The Australian Journal of
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

'E SAYS IT AS IF 'E'S GOD -

(HOW *DO* TEACHERS TRANSMIT THEIR ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS)

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Jennifer: When we have - When Mr A - um -'e goes,"Now hearken to my words of wisdom"- an' we all start laughin'.
J.D.: Why do you laugh at that?
Jennifer: Um - because - um -
Caroline: We all tell 'im 'e doesn't know anything.
J.D.: Do you laugh at the way he says that?
All: Yes! Yes!
Jennifer: 'E says it as if 'e's God -
Deva: Sometimes, when Mr A's angry wiv someone, 'e starts making jokes about 'em.
J.D.: How do you know that he's not pleased - when he makes those jokes?
Paul: Sir - some jokes are funny and some jokes aint.
J.D.: How do you mean?
Mark: Like - 'e tells the joke - an' then 'e does -'e looks serious.
Deva: Yeah - an' the expression on 'is face.
Paul: It's what 'e says, an' the way 'e says it.
(11-12 year old London children)

As teachers, most of us would agree that our attitudes and expectations do somehow influence the academic goals of our pupils and of ourselves. Research findings indicate that the self-fulfiling prophecy operates in all realms of education and that it results in the kind of behaviour that is expected. The significance of this, especially for teachers in cross-cultural classes, is now well established and generally accepted. However, the ways in which we actually transmit our attitudes and expectations to our pupils are still not clear.

I would like to explore one promising explanatory theory-Gile's theory of interpersonal accommodation-and to propose a tentative model based on it, with which we might analyze our own language behaviour. This may help us to become more sensitive to the consequences (intended and unintended) of our interactions with individuals, small groups, or the whole class.

In its simplest terms, Giles' accommodation theory suggests that, depending on their perceptions of the interactive situation, people continually modify their speech with others so as to reduce or accentuate the linguistic (and hence social) differences between them. We are all aware of changes that we make to our speech according to the topic, the setting and the audience. Giles, however, has been concerned with *why* speech modifications occur in the first place - with the motivations and social consequences which underlie changes in people's speech styles.

All of us have available a repertoire of speech alternatives (of vocabulary richness, grammatical complexity, speech rates, accents, intonation patterns, and so forth) which we use in differing

ways in various social situations. For example, as teachers who control an extensive vocabulary, we have a choice between making full use of it or of conveying our meaning (perhaps less precisely) in fewer and simpler words; or, as people well versed in the grammar of a language, we can speak with a complex or simplified grammar to meet the needs of our listeners. We select from this speech repertoire in response to situational elements which may be 'internal' (such as our mood at the time) or 'external' (such as the topic significance, emotionality, technicality, abstraction, or humorousness; the general context in which we are speaking; our familiarity with the setting; or the characteristics and behaviours of our audience). We all know that some of these shifts in speech style occur in compliance with social norms (we are 'expected' to speak in a certain way to older people, employers, and so on), but Giles' theory suggests that much speech adjustment - interpersonal accommodation - occurs as a means of expressing values, attitudes, and intentions towards others; with the extent of shift towards or away from the speech styles of those with whom we are talking being the mechanism by which we communicate social approval or disapproval. A shift in speech style towards that of another is termed *convergence* while a shift away is called *divergence*.

It has been observed that when people interact there is a tendency for them to become more alike *(to converge)* in their languages, pronunciations, speech rates, pause and utterance lengths, and vocal intensities. It has also been noted that people converge in terms of the content of what they say - for instance in the intimacies of their self-disclosures or, on a different level, by using less jargonised and technical language when speaking to listeners with less knowledge. Thus convergence occurs both at the levels of *how* a message is transmitted and of *what* is being said. Convergent shifts generally result in a favourable appraisal of the speaker (who is perceived as trying to accommodate to his listener) and at the same time, they probably also convey to the listener the impression that the speaker approves of him.

