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David GRADDOL
Joan SWANN

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag stellt neue Analyseansätze vor, die in der angewandten Linguistik, wie sie in Grossbritannien praktiziert wird, mehr und mehr zum Tragen kommen. Diese Ansätze basieren einerseits auf einem funktionalen Modell im Sinne HALLIDAYs, schöpfen jedoch auch aus postmodernen Sprach- und Gesellschaftstheorien. Die Autoren untersuchen den Einfluss, den solche postmoderne Ansätze auf das Gebiet des geschlechtspezifischen Sprachgebrauchs haben, ganz besonders im Erziehungsbereich. Die sich seit den Sechzigerjahren abzeichnenden Entwicklungen im britischen Schulwesen, informellen, interaktiven Kommunikationsstilen im Schulunterricht mehr Gewicht zu geben, werden in diesem Beitrag in Bezug gestellt zu solch postmodernen Konzepten wie "border-crossing" und "conversationalisation".

Introduction

Applied linguistics is about the application of linguistic theory to real world problems. As such it is a complex exercise, which must necessarily draw on at least three kinds of theoretical framework: one which models language, one which models the world, and one which models the complex interactions between the two.

This description of applied linguistics is a maximal, all embracing one. In practice, applied linguists seem to have restricted themselves to a narrower domain, in particular to language teaching. But applied linguistics has long had an ambition to expand beyond this field. When Pit CORDER wrote his book *Introducing Applied Linguistics* in the early 1970s, he acknowledged that "there are practical tasks other than language teaching to which a knowledge of linguistics is relevant" (CORDER, 1973:7). This expansionist ambition has become clearly visible in recent years, with the growth of work in translation, in communications technology, and in forensic linguistics - to mention but three. Pit CORDER also envisaged another kind of expansion - the growth of a "superlinguistic theory" - a unified semiotic theory which would describe, "the science of the life of signs in society". He was, of course, echoing the words of Ferdinand DE SAUSSURE, who had foreseen the growing importance of sociolinguistics in linguistic enquiry.

Such expansion in the domain of applied linguistics has been clearly visible in the recent themes of the Annual Meetings of the **British Association of Applied Linguistics** (BAAL) and their associated publications:

Language and Power 1989 (Romy CLARK et al, eds, 1990) *Language and Nation* 1990 (Paul MEARA and Anne RYAN, eds, 1991)

Language and Culture 1991 (David GRADDOL et al, eds, 1993)

Evaluating Theory and Practice, 1992 (David GRADDOL and Joan SWANN, eds, 1994)

Language in a Changing Europe 1993 (David GRADDOL and Stephen THOMAS, eds, 1994)

Change and Language 1994 (Hywel COLEMAN and Lynne CAMERON, eds, 1995)

These titles demonstrate a broader conception of the kinds of application, of the kinds of data, and the kinds of theory and data which might constitute applied linguistics. The last theme, in particular, had three sub-themes which show this clearly: Change, language and the developing world; Change, language and the late 20th century society; Change, language and the individual.

In this paper, we examine some ideas about language which are becoming popular amongst members of BAAL, and which seem to be increasingly employed in analyses of data by applied linguists in Britain. These ideas belong broadly to a functional model of language, which owes much to the work of Michael HALLIDAY, but they draw also on what is sometimes called a postmodern theory of language and society. We will show briefly how the field of "language and gender" is becoming reconceptualised under the influence of such theory. We will also illustrate some of the ways we, and other researchers, have applied research findings in language and gender to the traditional, core activity of Applied Linguistics: namely education.

The postmodern model

Postmodern theory can be described as incorporating three "big" ideas :

1   That individual social identity is more complex than is suggested by the essentialist, monolithic categories often employed by sociolinguistics - like "female", "middle class", "middle age", "white". The sociolinguistic model of identity typically represents society as orderly and well structured, in which individual people have an uncontested, and unproblematical "place", determined by socio-economic indicators, social group membership, and territory-affiliation. Postmodern theory represents a person's identity as fluid, negotiable, contested, ambiguous. One could say that traditional sociolinguistics sees diversity as being stratified within society, such that individuals can be located within the cell of a large social matrix.

