During the past decades linguists, psychologists, and educationalists have been involved in a continuing debate on how language can be taught. Research on language education has sought answers to the question of how the development of spoken and written language can be fostered, from their origins in early infancy to their mastery as systems of representation for communication with others and for the inner control of thinking and feeling. Thanks to the input of sociolinguistics in educational research, the ways in which social equality can be enhanced through education have also received attention.

In the present chapter a short review will be given of the study of language education. We begin with the processes involved in language learning and language teaching. In addition, we explore the ways in which language and literacy skills can be fostered through education. Then we go into the issue of equity in educational experience. Since language can be seen as a social marker of gender, class, and ethnicity, we will discuss ways in which classroom experiences may contribute to equality in school learning processes. We conclude with some generalizations derived from sociolinguistic theory and their implications for teacher training.

1 Language Learning and Language Teaching

1.1 Language, communication, and thought

The ability of individuals to communicate through language is both a unique and a universal human quality. The human capacity to think symbolically and to interpret and produce sounds makes it possible to create a language system. Human culture, social behavior and thinking would not exist without language. On the other hand, communication would be meaningless in the absence of thinking. Language and thinking are so closely connected that it is hard to discuss one without the other, for speech can serve thought and thought can be revealed in speech.

In both epistemology and cognitive psychology theoretical claims have been made in support of a dichotomous conception of language proficiency. In these claims linguistic knowledge is distinguished from language use. For instance, Chomsky (1965) made a distinction between grammatical competence, the knowledge possessed by the idealized native speaker, and performance, referring to the actual linguistic data. According to Chomsky, linguistic competence can be seen as an innate biological function of the mind that allows individuals to produce the indefinitely large set of sentences that constitutes their language.

The monolithic, idealized notion of linguistic competence was considered to be inadequate by a growing number of researchers. Taking a sociocultural approach to language as a starting point, a more elaborated concept of communicative competence was introduced by Hymes (1971). He argued that the concept of competence should be extended to include language use as well as sentence creation. Searle (1969) introduced the term “speech acts” as a counter claim to Chomsky's focus on...
cognitive processes. Austin (1962) speculated on the notion that using language may in certain circumstances be perceived as a kind of action rather than just cognition. In the context of language teaching Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as: "a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse." According to Canale and Swain, communicative competence is composed of four competencies: grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. Grammatical competence covers the mastery of phonological rules, lexical items, morphosyntactic rules, and rules of sentence formation. Discourse competence refers to the knowledge of rules regarding the cohesion and coherence of various types of discourse. Strategic competence involves the mastery of verbal and nonverbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns and to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Sociolinguistic competence is related to the mastery of sociocultural conventions within varying social contexts. This type of competence involves rules that are sensitive to various factors, such as the context and topic of discourse, and the social status, sex, and age of participants. These factors account for stylistic differences or varying registers of speech.

With respect to the development of communicative competence in children, it is clear that children must not only acquire a repertoire of linguistic devices, but also a repertoire of sociolinguistic devices marking distinct registers. Besides linguistic competence, the social roles associated with language use in varying contexts must be acquired (see Foster, 1990).

1.2 Acquisition of communicative competence

Grammatical competence

A fundamental problem of linguistics is to explain how a person can acquire knowledge of language. In the tradition of generative grammar an attempt has been made to solve the problem of language acquisition by studying the abstract principles in the complex syntax of adult grammar. In explaining language acquisition it is supposed that the language ability of human beings is constrained by universal grammar. This is defined as a set of language–specific principles, which contains some sort of language acquisition device: a neural mechanism tailored to the specific task of language acquisition. It is also assumed that language acquisition is a genetically transmitted process, and that the basic structures which make language acquisition possible are uniquely linguistic. A problem with the generative approach of language acquisition is that the factor of time is ignored. While explaining its apparent ease, rapidity, and uniformity, language acquisition is seen as an instantaneous phenomenon, idealizing it to a situation in which the child has at his disposal all of the principles and parameters of universal grammar and all linguistic data necessary to fix those parameters. As such, it is by no means clear how and in what order linguistic parameters are set, nor is it clear how apparent delays which characterize the developmental process can be explained.