Varying situational determinants can lead to 'upward', 'downward', and 'mutual' convergence or divergence; to a 'mixed' convergence situation; and to a 'pursuit' manoeuvre. All of these kinds of shifts can occur on *all* levels of the speech repertoire. As an example, a speaker, perceiving his own *accent* to have lower prestige than that of his hearer, in order to gain his listener's approval (or alternatively, to indicate that he does not want this), may shift his own accent 'upwards' towards the higher prestige one (or further 'downwards' from it). Where both speaker and listener desire 'mutual' approval, the higher prestige speaker may shift 'downwards' while the other moves 'upwards'. Alternatively, they may both choose to diverge further, the higher prestige speaker shifting further 'upwards' and the other diverging further 'downwards'. 'Mixed' convergence occurs, for instance, when a speaker who is of low social status but whose pronunciation displays high accent prestige talks to a listener of high social status but with lower accent prestige. In such a case the speaker has a conflict between converging 'upwards' because of his lower social status or 'downwards' because of his higher accent prestige. Often he will choose a maintenance position by deciding to make no shift. A 'pursuit' manoeuvre can occur when a higher status sender using a higher prestige accent diverges 'upwards' to stress superiority, while his lower status received converges 'upwards' in pursuit, to narrow this widened gap, thus restoring his status relative to the other.

Giles seems to suggest that divergence derives from hostile motivations, but it seems to me that in a teaching situation positive motivations can also lead to divergent shifts. When we, as teachers, indicate a more appropriate pronunciation of a word used by a pupil; or when we deliberately introduce technical or more complex items; or when we indicate disagreement with aspects of a child's performance; we may

do so in an attempt to foster the child's development. However, for such a strategy to be successful, divergence at one level may need to be balanced by convergence at others. Such a situation may be applying in the following interaction:

The teacher, in a class of 11-12 year olds, is discussing with him, Mark's attempt at creating a cartoon strip. He begins by reading the caption:

1. "I'm the ghost of the white eyes."
   "If you don't shut up you'll be the ghost of the black eyes."
   -Aah!! That's all I need! (chuckles).
   OK That's not bad at all. Now the thing is - ah - you've got to change those around haven't you - in each case, see?
   P'raps it might be an idea to move the - have the reception table there - of the hotel - and - ah - Mr Invisible coming in. Who's this? - Mr Square? coming in.

2. I like this idea where you put - put the time of day in - time of night, I should say.

3. Now, that's not a very good picture though, is it? - that one there - nor's that.

4. I like the idea though.

5. Now we need to polish up on the pictures - right? - and get the words in the right order.

Here the divergence is at the level of content. Even at this level it is interesting to note how the teacher alternates converging and diverging shifts.

> OK That's not bad at all ... the thing is you've got to change those around ...
> I like this idea ... Now, that's not a very good picture though, is it? ...
> I like the idea though ... Now we need to polish up ...

What the transcript can't show (but the actual tape clearly does) is that although the teacher is diverging at the content level, his tone of voice, his pace, and his laughter (his chuckles indicate that the apparently divergent "That's all I need!" is really a convergent move) are all supportive.

As teachers, then, we may converge or diverge for a variety of motives and on a variety of linguistic levels. To cater for this complexity, the concept of interpersonal accommodation draws on a number of other theories.

Similarity-attraction theory proposed that the more similar our attitudes and beliefs are to those of certain others, the more likely it is that we will be attracted to those others. Speech convergence is one device that increases similarity. It reflects the speaker's desire for his listener's social approval and it also indicates that he is bestowing approval on his listener. The implications of this aspect of the theory for those of us working in a cross-cultural situation are obvious. If our attitudes towards our pupils are negative, we will make few attempts to converge, signalling not only that we do not desire their social approval, but also that we have little approval of them. In such a case, while a 'no-shift' interaction may indicate a neutrality of attitude, diverging strategies both overt and covert, may signal negative attitudes and expectations.

