

*Flight.* It is said that language reflects social stratification, differentiation, and social/geographic distance. In flight there is evidence of members presenting themselves and their social stances, exercising their interaction skills in particular ways to transmit information, exchange 'repartee' and switch codes or styles. This switching reflects differentiation of attitude, often depending on the topic (see Fishman, 1972). For example,

10 **How'd the game go las' night?**

**It looks like this conference will be useful for all levels of the work force.**

Both of the above were uttered by the same member, with different pace, voice, tone and seating posture within three minutes.

*Narration* is a skill which, it has been shown (Tannen, 1985, Cazden, 1980), reflects ethnic tradition on a number of levels. Conversational style, including the sequencing of data and the inclusion of internal evaluation (as opposed to external evaluative data (see Tannen), reflects the value and tradition of orality in the ethnic group. The rights to use narrative as a method of clarifying meaning are distributed (unequally) to those who are privileged with success or academic distinction where the society is 'literarily' orientated (see Cazden). It may be useful to explore the modes and methods of narration and narrative in a T-group setting, taking into consideration the variables of ethnic background of speakers and audience, topic narrated, response of audience (and their ethnic or educational contexts), and mood of group (i.e. introspective/towards flight/intellectualising, etc.).

*Intimacy-introspection.* In a 'group processes' course the essential element aimed for is 'natural behaviour'. It is hoped that, gradually, the members will rid themselves of all pretensions, facades and assumed roles and arrive at their 'real selves'. While it is admitted that no interaction is completely unencumbered by societal influences, it is reasonable to assume that the intense 'sharing' in the intimacy introspection phases might reflect the vernacular of the members.. (The vernacular of the group (if such a thing could be posited) would be characterised by particular vocabulary, the mutually intelligible language variety and certain norms of discourse). The individual member's

idiolect may represent one variety of the vernacular of his/her regular speech community. The intensity of the interaction may be such that the speaker does not pay attention to style, i.e. monitors the production (phonology, syntax, vocabulary, prosody) very little, if at all. A quotation from the assistant facilitator may be relevant here. In session 7, after a particularly fraught discussion between a number of members, he said:

11      **Now you re getting real!**

Later, he explained that anger tends to promote unmonitored, spontaneous behaviour which often displays attitudes and deeply held beliefs. Research has shown (Labov, 1970, Gumperz, 1966) that the vernacular - with its range of choices - provides the most systematic data for investigating speech styles and codes.

It may be possible to compare the members' performance with regard to hypercorrection, style shift, or register shift in various phases of the sessions.

4. Code Switching. In some communities, code choice has a high degree of regularity (Blom & Gumperz, 1972) even while the switching might be subconsciously executed. Styles reflect attitudes to oneself, one's interlocutor(s) and to the message being sent. Every speaker has more than one style, the range of available styles depending on the range of roles played in society and the individual's attention to appropriacy of verbal behaviour in any given situation. The difference between a *code* and a *style*, it could be posited, is a matter of degree where one is discussing one 'greater speech community', i.e. USA English, where numerous codes of distinctly different speech behaviour exist. *Code* may be considered to refer to a language (of a nation) or a style which is employed by an acknowledged group of speakers for a particular purpose. It has been said that while the employment of a variety of styles may seem random, there is usually some systematicity in the choice. (See Gumperz, 1966). The switching of styles amid one social interaction has a metaphoric quality, indicating a speaker's sensitivity to the context and/or some particular intention or perceived intention. The sociolinguistic enterprise of looking at speech styles and the choices of forms of speech, which may depend on overt or covert ends,

attempts to identify the components of the forms and how they relate to one another. Within one speech community there is a range of styles compounded by the range of components of each style (with respect to the content, the producer of the speech, the receiver of the message and the elements which make up the production and reception).

