Review

Reading Bernstein, *Researching Bernstein*
Muller, J., Davies, B. and A. Morais (eds) (2004)

Craig Ronalds

This important new collection of essays is divided into three sections, each of which approaches Bernstein's theories from a slightly different perspective. Section 1 focuses on 'meta-dialogue' between Bernstein and other key thinkers. The second, and largest, deals with empirical applications in a variety of pedagogic contexts. A consistent focus here is the problem of 'invisibility' in progressive pedagogic modalities and its role in reproducing inequalities based in class, gender and race. The final section, more varied in its focus, addresses craft training, legal studies for adult learners, and the recent history of educational policy in the UK, all from a Bernsteinian perspective.

Muller's introduction is at once retrospective and prospective. It divides neatly into two halves: the first sets out a theoretical framework for the whole collection, by tackling the thorny question of Bernstein's politics. Far from apolitical, Muller argues, Bernstein's work represents 'a political theory of action based on theory' (p. 2). Muller also draws attention to Bernstein's concern in his late work with 'trainability', and the destabilizing and 'socially empty' consequences for the individual adrift in the 'totally pedagogized society' (TPS). This problematic is relevant to many of the book's other chapters and provides an appropriate theoretical platform for the summary of contents that follows.

Affiliation

Craig Ronalds, Department of English, University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, 2006, Australia
email: craig.Ronalds@arts.usyd.edu.au

William Tyler's chapter, 'Silent, visible, total: pedagogic discourse and the age of information', examines what he calls 'Bernstein's poststructuralist turn' (p. 20). According to Tyler, late in his career Bernstein moved away from a concern with class toward a more fragmented and volatile model of social relations and subjective experience, influenced by his analysis of the drift of pedagogic processes away from official sites into almost all other social domains. Thus, educational processes no longer 'merely reproduce society but, in some sense, … constitute and legitimate that society' (p. 16). Tyler's problematic is then to sketch the 'social semiotic' implications of this shift to a TPS, and to provide a theoretical framework for further research into the specific modalities of pedagogic discourse that emerge as a result.

In her chapter, 'The concept of semiotic mediation: perspectives from Bernstein's sociology', Ruqaiya Hasan once again brings Bernstein into a meta-dialogue with Vygotsky. She first defines 'semiotic mediation' and its role in the development of higher mental functions, with language as the most important mediating tool. But Hasan extends the concept to cover all modes of 'meaning making' as interact (p. 33), not just those uses of language typical of official pedagogic sites. Here, as elsewhere in her work, Hasan is concerned to locate semiotic mediation in relation to the nature of the discourse being mediated and the social positioning of interactants. Her work is a powerful antidote to scholars who see 'higher order consciousness' solely in terms of 'abstract' or de-contextualized meanings, without relating it to the social conditions for the production and reproduction of such discourse, and to variable modes of higher order consciousness.

In Chapter 4, 'The debt to pleasure: the subject and knowledge in pedagogic discourse', Zain Davis attempts to read Bernstein on the indeterminacy of pedagogic discourse and pedagogic subjectivity in the light of Freud and Lacan. The subject relates to two forms of pleasure: desire (for the law) and enjoyment (*jouissance*). The latter makes a 'rational calculus of pleasures' inoperative, is opaque to the subject itself (*sic*) and renders the human subject 'an incalculable entity'. *Jouissance* is thus aligned with what Bernstein has called the 'discursive gap'. The fundamental principle of pedagogic (as of all) communication is that 'communication starts from the necessity of its own failure' (p. 47). After recasting Bernstein's terms in Lacanian guise, she then provides a detailed critique of the pedagogic relation as that which holds between a subject-who-knows and a subject-who-does-not-know. The intent is to provide a more delicate account of 'the structure of the pedagogic relation': that is, 'a formal model of the structure of the social bond of educating' (p. 50).

Acknowledging the essential character of official pedagogy (as vertical, rather than horizontal, discourse), Jill Bourne's 'Framing talk: towards a "radical visible pedagogy"' argues that this fact can either 'be "masked" for some or all

of the participants, or made clear and explicit to all, so that all involved can understand it' (p. 63). If it ignores this, the weak classification and framing of some progressive pedagogy can make education more, rather than less, difficult for marginal groups. Bourne's response is a 'radical visible pedagogy': the teacher retains control, explicitly ordering the discourse, but learners are no longer positioned as individuated acquirers ranked by innate ability through competitive evaluation: rather, learning is construed as 'a collective endeavour' (p. 66). Using data drawn from observation of a single experienced teacher in an 'urban, multi-ethnic school' (p. 67), Bourne demonstrates the role dynamic variation in the strength of classification and framing, and the 'managed introduction of horizontal discourse' plays in student learning: a 'radical realization of an apparently conservative practice' (Bernstein, 1990: 73).