Empirical studies give reason to believe that the process of language acquisition must represent an interaction between universal grammar and other cognitive functions. If it is true that there are no instantaneous linguistic principles underlying language acquisition, it can be questioned how in the course of time children acquire rules which relate syntactic forms and semantic functions. On the basis of an extensive series of cross-linguistic studies Slobin (1985) has proposed a set of universal operational principles for the construction of language. In their initial form these are believed to exist prior to the child’s experience with language. In the course of applying such principles to perceived speech and the associated perception of objects and events, a basic child grammar will evolve, corresponding to the internal organization and storage of linguistic structures.

Discourse competence

There is good evidence that major points in development are associated with the appearance or transformation of new forms of mediation. A clear example is the transition from utterance to text. Later language development in children can be characterized by a growing command of discourse. Around age 5, developmental shifts take place from intra– to intersentential devices, from basic structures to additional functions, from extra– to intralinguistic abilities, and from contextual to decontextualized abilities.
A related marking point in children’s development is the transition from oral to written language. Learning to read and write involves much more than the ability to decode print to speech and to encode speech in print. Registers of written language require a different selection and organization of ideas from those of oral language (see chapter 10). In written communication logical and ideational functions are primary, whereas oral communication has more informal characteristics. In oral communication the listener has access to a wide range of contextual cues, while in written communication such cues are almost completely absent. Accordingly, a distinction can be made between context–embedded communication and context–reduced communication. For children the transition from oral to written language can be thought of as a critical event.

**Strategic competence**

Strategic competence refers to metacognitive abilities which are involved in planning, executing, and evaluating language behavior. Strategies are goal–directed cognitive operations used to facilitate performance. A distinction can be made between strategies for planning, executing, and evaluating language behavior. Strategies may be relatively conscious or relatively automatic. Successful strategy use enhances children’s self–concept and attributional beliefs, and these motivational states enhance the development of new strategies.

Monitoring plays an important role in oral language use. It involves concurrent control of ongoing speech, which may result in self–initiated repairs. By matching strings of overt and covert speech with the intended message or with standards of speech production, the speaker may become aware of a difference between the intended message and speech, or of some sort of error, and stop the flow of overt speech to make a repair. In developmental studies it was found that children start monitoring their speech at a very young age. In the course of primary school, the frequency of self–correction increases, while the numbers of restarts and repeats decreases.

With respect to literacy tasks, there is good evidence that strategic competence improves academic performance. Examples of reading strategies are skimming, recognizing text structure, activating background knowledge, contextual guessing, tolerating ambiguity, and rereading. Planning and revision turn out to be the most crucial strategies in writing.

**Sociolinguistic competence**

Sociolinguistic competence enables the individual to cope with language situations in everyday life. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of stylistic differences, usually called register variation. Different types of situations may call for different types of language items, as well as different values and beliefs.

The development of sociolinguistic competence involves the elaboration of distinct sources of knowledge: person knowledge, referring to the moods, states, preferences, and intentions of people; knowledge of social categories, such as age, sex, and status in order to tune their linguistic behavior to the social context; and knowledge of how events are organized in the form of routines, as in telephone dialogues.

There is no agreement on the age level at which children learn to make some stylistic adjustments to varying contexts of language use. In line with Piaget’s notion of egocentric speech, it was generally believed that children at kindergarten level are still incapable of applying rules of sociocultural appropriateness, and that the differentiation of speech registers is only learned in the course of primary school. However, more recently it has been shown that infants learn to take turns, to attract attention and direct it to objects of interest, and make demands without having control of grammatical structures. The extensive experience children have with social games helps them to acquire the ability to structure conversations at an early age.

**1.3 The role of the environment**

Based on the assumption of an innate component in language acquisition, it was generally believed that minimal linguistic input suffices to enable the child to learn a language. However, this view reduces language to a set of rules and principles which generate an infinite set of sentences. If we view language as a system of communicative social action, then what the child has to learn are rules and principles which relate forms and functions, and these functions may be semantic, pragmatic, or
social. From research on linguistic input in young children, we know that the nature of the speech addressed to the child is characterized by modifications of the adult model, in particular at the level of paralinguistic features, syntactic features, and discourse features (see Snow, 1995). The most important facilitator of language development is the extent to which parents are sensitive to their children's communicative attempts, and their endeavors to extend the conversation while taking such attempts as a starting point. The semantic contingency of adult speech is a critical factor.