Code switching can indicate (as a metaphor) solidarity, as in the case of two members who were both members of a Muslim sect, and greeted each other with

12 Salam a lekum.

at every meeting. Similarly, two black members spoke to each other in English which was almost unintelligible to some white members. Three Jewish members exchanged ideas on customs and food using the appropriate lexis (Yiddish terms) with regard to cooking processes.

Fishman (1972) has pointed to the phenomenon of topic dominating the language use. (See, e.g., ex.10, above) Thus, speakers switch codes even during one conversation where an aspect changes or different persona are introduced. A prime example of such switching occurred when a black member was talking about the hospitality of the South. At the mention of his mother, he switched from a standard variety (which nevertheless had some elements of BEV) to a much more apparent variety of BEV

13 If I take y'all t'ma home as soon as you git there - she  
in the kitchen.

if she's in bed she git up - all y-d gotta eat somefin

A further way of looking at code switching is as a manifestation of linguistic insecurity. It has been found that certain social groups maintain their styles when in different environments and are aware of their linguistic practices, while others alter their styles (e.g. hypercorrect) more readily. (see Labov 1971). The difference in style may be identified as attention to speech (e.g., re. pronunciation or lexis.). An example of code switching in response to an environment where the member displayed insecurity (also non-verbally) follows. The member was a white businessman from New England who was appointed spokesperson. When announcing activities or distributing departmental

notices he adopted a formal tone (unlike his vernacular), enunciating every word (hypercorrecting). When speaking with one of the two black members, he resorted to lexis such as

14 **dude, wheels (for car), bad**

and other such stereotypical vocabulary (see Wolfson, Chapter V). Inappropriate code use or illegitimate code use (such that it is socially obvious that the code is inappropriate, e.g. by dint of other ethnic background) causes social disharmony. Some groups are offended by "aliens" attempting to break their solidarity by appropriating their style. Others are flattered but their regard for the "usurpers" is not always respectful. In the case cited above, one black member appeared somewhat uncomfortable. Two (white) members had noted the event in their journals.

### 3. The T-Group as speech community

Eminent sociolinguists have defined the 'speech community' as:

(i) "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage". (Gumperz, 1968);

(ii) "a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use" (Hymes, 1974);

(iii) "a neutral term.....does not imply any particular size.....all of whose members share at least a single speech variety and norms for its appropriate use" (Fishman, 1971).

Gumperz, in 1964, described the "linguistic repertoire" of a linguistic community as the "totality of styles, dialects and languages used within a socially defined community". Fishman (1971) describes the "belief -behaviour system" as having the following dimensions: standardization, autonomy, historicity, and vitality.

The T- Group conformed to many of the above criteria. It had a mutually intelligible language (English) which had been accepted as a norm; therefore one could admit standardization and rule sharing. It also had a particular, unique code consisting of group-specific lexis and some particular phrases, idioms and norms of discourse which had idiosyncratic meaning for the group. Therefore one could attribute the 'setting off from similar aggregates by significant differences' factor to the group, hence "autonomy". Finally, it had a dynamism characterised by the growing body of common experiences which were reflected in the vocabulary, the "catch phrases" and the inferences made from utterances, based on the ever-growing knowledge of underlying issues and social factors which had a bearing on the utterances. Hence there existed "historicity, shared knowledge and vitality".

Now that the group has ceased to exist, the specific language variety will die (with the ever-decreasing contact of the members) and the only remnant will be the written word (the journals and term papers)!

6. Members of the Speech Community. In view of the above ascriptions, members of the speech community will be described with reference to their linguistic repertoires and the influences and factors which relate to their performance in the community.

Of the two 'foreigners', one spoke English as a second language. She was from China and displayed a number of recognisable interlanguage traits such as omission of past tense markers, omission of final 's' in a number of environments, and idiosyncratic collocation of prepositions. She employed a type of 'confirmation check/end of turn signal' (see Long, 1980) at the ends of many of her sentences which were comprehensible but frequently displayed a narrow competence in register appropriacy. The 'confirmation check' consisted of one word, i.e. "Yeah", uttered at a low pitch with slight rising intonation, e.g.