In 'The *what* and *how* of teaching and learning: going deeper into sociological analysis and intervention', Ana Morais, Isabel Neves and Delmina Pires report on a longitudinal study 'focused on the interaction between children's social background, pedagogic practice and scientific learning' (p. 80). Instruments were devised to measure the variable strength of classification and framing values applied to three key relations: between subjects, between spaces and between discourses. Data was gathered from classroom interaction, and collated against a theoretical profile of most effective practice indicated by previous studies. Results suggests that, stated rather baldly as it is on p. 83, 'pedagogic practice can overcome the effect of children's social background' on scientific learning, especially of what they call 'complex cognitive competences' (CCC). The most important factors appeared to be teachers' own scientific competence (the *what* of pedagogic practice), and intra-disciplinary relations and evaluation criteria (weakening the former, and making the latter explicit: the *how*). More surprising, perhaps, was just how significant relations of space and child-child hierarchy were to the acquisition of CCC.

David Rose's chapter, 'Sequencing and pacing of the hidden curriculum: how indigenous learners are left out of the chain', investigates the 'underlying literacy development curriculum' (p. 106) that dominates contemporary education. Since, beyond junior primary, this curriculum is acquired tacitly, indigenous and other children who lack the necessary skills acquired in a previous stage of their learning are unjustly disadvantaged, especially at the interface between home and school, where an orientation to written discourse is essential to students' success. Parallels between what Rose calls the 'scaffolding interaction cycle' and the 'triadic dialogue' or IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) pattern of classroom discourse ensure that students unfamiliar with the former become almost immediately marginal to the latter. The 'tyranny of curriculum pacing' then perpetuates this, ensuring that 'access … remains unequal, and that this inequality remains invisible' (p. 95). Using examples of classroom interaction

to illustrate his argument, Rose concludes that democracy in the classroom will only be achieved by designing practices for literacy responsive to the needs of all students, by incorporating elements of SIC into IRF dialogue, by making criteria explicit, and by limiting negative feedback that typically works to affirm the received hierarchy of learner identities.

Sarah Theule Lubienski's chapter, 'Decoding mathematics instruction: a critical examination of an invisible pedagogy', also considers the risk that invisible 'progressive, constructivist-inspired pedagogies' (p. 108) simply privilege high SES children who enter school with the appropriate orientation. Basing her discussion on a pilot study of new pedagogy for mathematics teaching in a US high school where she was both teacher and researcher, she presents a detailed discussion of six individual female students chosen because of their different SES and result profile. She found that, in accordance with Bernstein's code theory, low SES students prefer stronger framing values, especially around pacing and evaluative criteria, and experienced difficulty moving from contextualized, real-world examples to underlying, abstract mathematical principles. Invisible pedagogy in such contexts (the teacher's 'hints' about correct responses) can be experienced as disabling, rather than empowering, by lower SES students. In line with research conducted by Morais and her colleagues, therefore, Lubienski found that visible scaffolding of all aspects of the pedagogic relation (especially evaluation) was essential to children from families of lower SES.

Combining 'Vygotskian psychology and Bernstein's sociology', Harry Daniels and Angela Creese (with Valerie Hey and Diana Leonard), in their chapter 'Gendered learning identity in two modalities of pedagogic discourse', examine changing forms of cultural transmission and their effects on the gendering of pedagogic identity, and attempt to model relations between the macro of structure and the micro of 'individual effects'. Daniels and his colleagues gathered data on schools in two LEAs in the UK, though only data 'from two highly successful schools in one LEA' are reported in detail (p. 126). The study provides evidence that different gendered identities are taken up based on the interaction between the social class positioning of students, the dominant pedagogic code of the school and that of the individual classroom (across a range of values of classification and framing).

Data for Madeleine Arnot and Diane Reay's study, 'The framing of pedagogic encounters: regulating the social order in classroom learning', were drawn from Year 8 students' verbal accounts of their experiences in the classroom in two contrasting English secondary schools, the students being differentiated in terms of gender, achievement, race and class. The researchers examined students' sense of 'what controlled the speed, level and nature of what they learned' (p. 147), with framing understood as 'the inner logic of a pedagogy'

(Bernstein, 1990: 63). They demonstrate complex interaction between race, class and gender, and the specific framing values preferred by individual schools and classrooms. In general, they found that even where control over content and pacing were less visible, students had little perception of autonomy. An era of increasing external control over classroom practice leaves individual schools and teachers with little discretion. Nevertheless, where chances exist for greater autonomy, the opportunities presented are exploited more fully by middle class, especially female, students. 'Even the pacing of educational knowledge' as Bernstein remarked in 1977, 'is class based'.