Postmodern theory, on the other hand, sees diversity as experienced by the individual, whose identity can be described in terms of a subjectivity which is problematic and contradictory. The unified rational self assumed by so much research in applied linguistics is seen as a fiction of the modernist project which began during the Renaissance and is now deeply entrenched in western, liberal thinking.

2   That there is an important dialectical relationship between language and the social world which has two main dimensions :

(i)   the way we talk, and the kinds of texts with which we interact, both reflect the kind of person we are, but also help create that identity- as well as helping create the kind of social relations which we experience. Postmodern theory is not the only approach which suggests that a such a dialectical relation between language and the social world exists, but its analysis of this relationship is distinctive, employing ideas such as **discourse** and **subjectivity** rather than language and society.

This also marks a departure from the old, sociolinguistic agenda: do forms of language determine social relations and experience of the world (WHORF, the early work of Basil BERNSTEIN, some strands of feminism) or do the forms of language reflect an unequal social and sexist world? (typical of variationist sociolinguistics).

(ii)   Postmodern theory conceptualises the process of communication differently from modernist theoretical frameworks (in which we include much traditional sociolinguistics as well as much grammatical theory). Within postmodern theory, the meanings of particular utterances and texts are seen as precarious and contestable: not given simply by the linguistic structure but constructed and mediated by people with a diversity of social experience, expectations, and practices. Meaning thus arises out of the interaction between language and social life. It follows from this that utterances and meanings are not seen as constructed by single, rational minds. This does not abolish such notions as "intention", but it certainly problematises it.

3   That social and economic relations in the world are undergoing important qualitative changes which are leading to both global and local restructuring of social and economic life; and that such massive change renders traditional frameworks of analysis inappropriate.

So postmodern theory is both a new way of theorising the world, and a way of theorising a new kind of world. It not only provides new insights into old problems but also, by setting a different agenda of real world "problems" linked to language use, it suggests a new domain for Applied Linguistics: a critique of social life through language.

It is, perhaps, important to say that we do not see postmodern theory as a brand new product which will solve our analytical problems at a stroke. Many of its ideas have a long history, particularly, perhaps, in the disciplines of anthropology and ethnography. Postmodern theory remains rather better at constructing analytical problems than solving them. Furthermore, many of the linguists incorporating some of these ideas are doing so cautiously and eclectically, and may even reject the label "postmodern" altogether. We are merely using the term as shorthand for what we see as some important developments in applied linguistics which we think help provide new insights into some of the issues which confront us in the developed world today.

The diffusion of identity and agency

The following example might make some of these ideas about language and social identity more concrete. In many parts of the developed world, the nature of public encounters with larger organisations and businesses is being transformed. One example of this is the automated enquiry service provided by banks, airlines and other service industries. Bank customers, for example, are able to obtain information about their account by interacting with machines rather than with people: at an automated teller machine on the street, by Minitel or link from a home computer. It is also possible to telephone the bank and receive information from a synthesized human voice which responds to queries and instructions from the user given either by voice or by keying numbers.

Imagine one such customer, a man who rings the bank by telephone from home, late at night, surrounded by domestic life: television, smells of cooking, neighbours calling. Banking transactions are, in most countries, associated with public and institutional spaces and formality. The interaction we have just described, however, is typical of the way the environment of work is increasingly penetrating the domestic sphere and **vice-versa**. This interpenetration of the domestic and commercial, and of the private and public, is claimed to be one of the features of postmodern life. Such blurring of boundaries is what Norman FAIRCLOUGH, in his keynote address to BAAL in 1994 called **border crossings**.

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We are particularly concerned in this paper about issues of language and gender, and we can note that it is not accidental that the synthesized voice on the telephone is that of a woman. Women have long been used in commerce to provide services to (often male) customers in a dy of airline cabin crews, referred to this as "emotional labour". Norman FAIRCLOUGH has developed this idea in relation to language:

"Emotional labour is an institutional appropriation of practices of everyday life, and it needs the language of everyday life. It has often been remarked that the burden of emotional labour in everyday life, especially in the family, has an unequal gender distribution, and is disproportionately carried by women. Service industries can be read in terms of a feminization of labour, suggesting a certain gender bias to phenomena of conversationalisation." (FAIRCLOUGH, 1994)

By the term "conversationalisation" Norman FAIRCLOUGH has in mind "the engineering of social relations such as informality, friendship, and even intimacy ... through the deliberate simulation of the discursive practices of everyday life". Service industries have become the dominant economic activity in countries like Britain, and with it an increase in the exploitation of particular forms of talk. The use of a conversational style permits service providers to simulate a personal interest and friendliness towards a customer; to give the impression that the customer's desires form the basis of the interaction.