This is not to say, however, that convergence is necessarily 'a good thing' and divergence necessarily 'a bad thing'. While the similarity-attraction process holds out the promise of rewards for convergence, these shifts are likely to involve costs for the speaker. Thus, social exchange theory suggests that prior to acting we attempt to assess the rewards and costs of alternative courses of action. We will converge only if potential rewards are greater than costs. For example, teachers who feel that a child's own language style is valid, may wish to converge on it in the school situation, but are aware that in doing so they may risk going against the norms of the school, or they may be failing to alert the

pupil to expectations that employers, for example, may have of him. Their decision to converge or diverge may be based on a balance sheet drawn up from elements in the actual situation; their attitudes and intentions; and their perceptions of the wider scene. If they choose to diverge, then *how* they diverge may be critical, as such a shift may be perceived negatively by the pupil, simply as an indicator of disapproval.

Because convergence can be upwards or downwards; because it includes the notion of rewards and costs to both speakers and listeners; and because of the possibility of differing perceptions of intent between speaker and listener, it is not possible to explain convergence merely in terms of the observable characteristics of the actors. Causal-attribution theory suggests that we understand a person's behaviour, and hence evaluate the person himself, in terms of the motives and intentions that we attribute as the cause of his actions. We probably consider three factors when attributing motives to an act - the other's ability, his effort, and the external pressures causing him to perform in the way he did. Thus, as teachers listening to our pupils, we will attribute accommodation and non-accommodation (either a maintenance 'no-shift' position, or a divergent one) in a variety of ways. As an accommodating act already displays that ability is present, we may attribute the accommodation to either the child's making a voluntary effort to reduce dissimilarities (in which case we will probably react positively towards the child) or to his being forced to do so by external pressures (which may promote positive feelings in us, although these may be somewhat tempered). Non-accommodation, on the other hand, may be attributed to lack of ability; to a lack of effort to reduce dissimilarities; or to the existence of external pressures. Thus, although interpersonal convergence is generally favourably received and non-convergence generally unfavourably received, the extent to which this holds true will be influenced by the participants' perceptions of each other. Sometimes, those interacting lack valid and reliable information about each other. When this occurs, the attributions a perceiver makes about another's behaviour will be based on the perceiver's past experiences, stereotypes, and so forth. This is especially significant when such stereotypes and expectations are unfavourable.

For instance, the teacher holding negative attitudes may attribute convergence by the culturally-different child to unspecified external pressures or deviousness, rather than to a sincere desire to reduce dissimilarities. On the other hand, the culture-different child's non-convergence may be attributed to 'lack of effort' rather than to a possible lack of necessary ability or to the force of external pressures (such as the influence of the child's peer group). Alternatively, to protect his own self-esteem, the teacher may attribute 'lack of ability' to his culturally-different pupil (because if he attributes the child's non-convergence to 'lack of effort', he is forced to assume that his pupil does not desire his approval). If such an attribution is made frequently, this teacher's expectations of his pupils will be lowered, not because he operates from a position of prejudice or stereotype, but because he needs to protect his own image. Thus, whether non-convergence is attributed to 'lack of effort' or 'lack of ability', his culturally different pupils may be at risk in their relations with him.

For culturally-different children, non-convergence may actually be a powerful symbol by which the members of their group display their intention of maintaining their identity and cultural distinctiveness. The perception of such positive inter-group distinctiveness by in-group members assures them of an adequate social identity. Thus, attacks on the validity of the children's distinctive language form may signal disapproval of the children themselves. However, teachers may be in a 'mixed' convergence situation with regard to issues such as standard English and dialect. Teachers, determined to be supportive of an out-group language form, may

place themselves in a tension situation because their action starts to break down one of the 'distinctive' dimensions valued by their own in-group. On the other hand, teachers committed to standard English, may see the out-group child's non-convergence on this form as a challenge to the teachers' in-group position.

The interaction situation is further complicated by the fact that some combination of speech shifts may be perceived by a listener as *optimally* accommodating, whereas *maximal* convergence by a speaker may sometimes be perceived by his audience as patronizing, condescending, threatening, or ingratiating. It is also possible to contemplate situations where an optimal amount of divergence might elicit cooperating where convergence would not.

