writing what the oral poet had transmitted by tone of voice and body gesture. Kristeva argues that this quest for an equivalent means, in most instances, led to a form of poetic expression that may be characterized as "romantic." In effect, the literate poet was attempting to find some means of expressing the affective dimensions that had been expressed by voice and body rhythms in oral performance.

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