Semantically contingent utterances include expansions limited to the content of previous utterances of the child, semantic extensions that add new information to the topic, questions demanding clarification of the child's utterances, and answers to the child's questions.

The role of social interaction in determining language form and function has been emphasized by Halliday (1975, 1985) in his systemic–functional linguistics. According to Halliday, the beginning stages of language development are related to limited functions. The child's meaning potential is said to increase as he or she learns to take on more social roles. Three situational variables are viewed as the constraining factors of the process of language development: the social activity generating the topic, the role relationships of the participants in terms of contact, affect, and status, and the rhetorical modes they are adopting. As such, the theory provides insight into the social determining factors of variation in children's language development.

Another theoretical framework in which the role of social interaction in language learning has been emphasized is Soviet Activity Theory. In this theory it is assumed that individuals acquire knowledge and skills by participating in activities with more experienced members of the culture. For learning to be effective the child's intellectual growth must be contingent on mastering language as the social means of thought. The basic premise of activity theory is that development takes place on the social level within a historical–cultural context. In a dialogue with an adult the child has the opportunity to internalize the mental processes that occur on the social level. By means of social interaction mental processes move from intersubjective functioning to intrapsychological functioning. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that higher mental functions have a social origin and defines language as a sign system that can be used for symbolic activities permitting intellectual accomplishments. Intellectual development demands the conscious realization of mental processes on the part of the child. The task of the adult can be seen as maximizing the growth of the intrapsychological functioning of the child. Vygotsky introduced the concept of a zone of proximal development as the distance between the actual developmental level of problem solving and the potential developmental level under guidance of an adult.

1.4 Teaching models

Any theory of language learning implies a theory of instruction. Adults can provide conditions that help children find linguistic patterns and regularities to solve communicative problems. During the past decades there has been a marked shift in the perspective of language pedagogy. Traditionally the focus was on direct teaching predetermined by a strict program that is controlled by the teacher. In such a transmission model of teaching, learning is seen as going from simple to complex knowledge and from smaller to larger skills. In principle, children are viewed as grammarians and lexicographers who have to extend their linguistic repertoires. Furthermore, there is a strong focus on the correctness of the learners' responses. The reproduction of predetermined responses is viewed as evidence of learning, whereas risk-taking is discouraged.

In recent years the focus moved toward children's competence to participate in communicative settings. The child was seen as a purposeful communicator, as a creator of meaning within social contexts. The focus shifted away from the form and the meaning of utterance toward the child's communicative intent. In addition to the elaboration of children's language system, the social context in which language behavior occurred was taken into account. Studies of conversations between children in the classroom and of teacher–child interaction formed the basis of new guidelines for language instruction (Weaver, 1990). In such a transactional model of teaching the emphasis is on learning being facilitated by the teacher, or by peer interaction. The ability to apply new knowledge and the ability to use strategies in a variety of contexts are seen as evidence of learning. Risk-taking on the part of the child is viewed as an essential part of learning.

The transactional model of teaching is based mainly on Vygotsky's theory of learning through social interaction. With reference to a Vygotskian approach to development, it is claimed that cultural tools,
such as language and literacy, are optimally learned in social interaction with others. Through experience with language and literacy tasks in guided participation with skilled partners the child's repertoire can be gradually expanded. Two major conversational strategies have been described as ways to engage students in zones of proximal development: scaffolding and apprenticeship.

Scaffolding relates to a conversational strategy in which people build on and extend each other's statements and contributions. Through scaffolding the teacher is able to motivate the child to work on a task, to define the number of task steps related to the child's abilities, to diagnose discrepancies between the child's production and the ideal solution, and to control for frustration and risk in finding task solutions. Teachers may scaffold children's comprehension by introducing unfamiliar words before storytelling, so that their attention to the story line can be maintained. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) elaborated the metaphor of scaffolding toward a theory of teaching as assisted performance. According to this theory the child's performance can be assisted by the following means: modelling, contingency management, feedback, instruction, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Modelling refers to the imitation of the tutor's behavior by the child. Contingency management involves the use of rewards, such as praise and encouragement. By means of feedback the teacher is able to correct the child's performance. Instruction helps the child to regulate its own learning. By means of questioning the child can be invited to perform mental operations with assistance by the teacher. Cognitive structuring implies the provision of a structure for acting out a given task. In Vygotskian terms, these six ways of assisting children's performance constitute teaching within the children's zone of proximal development.