In the opening exchange in the following transcript (which is taken from a different segment of the previously discussed cartoon-strip lesson) the teacher inadvertently goes beyond this optimal level of divergence in statement 1, and is misunderstood. Noting Paul's obvious distress, the teacher both converges and diverges in 3. Again he is misunderstood, and again, in 5, he converges not only in content but in tone and pace and by laughing. In 6, he begins to diverge, senses possible further danger, and switches, in 7, from a more neutral position to the converging 'sticks one on'. By 13, he is still converging - 'terrible joke' has not become 'excellent cartoon'. In addition, in 14, the effort as well as the produce is praised. However, by 15 and 16, although Paul is now happily accepting his teacher's statements, the teacher is beginning to sense that he is running the risk of going beyond an optimal convergence position and feels constrained to justify the magnitude of his shift to himself as well as to Paul.

1. T: (to Paul): ohhh!! - Terrible joke! - Terrible story!
2. Paul: I never 'fought' it was a terrible story.
3. T: Actually - it's not really. It's just that it's so silly.
4. Paul: I made it up.
5. T: Yeah! I know (laughing). It looks like it Paul. No actually - I'm being - I'm being rather mean. It's not all that bad - it's just that - um - no - in fact, actually it's quite good I suppose - the twin brother -
6. : You can use that idea of somebody speaking out of a picture one - p'haps twice - but I think using it three times is - yeah? - a little bit - bit too -
7. : Now, let me see - Oh, this is with that - Oh, I see, it's - um - it's Bubble's twin brother that sticks one on.
8. Paul: No sir - ah - sir - ah! This is - sir - 'e finks it's um him, but it's 'is twin bruvver.

9/10 T: That right.
Paul: 'E get 'em all into trouble - so 'e 'it's 'im.

11. T: Right. Um! - Yeah! To -wh- can you give you - your bubbles - make 'em, make 'em a little bit bigger - all right? Like this - they're a little bit too small.
12. : OK - um - now that's one, two, three, four, five, six seven, eight, nine, then - Right! There's twelve frames there, all right?
13. : Um - That should make an excellent cartoon when you've finished.
14. : Um - I think actually - just for the effort that you put into the - this part - I'll give you two stars for that -
: because you've obviously - uh - taken a lot of time and trouble over it -
16. : and - uh - just because you happen to have an appreciative teacher.

This non-linear relationship between convergence and attraction opens up a number of intriguing questions, all of which have relevance in the classroom. As convergence can occur on more than one dimension simultaneously, how significant would 'over' convergence on one or more of these dimensions be for the total message? Are there individual differences with respect to optimal levels of convergence? Are there

different levels for different cultures? Will a convergent shift by a speaker from one culture be perceived as convergent, or, perhaps, as patronizing by a listener from another? To what extent are the dimensions salient to the evaluation of speech style, context dependent? For instance, the extent and kinds of convergent shifts appropriate between beacher and problem pupil in a private, 'man-to-man' talk will probably differ from those appropriate when the pupil's peer group is also present. This introduction of a wider group is likely to create conflict for the speaker, from whose point of view a group can be considered as a single addressee plus an audience; as several addresses plus an audience; or as a plurality of audiences. This diversity of listeners (whether they are directly addressed or are non-participating auditors) presents the problem for the speaker that convergence towards some necessitates divergence from others. In some cases this problem is resolved by the speaker's overt convergence with the out-group, while at the same time converging covertly (without this being perceived by the out-group) for the benefit of in-group solidarity. Teachers, suddenly faced with a burst of laughter following an apparently innocent pupil response, are often in this situation, as is the child who gets only the overt message while the rest of the group shares his teacher's covertly expressed attitude towards him.