15 The way he treat people - really hurt me. Yeah.

and

16 I tol' the teacher, mos' of the time (one year an' ten month) I work in the laboratory. Yeah.

The group was very tolerant of her speech and signalled that they understood her meanings. When members responded to her, they monitored their speech so that it was slow, deliberate, and on some occasions, devoid of idioms (where idioms would have collocated with the style and register).

The other foreigner spoke a variety of English (BE) which was different from the norm but caused minimal problems for the foreigner in terms of comprehending and being comprehended. It was in cultural references and idiomatic use of certain lexis that breakdowns in communication occurred. These caused a rift in communication and group-feeling on a number of occasions (between the group and the two). As the group became more cohesive, this and other differential attitudes faded.

In some phases, members' language reflected their occupations and in others, their familial and social roles outside the group setting. Within the group, furthermore, certain people played particular roles (assigned or self-imposed) which employed (or required) an identifiable style. The most overt of these was the language of the two facilitators. It was the facilitator's brief to intervene as little as possible in the process. Indeed, some facilitators do not utter a word through complete sessions. When they do speak (known as intervention) they do so to comment on the process, rather like a Greek chorus, or to respond to a member's message elicitation. The language is, therefore, formal, pithy (economical) and possibly (as in the case of this study) uttered with a didactic tone. The facilitators' messages were not usually direct or referential but instead were intended to make the group think about the process and infer meaning: these are known as 'non specific interventions'. The type of language used by the facilitators (particularly the assistant, who was perceived as lacking authority and therefore having

no right to 'pontificate' as he did) alienated them from the group since they did not seem to be prepared to reveal their 'real'

selves by using their vernacular. Examples of facilitators' utterances follow:

17 That is the myth of knowledge

18 You are not angry enough

19 The group has achieved a greater degree of intimacy - and doesn't know what to do with it.

Even less acceptable to the group was the behaviour - manner, attire and maintenance of distance (social, physical and spiritual) - of one of the members whose formal style never deviated. Every one of his few utterances was executed in a clear, steady tone, the result, it is assumed, of much premeditation and careful monitoring.

In contrast to the above example was the language of the psycho-therapists which was spontaneous and reflected feelings both immediate and contemplated. Certain phrases were obviously part of the jargon or argot (see Tripp, 1971) such as

20 A piece of me is feeling that.....

and

21 My immediate reaction to you was anger and I wonder where this anger is coming from.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the aim was to give account of one Group Processes course: its setting, participants, significant linguistic features and particular identity relating to sociolinguistic phenomena. Since the study involved participant observation and a particular, unique group of people who will never again meet under the same circumstances, it would be impossible to replicate such a study.

Nevertheless, examination of similar courses might be a fruitful enterprise. Through the study of the language produced, one may be able to investigate a number of issues using the T-group as focal point: (i) the variables of participant make-up in a group and

the effect of certain individuals on the social behaviour of others; (ii) topic addressing and topic switching; (iii) forms of discourse: how ethnic identity affects them; (iv) the effect of context and context boundedness (see Milroy, 1984) on a speech event. And the antithesis of this, as posited by Silverman, (in interview, 1987) who has sought to attain context-free situations in T-groups by encouraging group members to remain 'anonymous' or to present themselves as the personae they desire to be; (v) signs and senses of ethnicity and attitudes to them; (vi) the language of the 'phases': how and why the vernacular is employed and what effect it has on the context; (vii) cross-cultural communication in a 'closed community' (including "foreigner talk"); (viii) the T-group as a 'speech community'.

By looking at one group as representative of society at large, one may gain insights into communication and its breakdowns, language change, values of standard and non-standard varieties, and the influences and power which language wields. It would seem that psycho-educational processes departments have much to offer their colleagues far beyond the limits of the rationale it proposes for a group processes course!

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