Paul Ensor's chapter, 'Toward a sociology of teacher education', introduces important new terrain for the application of Bernstein's theories: 'teacher education discourse' (TED). This latter is defined as a double articulation: the school discourses of specific subject-areas embedded in a more general teacher education discourse as 'the transmission of a privileged teaching repertoire for implementation in school classrooms' (p. 154). Two aspects of the problem are explored. The relation between different pedagogic modalities of TED (three modalities are specified, pp. 161–2) and the student teachers' acquisition of recognition and realization rules, with framing values critical yet again. A second, shorter section in the chapter discusses variable student orientations to modalities of TED (as *relations to*): in terms of commitment, and/or involvement, although without taking the student-teachers' own social positioning overtly into account.

The impact teachers' 'life history' has on their orientation to TED is addressed more directly in Chapter 12, 'Teacher training contexts: study of specific sociological characteristics' an analysis of data drawn from the teacher-training phase of the study discussed in Chapter 6. Isabel Neves, Ana Morais and Margarida Alfonso argue that the data 'revealed the existence of parallels between the teacher training modalities most favourable to professional training and those of pedagogic practice most favourable to the scientific and socio-affective development of children from differing social backgrounds' (p. 171). Weaker classification and framing values, especially around selection, pacing and evaluation, could have an inhibiting effect on the teacher's development: attempts to surrender selection to the teachers in the early phases of training, for example, can easily cause confusion. This suggests in turn that current ideas on action-research processes using weak classification and framing 'need to be rethought' (p. 183). The conclusion is that 'control should be centred on teachers in some aspects of teacher-training (e.g. pacing and hierarchical rules) and on teacher trainers in others (e.g. macro selection and evaluation criteria)' (p. 183).

Jeanne Gamble's article, 'Retrieving the general from the particular: the structure of craft knowledge', explores the process of knowledge transmission in crafts, where learning is typically tacit and based on visualization and

demonstration (modes which have been seriously eroded by the process of mechanization and mass-production). Her research supports Bernstein's decision to classify craft as a horizontal knowledge structure within vertical discourse, though with some important modifications. What distinguishes knowledge transmission in 'craft' is what she calls 'principled knowledge'. As a principle of arrangement underlying particular activities and artefacts, principled knowledge 'constitutes the abstract' even as it is manifest in the particular. The final fraction of her 'epistemic network' (p. 198) offers a sub-classification of craft knowledge as particular, principled and embodied (rather than discursive). While not presuming her analysis of 'craft' as vertical discourse can by itself solve the 'theory–practice' dilemma bedevilling contemporary pedagogic theory, her work does offer a new way of understanding vocational knowledge and extending Bernstein's remarks on craft as pedagogic modality.

Mignonne Breier's 'Horizontal discourse in law and labour law' examines the role everyday experience might play in pedagogy designed for groups of students including adult learners. Her data is drawn from two university courses on labour law attended by such students. Concerned at 'gaps' in Bernstein's model of horizontal and vertical discourse, she introduces a more delicate taxonomy of 'knowledge forms', based around a distinction between 'localizing and generalizing strategies' (p. 208). Using examples from her data, she demonstrates the complexity with which these forms may intersect in pedagogic practice. Successful mediation between local and general is essential for effective learning in fields like law, and the relative success of such pedagogy is in part determined by the use lecturers make of the experiences of their students. In more overtly Bernsteinian terms, she argues that horizontal discourse should be used in such contexts to 'scaffold the acquisition of the relevant gaze' (p. 215). Neither lecturer studied did this successfully, and the outcome was predictable: those with prior experience of academic discourses and meanings succeeded, while those without this experience generally did not.

Finally, in 'The wrong kind of knower: education, expansion and the epistemic device', Karl Maton provides an historically focused analysis of the politics of knowledge and the knower in British higher education, theorized in terms of his development of Bernstein's conceptual framework (legitimation code, epistemic device). He assesses the effects on the rapid expansion of higher education in 1960s Britain of the myth of the 'new student'. This new student (working class, with capabilities in specialized knowledge, but without the appropriately 'cultured' habitus) challenged the existing system to respond to his/her needs. Rather than refashion higher education in accordance with a 'knowledge legitimation code', the 'managers of expansion' (by which Maton means primarily academics themselves) tried to 'overcome the mismatch between the new student and the established university ideal by resocializing

them (i.e. students) into the right kind of knower' (p. 226). Their reasons for doing so were relatively straightforward: to 'retain control of the epistemic device' (p. 229), set in accordance with a legitimation code that favoured the knower's social position, and affective habitus, over their mastery of specialized knowledges. The conservative, hierarchic and tradition-bound epistemic and pedagogic modalities governing higher education in Britain are nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in this failure to take account of the, largely fictitious, 'new student' in the design and implementation of an expanded higher education field.

There are important contributions here to the theoretical elaboration of Bernstein's sociology of education (especially in Section 1). But perhaps the most striking feature of the collection as a whole is its demonstration of the power and scope of Bernstein's conceptual tools in empirical research. In a totally pedagogized society, where the autonomy of education is under constant threat from a re-centralized state, this can only be welcomed.

Book reviewed

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Reference

Bernstein, Basil (1990) *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse*: *class, codes and control Vol. IV*. London: Routledge.