It would seem then, that interpersonal accommodation theory offers valuable insights into how attitudes and expectations are transmitted in the classroom. I have suggested that accommodation may occur both in *what* is said, and in *how* it is said. However, as teachers, we might most easily observe our accommodating moves if we monitored our language behaviour against our intentions, as these are modified by our beliefs and attitudes, and by the on-going interaction. The tentative model, (Figure 1), is proposed to help us explore the motives behind our own accommodating and non-accommodating behaviours; to help us explore how these motives affect the kinds and extent of shifts we make; and to help us explore the effects of these shifts on the whole class or on groups or individuals within the class. The aim of such exploration would be to sensitise us to the extent to which our language behaviour signals, both overtly and covertly, our own attitudes and expectations to our pupils. It would also aim to alert us to the fact that particular pupils may be misperceiving our intentions. The feeling that such a strategy could be valuable arises from the increasing stress currently being placed on the value of participant observation in the description and analysis of classroom interaction. Of course, we cannot teach and observe our own teaching at the same time. The ideal situation, perhaps, would be for us to be provided with video tapes of our own performance. With these we could also analyse the non-linguistic cues we transmit - gestures, facial expressions, and the like. But teachers generally do not have access to this kind of equipment. However, most of us do have recourse to a tape recorder, and an audio tape will remind us of dimensions beyond the aural. We will know why there was a pause at a certain stage. We will recall the look on the face of a particular responding child. We will know what we meant in a particular interaction (and may become more aware of what our pupils thought we meant).

I am suggesting that, from time to time, we might tape our interactions with class, group, or individual and then, away from the classroom, listen to the tape against the framework of the model. The aim would be to explore the motives behind, and the effect of, our language behaviours rather than merely totalling up converging and diverging shifts. It probably would be more valuable if we transcribed some of the more significant interactions - it is surprising what you hear when forced to listen really closely. It might be illuminating, for instance, to transcribe interactions over a period of time with a pupil who is performing poorly, or with one who presents a discipline problem, in order to see the kinds of accommodations that occur and the effects of these.

As we are all products of our own cultural socialization, we bring certain assumptions and pre-dispositions with us to the classroom. These influence our views of knowledge and of teaching; our intentions; and our attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions. In any specific interaction, whether or not we choose to accommodate, how, and to what extent, will be influenced by some combination of these factors (see model). Often, within these, we will operate on a continuum rather than from a fixed point. Thus, our view of knowledge may vary along a continuum ranging from a belief that knowledge is a 'public discipline' to one which sees it as actively 'created' by the learner. Similarly, we may see teaching as ranging between 'transmission' and 'interpretation'. Our positions on these dimensions will influence the intentions we have for our 'lessons' at any given time. These may range from the 'handing-on' of a cultural heritage (thereby ensuring cultural reproduction) to helping a child discover more about itself. Thus, the learning we intend may range from 'school knowledge' to 'action knowledge'. To achieve this, our teaching role intentions may vary between 'judging' and 'understanding' and we may have particular intentions about how pupils should use language and present their ideas. (See Barnes, 1975, for a full discussion of these terms).

Although, according to the particular situation, we may operate from any point on each continuum, there will probably be some relationship among our choices on each. It is possible to conceive of a profile of the situation on, at least, the following dimensions:

Knowledge:
Public discipline <-> Actively created

Teaching:
Transmission <-> interpretation

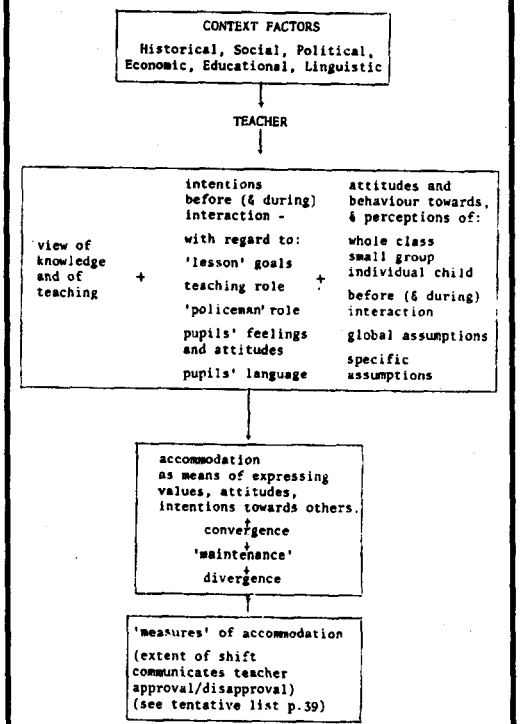
Goals:
Cultural reproduction <-> Learner self-discovery

Teaching role:
Judging <-> understanding

Pupil language:
draft <-> Exploratory

Therefore, there is likely to be a related pattern in our accommodative and non-accommodative moves.