Research on language and gender, as documented in our book *Gender Voices*, has shown how, even in the domestic sphere of married couples, there is an uneven division of labour in conversations. The conversational role we have just described - the maintenance of interpersonal relations in conversation; allowing topics raised by the interlocutor to flourish; supportive, non interruptive conversational styles - these typically form women's conversational work. Hence the adoption of conversational practices in the workplace is not merely an "informalization" of work discourse, but also often a process of "feminization", as Fairclough suggests. Men in their everyday work are being encouraged or required by their employers, to adopt communication practices and discourse roles hitherto associated with women in the private sphere. In addition to the service encounters we have mentioned, trends on the factory floor and in middle management are towards cooperative teamwork, problem solving between equals, and the avoidance of aggression and conflict.

So the adoption of a female voice by the bank for its automated enquiry service is far from accidental: it can be theorised in a way which engages with

wider facts about the role of language in constructing economic and social relations in the late twentieth century, and what Norman Fairclough has called **discourse technologies**: a form of exploitation of sociolinguistic research by corporate bodies whereby certain discourses are designed and implemented in the workplace in an attempt to achieve particular social relations both amongst staff and between staff and members of the public.

Postmodern theory encourages us to examine the wider social and economic context of individual behaviour. It also encourages us to ask more searching questions about identity and agency. For example, who exactly can be said to be speaking on the bank's automated enquiry line? Who is the relevant human agent?

At one level it is obviously the woman whose voice was digitised - who recorded the snippets of speech which were assembled into appropriate utterances by the computer. But at another level, it could be said to be the person who wrote the script which she reads. So what she says contains an institutional voice of some kind. At yet another level, the human agent can be regarded as the programmer, or systems designer who created the software which puts the bits and pieces together to form a connected utterance. Certainly some of the features of this utterance, such as its timing and prosody which often signal important aspects of personal identity, are partly the work of the programmer.

But in an important respect, the human agent who constructed the utterance was not the woman, or the bank, but the listener. How then, can the listener be theorised as being the speaker? When the user interacts with this distant machine, the synthetic voice responds mechanically and simply to the pattern of button pressing. The linguistic consequences of each button press are (one hopes) quite predicatble and are invoked by particular acts of intention by the customer. In this sense, the user was a key human agent in the construction of the utterance.

The customer's agency in the matter does not stop there. The numbers which the synthesised voice utters when it lists a balance and statement of account are created by his transactions and pattern of behaviour in the world. So we can argue that in a deeper sense he was the agent, the speaker of this utterance. And in the sense that this is a record of gendered interactions with the world, it is a masculine voice.

No doubt you find this a bit of a tricky, typically postmodern argument. Nevertheless, the diffusion of human agency, and the complex division of labour in the production of texts such as these - whether spoken or written - is undoubtedly one of the key features of much communication today. In this one

example, apparently an interaction between a male and a female, we have been able to raise a variety of questions about language and gender identity. Such questions are becoming increasingly pressing ones in sociolinguistic research.

We have seen in the papers presented to BAAL over the past few years the working out of some of the implications of such postmodern ideas in a sufficiently empirical and concrete way to serve the needs of applied linguistics. Our colleague Janet MAYBIN, for example, has been applying the "Bakhtinian" notion of "voices" to her recordings of schoolchildren (MAYBIN 1993). One of us is currently examining boys" talk in classrooms (GRADDOL and KEETON, forthcoming), demonstrating how some of the cooperative features which Jennifer COATES has found in the talk of women's friendship groups (COATES, 1994), such as the joint construction of turns, can also be found in boys' talk. Postmodern theory is not just a pastiche of obscure, abstract ideas. It can be operationalised within an empirical framework and made to generate useful insights in applied linguistic research. In fact, we could go so far as to say that it renders usable for the first time, data which has long been marginalised and even ignored as being too messy or difficult, or as being complicated by uninteresting "performance" factors.