Apprenticeship refers to learning a cultural practice through collaborative actions with more skilled others (see Rogoff, 1990). This notion puts emphasis on an active role in children's development. The basic idea is that the child as a novice makes continuous attempts to make sense of new situations, while more skilled partners help the child to arrange tasks and activities in such a way that they are more easily accessible. Intersubjectivity, the shared understanding based on a common focus of attention, is seen as a crucial prerequisite for successful communication between the teacher and the child.

Cooperative group work can be viewed as a special case of apprenticeship. Small groups have proven to be quite effective in increasing language-learning opportunities for children. In small groups children have the opportunity to negotiate meaning, to transfer information, and to model their communicative strategies. Research on the ethnography of communication has emphasized the role of small groups in defining students as equal participants in spite of differences in abilities and sociocultural background. Working in small groups with minimal teacher assistance helps children with varying social backgrounds and intellectual skills to learn subject matter, solve problems, and develop social skills.

2 Teaching Language and Literacy

By definition, language education involves the learning of language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A basic assumption of language teaching is that all modes of language must be trained in all courses at varying school levels. Language learning should be viewed as inherently integrative. As children participate in classroom activities they are naturally able to connect the different modes of language use to learning. Besides the learning of language arts, children learn how to use language as an effective learning device. Given the close connection between language and thinking, language can be viewed as an instrument to develop higher-order cognitive skills. Because the roots of both language and thought are social, language learning will enhance children's social skills as well.

2.1 Fostering oral communication

Since language is not only used to describe the world but also to influence it, speech acts can be seen as basic units for the enhancement of children's discourse competence. By means of classroom discourse children have the opportunity to learn how to translate one's ideas into actions in the community. In order to be effective, classroom discourse must rely on the personal involvement of all participants (Cazden, 1988). Without involvement there will be no coordinated interaction, nor shared meaning. The more participants invest in supplying meaning, the deeper their understanding and the
greater their sense of involvement will be. Research in interactional sociolinguistics has shown that coherence and personal involvement in spoken discourse is enhanced by the use of prosody, pauses, repetition, and overlap.

Major factors in classroom communication are mutual shared knowledge, situational characteristics, and personal perceptions. Shared knowledge refers to content, experience, and norm and value systems shared by the participants. Important situational characteristics are the participants and the context. The participation framework in the classroom determines the relation of all participants in the interaction to the utterance. Ethnographic studies have shown that the ratification of conversational contributions of children by other participants or by the teacher is crucial in maintaining their participation (cf. Phillips, 1983). Personal perceptions refer to individual differences in communicative intentions and the interpretations of ongoing events. Classroom discourse can go wrong if there is a mismatch in any of these factors. If the two participants are both native speakers corrections can be made very quickly. If, however, they don't share the same cultural background the situation gets much more complicated. There can be misinterpretations of idiomatic expressions, or inappropriate reactions to what a speaker said.

In order to help children to extend their communicative competence teachers must focus on both pragmatic and linguistic aspects of various speech acts. Pragmatic aspects include the cultural values and norms underlying speech acts in varying communicative contexts, e.g., the use of politeness expressions in varying contexts. Linguistic aspects include the repertoire of both direct and indirect speech. Two teaching devices seem to be important in helping children extend their communicative repertoire. One is instruction, including modelling, imitation training, and role playing. Instructions may provide the framework within which children's communicative activities are maintained, restructured, and elaborated. The second relevant teaching strategy is semantically contingent responding. By repeating or extending children's initiatives, responding to occasional questions and consistent queries by the child, and confirming children's assertions, the child's development of both language and communication can be supported.

2.2 Emerging literacy

The study of how young children growing up in a print-oriented environment succeed in understanding the functional and structural configurations of reading and writing has been a lively area of research for several years (see Sulzby and Teale, 1991). Many researchers focusing on emergent literacy attempted to show how children are making sense of how literacy works in their culture. Detailed analyses of literacy environments highlighted the importance of early encounters with print in the home. It was found that interactive activities, such as storybook reading, have a great impact on children's oral and written language development. Conditions which strengthen the relevance and purpose of literacy for learners are important for the development of literacy. A general conclusion of the research on emergent literacy was that the attainment of literacy can be stimulated by offering children a school environment where valid understanding about literacy can continue to emerge (Clay, 1991). In such an environment children have the opportunity to enhance the positive literacy experiences they have had prior to school. The development of a broad literacy curriculum in which language experiences are highly emphasized was therefore often promoted.