Figure 1
A Tentative Model to Explore Teacher-Pupil Accommodation



However, the model indicates that there are other factors to consider as well. In our teaching role we will have certain intentions about how talk should be organized in the class. In addition, we will use talk for organizing. In some cases our intentions will be to negotiate shared meanings with the class and individuals within it. At other times we may feel constrained in our intentions by roles we feel compelled to assume to meet school requirements, or by the different systems of rewards and punishments operating in the school and in our classrooms. We will certainly intend to distribute approval and disapproval but

we may feel constrained to ensure some degree of 'match' between our methods and distribution of approval and disapproval and those valued by the pupils themselves.

Whatever our general position on all the above factors, the actual decision to accommodate and the direction and extent of the ensuing shifts, will be influenced significantly by the assumptions we make about those involved in the interaction. At a global level we will make certain assumptions based on stereotypes we hold of our pupils' home backgrounds, of their ethnic characteristics, and so on. More specifically, our behaviour will be influenced by our perceptions of the degree of ability, effort, and response to pressure of those involved. In addition, we may be influenced by the degree of perceived reciprocal response to our on-going accommodation. In particular, in a cross-cultural classroom, our perception of the status of the child's language may affect our behaviour towards that child.

Finally, the model is intended to be a dynamic one, so that positions are adopted and choices made not only on the basis of a set of stable beliefs, intentions, and attitudes, but also in response to emerging elements in the on-going interaction.

Hence, the question for us as teachers using the model is not merely - did I converge or diverge? It includes - why did I shift? how? to what extent? and perhaps more importantly - with what effect? As well as noting the effects of deliberate shifts, we may become aware of shifts we had not planned and of the effects of these. We may also find it useful to relate the concept of 'optimal' levels to the reactions of children from different cultures.

The model, then, is designed to provide a theoretical framework, against which we can monitor our accommodative and non-accommodative behaviours, particularly as these are expressed through our speech. Keeping this framework in mind, we can check our language behaviour against the following, more 'practical', but as yet, very tentative list of 'measures' of accommodation.

AT TENTATIVE LIST OF MEASURES OF ACCOMMODATION:

'Lesson' Goals

- Did I perceive emerging opportunities or miss them because of pursuit of 'my' objectives?
- Did my response/lack of response/ minimal response to what could have been a promising pupil initiative have subsequent effects on that pupil (or on the discussion itself)?
- Did children understand my terms/my language? Did I attempt to meet their needs?

Teaching Role

- Did I value pupil contributions? Did I display interest in the content of the child's talk or did I respond within a corrective frame of reference? Whose opinions were finally accepted?
- How did I initiate and close interactions? Did I offend any child? How? Why?

•Questions

- open/closed? who initiated questions (and topics)?;
- were pupil responses valued?; did I repeat pupil's answers? why? with what effect?;
- what are the implications of unexpected answers? (including answers not 'heard'

at the time);
-how did I react toinsufficient'pupil answers?

•Organizing

-who controlled (and how) channels of talk communication?; amountof talk?;content of talk; under-standing?
-who did most of the talking? why? did opportunities for pupil talk emerge naturally or did pupils have to be 'told' to talk?
-was pupil talk interrupted? by whom? with what effect?
-what were the effects of the above on groups/individuals?

•Talk for organizing

-orders and instructions - did I establish 'contexts' in which orders and instructions were to be carried out; did I define clearly to whom the orders and instructions applied?
-would any child have perceived me as unfair? as 'picking on' him or her?