Language, gender and education

Education is perhaps the best established domain of applied linguistics. Furthermore, research on language and gender has certainly influenced educational debates, policy-making and pedagogic practices in British schools during the last few decades. Here we will briefly chart some developments in British education from the 1960s, and ask whether postmodern theory, as we have described it, offers a basis for understanding and critiquing them.

During the 1980s, for example, there was a spate of publications -- guidelines, teaching materials, policy statements - designed to redress perceived gender inequalities in education. Many of these focused on language use, both written and spoken. They can, however, be seen to incorporate some of the monolithic and fixed views of gender identity which postmodern theory finds so problematical. We have argued elsehere (SWANN, 1992b) that masculinity and femininity are frequently constructed as discrete and oppositional categories. There seems to have been too easy an assumption that boys behave in one way, and girls in another; and that boys and girls alike behave in a consistent manner.

Some of the earlier publications also take a rather transmission view of language and meaning (despite the fact that many of their authors were critics of a transmission view of education). Discussions of "sexist language", for

example, and of "sexist biases" in texts commonly saw sexism as something inherent in texts. Sexist language has, similarly, been portrayed in a simplistic and deterministic way as constructing language users as feminine or masculine. Many people have since begun to question earlier "anti-sexist" policies (see for instance the examples in MAYBIN and SWANN, 1993). The model of language on which such policies were founded has also been explicitly challenged. Gemma MOSS (MOSS, 1989 and elsewhere) has drawn attention to the importance of how apparently ideologically suspicious texts (such as popular romance) are actually used by adolescent women: how the social practices and discussion which typically surround such texts can transform the meaning and ideological effects.

We want, however, to focus here on developments concerning spoken language in the classroom. We will briefly trace the history of new, informal styles of interaction in British classrooms and relate this to postmodern ideas such as "border-crossing" and "conversationalisation".

In 1965 a new word came to be used in British education. The word was "oracy", and it was coined by the educationist Andrew WILKINSON as a parallel to literacy. WILKINSON insisted on the importance of spoken language in teaching and learning, complaining that "The spoken language in England has been shamefully neglected"(WILKINSON, 1965:11). He argued that oracy should be as highly valued in the educational process as literacy traditionally had been and famously claimed that "oracy is a condition of learning in all subjects" (WILKINSON, 1965:58).

In the 1970s and 1980s educational interest in spoken language grew to the extent that it is possible to talk of an "oracy movement", which had a growing effect on educational rhetoric and, though probably to a lesser extent, educational practice.

The important point in relation to our concerns here is that the oracy movement has tended to focus on and privilege only certain forms of talk. For instance, its followers were often critical of the discourse practices associated with "transmission teaching", where stereotypically the teacher stands at the front of the class and gives out information to pupils; or asks questions around the class - normally questions to which she or he knows the answer. The promoters of oracy tend to be less interested in whole class, teacher-directed, talk and to particularly value talk between pupils in small groups. Such talk is often seen as "conversational" in that it is typically informally-organised, exploratory, and collaborative in nature.

There have been a variety of motivations for the introduction of this kind of talk in the classroom: we have already mentioned one, which is that it is

regarded as an effective way to organise teaching and learning. But there are also social, economic and political motivations which have arisen from different quarters.

One motive, which WILKINSON himself put forward strongly, was a liberal, humanist one: oracy was good for democracy and made for a more civilised life. It encouraged good manners and mutual respect between staff and pupils :

"Since oracy is inextricably bound up with personality its encouragement is a matter of the fundamental attitude of the school towards its pupils; of their relationships with the staff; of the degree of responsibility accorded them; of the confidence they acquire. Oracy and democracy are closely related." (WILKINSON, 1965:59)

Twenty-five years later, WILKINSON characterised the the "rules" of classroom talk which supported this project :

"Take turns; don't interrupt; don't overtalk; share out the talk time; don't allow silence; don't speak at too great a length; listen to others; respect their point of view; find rational reasons for agreeing or dissenting; respond to the merits, not demerits, of others' points; do not be personal; be objective; be positive and constructive; be co-operative; try to arrive at a mutually satisfying conclusion. The consensus may be challenged, but with the intention of arriving at a new consensus by rational argument." (WILKINSON, DAVIES & BERILL 1990: 76-7)