Though in many publications a language experience approach to literacy acquisition is promoted, it is generally accepted that a naturalistic model which relies exclusively on exposure and immersion does not fully justify the complex task of learning to read and write (Cazden, 1992). Accumulated research evidence indicates that, especially in a more advanced stage, children need sequentially structured activities that are mediated by a teacher or by skilled peers in order to acquire automatic (de)coding and appropriate strategies for reading and writing (see Adams, 1989). Through experience with literacy tasks in guided participation with skilled partners the child's repertoire of relevant strategies can be gradually expanded. However, in order to support children's motivations toward literacy it is important to focus on meaningful experiences, and to stimulate critical thinking in reading and creative expression in writing.

2.3 Extending literacy

Advanced reading and writing demands the development of vocabulary, insight into the structure of sentences and larger textual structures, such as episodes and paragraphs, and knowledge of rules for
punctuation. Comparisons between expert and novice learners have also called attention to the importance of control processes, such as planning and monitoring reading and writing processes.

Literacy in advanced classes is fostered by teachers who plan lessons that have a clear conceptual focus. Students should be given time to reflect, to practice relevant strategies, and to achieve depth of meaning and understanding. Instruction should focus on principles and ideas that help children make connections between prior knowledge and the new information in the text. However, from observation studies we know that very little time is devoted to explicit or direct instruction in reading and writing strategies. Teachers spend more time on student assessment. They listen to students' reading of course-book texts or control their writing products for spelling or formulation errors. Traditional teachers tend to impart knowledge and strategies in a structured way, following a predefined sequence of reading and writing lessons in a fixed time schedule, forcing the student to assume a largely passive role.

In a learner-centered approach the teacher fulfills the role of a coach who shares control with her students (Langer, 1992). The teacher thus encourages discussion and provides detailed explanations about the scope and relevance of different strategies. Children are offered opportunities to build on their own strategies for acquiring and using knowledge independently. Learning is a result of interactions, such as experimentation, discussion, and elaboration in reading and writing conferences. In such groupings disagreement about textual inferences will provoke real questions which may turn into new ideas. In this way children learn to share ideas and to check the validity and appropriateness of these ideas. Strategies such as comprehension monitoring, using graphic organizers and activating prior knowledge must be taught not just as recipes for learning but as flexible learning devices. Students should come to realize that they can use language as a foundation for building new concepts and new structures of meaning. By doing so, they will gain more and more inner control and become less dependent on others and more confident in using their own strategies for reading and writing.

2.4 Teaching language to learn

Language education is not an end in itself. Language is at the center of the school curriculum because language is used to learn across the curriculum. Language, thinking, and learning cannot easily be separated. Learning should be seen as an active process in which children construct ideas about language as they engage in communicative settings. Learners are engaged in selecting activities, in attributing attention to specific parts of these activities, and in applying strategies for problem solving. Learning can be defined as a process in which new information is linked to prior knowledge. Learners integrate new information with what they already know. While being engaged in conversations, or while reading texts, learners continuously make predictions, monitor the outcome of these predictions, and seek a solution to problems they encounter. As such, language can be seen as an instrument to foster children's thinking and concept development (Collins and Mangieri, 1992). The cognitive processes involved in language learning can also be applied to other curriculum areas. Integrated language strategies can be used in curriculum domains, such as science, social studies, mathematics, and art.

Furthermore, schools should cultivate a climate that motivates children to explore the meaning of human experience through the language of literature. By using literature in the classroom, meaningful encounters with the most effective sources of human expression can be devised (see Cox and Zarrillo, 1993). Literature provides an in-depth study of universal values and needs, and it captures students' interests and challenges them to explore new avenues of meaning. Literature may involve the use of picture books, novels, folklore, poems, biographies, and nonfiction. By using trade books, print media, and electronic media across the curriculum children can be offered a broad variety of text structures and contexts to be explored. A literature-based program should not ignore children's ideas and interests. Relevant surveys have made clear that there are age-related differences. A literature-based program should also be based on the experiences children bring to school. It offers a good opportunity to attune the curriculum to the linguistic and cultural diversity in the school by allowing children to respond to literature in ways that are consistent with their gender, social class, and ethnicity.