Policeman Role

- To what extent did I feel constrained in my intentions by 'school imposed' roles, or by roles I felt compelled to assume to meet school requirements?
- Did these affect my relationship with groups or individual pupils?

Pupils' Feelings and Attitudes

- Would any child have felt very pleased, uncomfortable, unfairly singled out, embarrassed, hurt?
- Would an impartial observer deduce that I like/dislike particular children?
- Did I convey interest in what individuals had to say? How? (Why not?)
- Did the tone of my voice (warmth/ coolness), intonation, speech rate, pause and utterance lengths, pronunciation, language form (style/complexity) convey intended/unintended messages? To whom? With what effect?
- Did I use sarcasm or disparaging remarks? With what effect? On whom?
- Did I sometimes 'tell lies'? With what effect?
- Did I use words which conveyed (value) judgements, or words to 'distance' myself? With what effect?
- To whom did I distribute approval/ disapproval? What did I approve/ disapprove? How did I show approval/ disapproval? To what extent did these 'match' pupil values?
- Did jokes occur? With/at/by the children? Who initiated? Why? With what effect?
- If I had the opportunity, which of my statements would I rephrase/which of my actions would I change?

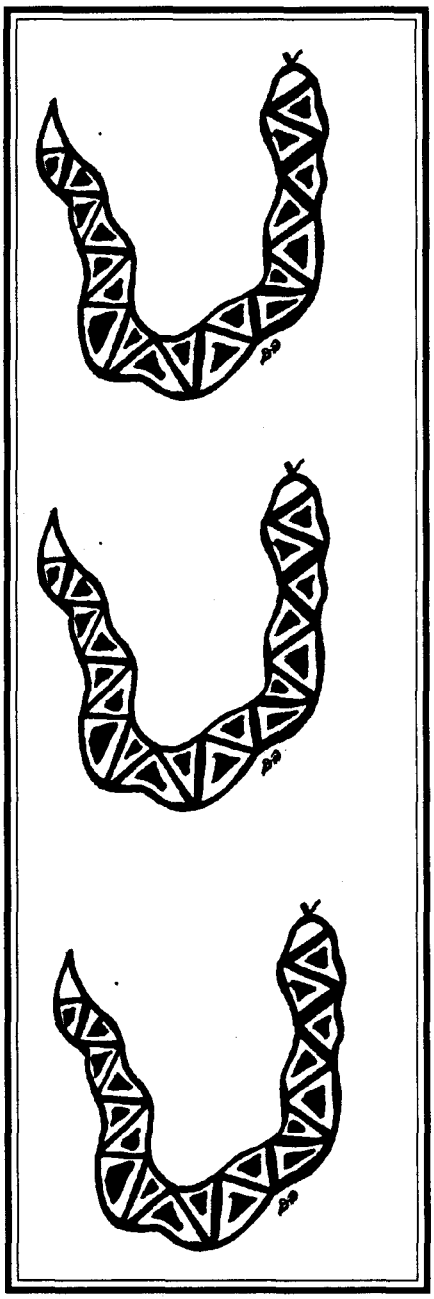
Pupil's Language

- How often did I comment on aspects of pupils' language? What aspects? Why? With what effect?
- Did I use 'in group' forms? When? Why? With what effect?

Apart from problems arising out of the tentative nature of the model, I realize that its successful use will involve time - one of the teacher's most valuable commodities. In addition, it is possible that some teachers may see such self-evaluation

as threatening. There is also the real danger that too great a concern with the language of communication might, in itself, adversely affect the quality of that communication. For instance, a teacher, surprised to note how often and in what ways he converges on the child's language style, may try to avoid this strategy (or alternatively to overdo it) without considering the reasons for, or the effectiveness of, his previous position.

In spite of all this, I hope that this model might be a useful tool which could help teachers sensitize themselves to the importance of their language behaviours in the classroom.



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This article originally appeared in Volume 7 Number 3 (1979) pages 28-42.