The promotion of collaborative talk, however, has also been seen as a beneficial activity by those concerned about gender inequalities. One of the most significant, certainly one of the most frequently discussed, findings that has come out of research on language and gender over the past couple of decades or more has been the extent to which male speakers of all ages "dominate" mixed sex interaction. In some other classroom research we indicated how such dominance took highly subtle forms, and could be maintained by the compliance of both girl and boy pupils, as well as the teacher (SWANN and GRADDOL, 1988). There have been repeated attempts to challenge such dominance - to give female speakers greater access to the floor. Most of the books and guidelines on gender issues in schools and classrooms have something to say about the way classroom interaction is organised. "Good practice" hinges on encouraging pupils to work together collaboratively - to engage in small group, informally-organised, exploratory talk :

"[The] work emphasized talking, listening, reporting back and operating successfully as a small group. We were also encouraging collaboration in other aspects of their work. [...] What we tried to do was to create situations in which girls and boys needed each other, and gained mutual support." (CLAIRE, 1986: 45)

This quotation comes from Hilary CLAIRE, a London teacher working with a class of 6-7 year olds, on how she and a fellow teacher tried to reduce the dominance of boys and encourage girls to contribute more in class. Collaborative talk is seen as "female friendly" and institutionalising it in the classroom practice is seen as a sound interventionist strategy which will give girls a greater chance to participate in useful learning experiences. The linguist Janet HOLMES gives the following advice to organisers of discussions in academic seminars :

"Provide opportunities for small group discussion as preparation for full session discussion of issues. Exploratory talk will thereby be encouraged and females are more likely to contribute in the full session in the role of reporter on a small group's views." (HOLMES, 1992: 145)

Collaborative rather than competitive discourse is not just seen as providing better access for women in situations which would otherwise be dominated by men. It has also been deliberately promoted in all-female groups. For example, Debbie Cameron described talk in feminist discussion groups, where there is a set of self-imposed practices designed to favour less confident speakers.

"When you attend a feminist group or meeting, you soon learn that interruption, talking too much, raising your voice, vehemently disagreeing with others, expressing hostility and so forth are not acceptable behaviour. On the other hand, it is desirable that you express solidarity, give way to other speakers and tolerate long silences if they occur." (CAMERON, 1992: 53)

This kind of collaborative talk has, partly through the oracy movement, become part of educational rhetoric and policy. A clear example of this is provided by a video, produced in 1992 by a newly constituted body known as the School Examinations and Assessment Council, or SEAC. (The fact that this body is itself now defunct bears testimony to the rapid shifts in educational policy in Britain). The video was part of a huge array of materials produced from the late 1980s to the present as part of the development of a National Curriculum in England and Wales. This embodied within it specified

"attainment targets" to be met by children in various parts of the curriculum. The quality of children's spoken language in the classroom was to be formally included within the national assessment programme. The video was designed to provide advice to classroom teachers on the assessment of young children's language.

One extract shows a boy, Thomas, working with different pupils. He is pictured in a collaborative, small-group discussion with two girls, Jenny and Michelle. The children have to solve a problem - they have to decide how they might release a cow from a pit that she's become trapped in. The task for teachers is to watch this video and discuss how they might assess the pupils' spoken language. The following is an extract from the teachers' booklet which accompanied the video in which Thomas is criticised for being "over-dominant" :

Thomas, Jenny and Michelle work together in a group, but Thomas assumes the lead role to an over-dominant extent. He does listen to Jenny's suggestions on occasions ("She might be too heavy to lift up on a rope"), but to meet the requirements of [Attainment Target] En 1/3c: listen with an increased span of attention to other children and adults, asking and responding to questions and commenting on what has been said he would have to listen more and show greater awareness of others and their contributions.

On the other hand, Jenny is assessed more favourably, mainly because she's "supportive" :

Jenny listens well and is the most supportive member of the group: she shows positive body language and makes eye contact with Thomas. ... It is worth noting that assessment of Thomas's work can still be made even though the group interaction is affected by the gender relationship.