3 Building on Language Variation
Languages and language varieties vary according to their status and social functions. The functions of language in the classroom are a special case of language in its social context. For many children there is a mismatch between the language spoken at home and the language used at school. At home they may speak a dialect or a language variety associated with gender, social class, or ethnicity (for an overview of research, see Andersen, 1990). The further development of such varieties and the learning of new varieties in school are highly dependent on teacher attitudes toward language diversity.

3.1 Dialect variation

Although dialect differences tend to become smaller as a result of geographical and social mobility and the influx of mass media, differences between language varieties spoken in varying regions remain. Thanks to the work of sociolinguists such as Hymes, Labov, and Trudgill, the belief that some language varieties are inherently inferior to others gradually lost some of its credibility. The postulate of equal opportunities for children requires that no varieties are discriminated against. To this end language variation among children must be recognized as valuable. All children, including monolinguals, have to learn a broad range of language varieties to facilitate effective communication in the social situations they will encounter.

Attitudes to dialect variation can have a great impact on the language curriculum. Children usually reflect the value system of their parents, varying from intolerance to strong personal allegiance toward the nonstandard dialect. Teachers not only vary in proficiency in using local dialects. They may also be prejudiced against using dialect in the classroom. Researchers such as Trudgill (1979) have made it clear that focusing on the standard language in education is almost certain to fail, and may lead to the loss of self-esteem and self-confidence by speakers of nonstandard varieties. Language awareness programs in culturally heterogeneous classrooms may help children to develop positive attitudes toward language diversity by sharing language experiences. By creating a supportive communicative environment, children are made aware of the social contexts in which different styles and varieties are appropriate. In this way children are helped to develop communicative skills in a functional repertoire of different language varieties.

3.2 Language and gender

There is reason to believe that the interactional achievement is not equally distributed between the sexes (see Coates, 1993; Wodak and Benke in chapter 8). Children learn to distinguish between gender–related differences in speech at an early age. Sex–related differences both in topic preference and in the use of linguistic forms are present in conversations among school–age children. Boys also tend to speak more than girls and to use more nonstandard forms. There is also evidence that language input models the sex–related differences in speech. Parents tend to provide different speech models for boys and girls, and mothers and fathers interact differently with them. Moreover, there is evidence that sex differentiation in speech styles is strengthened in single–sex peer groups.

An important question is how power relations reflected in conversations between men and women can be challenged and transformed in education. Teachers are able to influence the right to speak and the questions of when, where, and how much. By focusing on the distribution of speaking time and the allocation of turns, the teacher can discuss power relations among participants which contribute to defining their role in the interaction (Swann, 1992).

3.3 Language and social class

Families differ in social prestige, wealth, and education. Since language is learned in social interaction, there is variation in child language that correlates with social class. A classic example of this is the study of New York City speech by William Labov. He found that different pronunciations of speakers fall into a pattern reflecting social–class differences. The lower the position and status of people in the social–class hierarchy, the smaller the chance that they used standard language forms. In this context it was investigated to what extent the language of children revealed a similar pattern of social stratification. According to Labov, adolescents at about age 15 tend to move from the vernacular to standard–like forms. However, other studies suggest that shift toward adult norms takes place earlier, at about age 12, and that at an older age children use nonstandard forms in order to express group solidarity which implies the rejection of middle–class values.
Claims have been made that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds lag behind in language acquisition. According to Bernstein (1960), middle-class children develop an exploratory and explicit use of language (“elaborated code”), whereas lower-class children develop a more expressive and implicit language use (“restricted code”). Lower working-class children's speech was characterized by such features as short utterances of little syntactic complexity, frequent use of pronouns instead of nouns, and reliance on exo-phoric reference. Bernstein believed that the supposed limitations of a restricted code could result in cognitive deficits, as demonstrated by low IQ scores and poor school results.