This demonstrates what was highly valued in small-group talk. We can see that there is an emphasis on collaboration and conversational support: Thomas is over-dominant - he should listen more and be aware of other speakers; Jenny is better in this context - she's a good listener and a supportive member of the group. The assessors do seem to have taken on board the body of sociolinguistic research which shows that women's styles of talking are different from men's, and usually less highly valued in public settings. The advice here, then, seems to resonate with concerns for gender equality.

But we still need to ask whether, in the long term, such a strategy is actually beneficial to girls - or indeed to any of the individuals concerned. We think there are one or two problems here.

First, in terms of assessment, because girls are often expected to be collaborative and supportive, there is a danger that people will focus on this aspect of their talk and neglect other important features. For instance, in the SEAC video, we felt that the assessors had been led to a rather impoverished assessment of Jenny's speech: she is supportive, but she also puts forward several good ideas for releasing the trapped cow. The assessors have ignored this and focused on some (stereotypically) feminine features. This is reminiscent of the way girls have traditionally been complimented on the presentation of their written classroom work, whereas boys are complimented on its content.

Second, it is also possible that the rehearsal of collaborative talking practices fits a wider and quite different agenda. There has always been something of a tension in debates around the function of the English curriculum in Britain, which goes back to the introduction of state education in the 19th century. Some saw English as primarily a vocational subject in which boys and girls would be given those skills required by their future employers. On the one hand, there has long been a traditional liberal position which rejects the vocational argument, which stresses the humanising effect of exposure to great literature, the importance of personal development through creative writing, and the self-empowerment brought about by language education. This was largely the position taken in a formative Government Report in the 1920s, called *The Teaching of English in England* (*The Newbolt Report*, 1921). One of the contributors to this report was responsible for one of the more colourful and forceful statements of the liberal position :

"I am prepared to maintain, and, indeed, do maintain, without any reservations or perhapses, that it is the purpose of education, not to prepare children for their occupations, but to prepare children against their occupations. [..] We must really get out of the habit of talking as if education were the preparation of children merely for that part of life which does not belong to them, as if they, as reasonable, living beings, had no existence at all." (SAMPSON, 1921:10)

The oracy movement could be regarded, to some extent, as having taken this liberal agenda into the arena of spoken language. However, the compartmentalisation of life into "private" and "public", between "home" and "work" is, according to the postmodern model less easy to maintain. Changing

patterns in employment and work practices seem to have helped bring about a collision between the liberal and vocational educational agenda. Douglas BARNES has argued that we have to look at the motives of those who advocate collaborative small group work: the kinds of talk advocated by liberal educationists, like many of those in the oracy movement (and, we might add, by several feminists) bear an uncanny resemblance to workplace talk that seems designed to manufacture consent and compliance.

We have argued elsewhere (SWANN and GRADDOL, 1995) that the growing emphasis on small-group collaborative talk can itself be seen as a process of feminisation of classroom discourse practices. This kind of talk is not just more "civilised" and supportive to less confident participants but also consistent with research evidence on female conversational styles. In other words, what is being institutionalised is a form of discourse which seems closer to women's generic styles than to those of men. The problem is not just how to ensure that women get access to public talk, but how to ensure that men start talking more like women. For example, in a recent discussion of intervention strategies, Janet HOLMES (1995:221) suggests that "the facilitative, supportive, and considerate politeness strategies typical of female talk have been shown to be more effective. How can men be assisted to acquire them?"

Conclusion

Norman FAIRCLOUGH, in his address to BAAL, alerted applied linguists to some of the wider political and economic processes which such feminization connects with. We have pointed out in an earlier review of spoken language in the classroom (SWANN 1992a) that collaboration between girls and boys may be based on girls' relative support and compliance: speakers may collaborate perfectly in a way which ensures that existing power relations are maintained. In the workplace, such discourse strategies may be regarded as part of a managerial strategy to manufacture consent amongst work teams, as well as to position employees and customers in ways which serve the employers' purposes. After all, it could be said that feminine discourse strategies have facilitated women's exploitation for many years. Postmodern theory perhaps helps us understand employers' apparent enthusiasm for institutionalising such talk practices in the workplace. But, as the mixture of motives for encouraging them in the classroom suggests, the "meaning" of this co-operative, conversational and informal style - or rather, to put it in postmodern terms, the ways in which individual subjects are positioned by such discourse practices - is likely to be contradictory and ambiguous, both emancipatory and yet oppressive.

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