Labov (1970) criticized this position by claiming that, although there are clear differences in the forms and values associated with language use in different social classes, the speech of middle-class children is not superior to that of lower-class children and children of different social classes are equally proficient in language skills. Research by Wells (1985) on the language development of children in Bristol demonstrated that the language used by children does not vary much with social class. Family experiences related to the value orientations of the parents turned out to be the relevant predictors of children's development, rather than parents’ occupation and education.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, literacy is highly culture-specific. Heath (1983) showed how different kinds of literacy function in society. Analyzing the use of literacy in mill towns in the southern part of the United States, she uncovered seven dimensions of literacy use: instrumental, social–interactional, news–related, memory–supportive, communicative as substitute for oral messages, providing a permanent record, and confirmation. She found that the purposes of using literacy and the ways of using literacy were related to how people function in social networks.

For schoolteachers it is important to accept the variation in speech styles and registers as valid systems. Children should continuously be helped to bridge the transition from language and literacy practices at home to those at school. Language education should be seen as enrichment of children’s home language. Within an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect, children must be made aware of the potential and validity of language variation in social context.

3.4 Language and ethnicity

From a sociocultural point of view, minority group members may feel the need to use two written codes serving two complementary sets of purposes. The primary function of the use of the majority language will be intergroup communication in the community as a whole; functions of the use of the minority language will be intragroup communication and expressing one's ethnicity. The motivation to learn seems to increase as societal institutions pay more attention to the native language and culture of the bilingual child. With respect to the acquisition of literacy, there is clear evidence that the motivation of children to learn to read increases as they become more familiar with the language and as they find themselves more competent to accomplish school tasks in that language (see Au, 1993).

For many ethnic minority children there is a mismatch between home language and school language (cf. Verhoeven, 1994). It can be assumed that children who receive literacy instruction in a second language are faced with a dual task: In addition to the characteristics of written language, they will have to learn an unfamiliar language. Failure to relate the instruction to the child's linguistic background may impede the acquisition of literacy. Due to contrary results in different settings, the benefits of the L2 submersion approach to literacy instruction are hard to assess. In experimental bilingual programs in Canada (immersion programs) it was found that children speaking English as a majority language reached a high level of L2 French literacy skills without their L1 literacy skills lagging behind. Quite contrary results were obtained in studies of direct literacy instruction in L2 in the United States and Europe when L1 was a minority language with low societal prestige. This paradox can be solved by assuming that in the latter context the learning of L2 reflects the loss of L1. Poor results in both languages will then be the consequence, because of feelings of ambivalence on the part of the minority group toward the majority group and the majority language, as created by the social milieu.

The actual educational programs for ethnic minority groups are not determined by psychological arguments or evaluation studies, but rather by political factors. Chances for education in a minority language are poor where the general policy is directed toward assimilation, but good where the development of ethnic identities is tolerated. Language policies in multilingual societies are
determined by many factors, such as the number and importance of the minority languages in the society, their geographic concentration, their linguistic development, the social and religious structure of the population, the attitudes of the minority and majority groups, and the availability of teachers and learning materials.

4 Perspectives

The data reviewed in this chapter on language and education reveal at least three generalizations from sociolinguistic theory. The first is that language development at school involves not only the elaboration of a grammatical system, but also the ability to use language as an instrument for learning, and the ability to use language appropriately in varying contexts. This is important for defining the objectives of language education. The second generalization is the importance of social interaction in language teaching. The learning environments in which children are embedded form an essential part of what is going on when language is taught. Through guided interaction with other students and exposure to literary works students can be given the opportunity to develop as individuals within relevant cultural networks. The third generalization concerns the diversity of language behavior in the classroom. Sociolinguistic factors such as gender, class, and ethnicity play a significant role in the language-learning processes of children at school. Interactional sociolinguistics in modern educational settings provides a perspective which makes possible the exploration of the relationship of different discursive practices of language varieties.

The sociolinguistic study of language education should produce guidelines for teacher training. In the context of teacher-training programs, language should not be defined from an economic or technological point of view. Instead, the social context of language should be emphasized, taking into account sociocultural aspects of development and the concerns of different communities and individuals. Auerbach (1992) distinguished four pedagogical tendencies that can be derived from such an analysis: the notion of variability and context-specificity in language practices; the notion of language acquisition as a learner-centered process, developed primarily in opposition to mechanical pedagogy; the politicization of content in language instruction; and the integration of the voices and experiences of learners with critical social analysis. Taking an ideological view as a starting point, teachers should be trained to pay attention to the role of language practices in reproducing or changing structures of domination. The key to understanding language in context is to start not with language, but with context.

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