

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **KEY METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 put forward the broad theoretical framework within which this study is located. Although the understanding of ‘development’ that has been adopted is based in the socio-cultural-historical psychological tradition, it has been suggested that, theoretically at least, an integration of an account of discourse functioning within this frame might enrich understandings how the social domain functions in individual development. The addition of Discourse to a Vygotskian account, however, requires a more substantive elaboration of concepts such as culture, context, and meaning: these concepts are essential to the account, but are underdeveloped in the previous section. This chapter thus builds further on some aspects of the frame in order to provide mediating concepts critical to establishing the methodological means of this study.

In this account, the Vygotskian understanding of the importance of the functioning of social relations in interaction has been stressed. It has been noted that conceptually the social domain should not be reduced to interaction, and its existence as an independently analysable entity with its own explanatory principles should not be overlooked, since the social relationships acting within the specific context pre-exist, but are not independent of, the domains described at other levels of the analysis. As Wenger (1998) reminds us, there are a number of theoretical domains which must be considered in a study of learning, each of which has a rich history and its own trajectory of development: although this study raises some of these areas, it is beyond the scope of this project to meaningfully engage with each of them. Rather, what is necessary to a full understanding of how individual development arises and is constrained within these bounds is an understanding of how relations within the broad social domain are transformed into relations between domains, which

ultimately are transformed into possibilities at the individual level.

Theories which contribute to these understandings are explored below.

## **4.2 Culture**

In Gee's account, it is language which simultaneously reflects and constructs 'reality' (1998, p.82): reality in this view is not determined through reference to objective fact, but rather through cultural model understandings which the individual, as a member of a particular social group, holds. The social, including the social relations functioning in context, in this account is seen through the lens of 'culture'. Lankshear (1997) builds further on this account by describing culture thus:

(Culture is seen as a) consequence and function of the social dimension of human life... (which includes artifacts,) ideas, purposes and goals, concepts, beliefs, values, rules, theories, interpretations, and indeed, entire social institutions and patterned (or organized and ordered) social relations...Cultural phenomena also include systematic social relations and their associated power relations that operate within and between groups of human beings" (pp.13 - 14)

Lankshear suggests that there are three relations between language and culture: "1. language (is) a precondition of culture and an outcome of cultural process; 2. language (is) a medium of culture; and 3. language (is) a broker of cultural process." (op cit, p.21). Thus culture, whilst framing and defining experience (and arising from the repetition of that experience) is expressed through language, and the two are 'co-constitutive'.

The 'culture' that is of relevance to this study is that of academia. Academia is a system with its own

values, beliefs and ways of operating, which is connected to a specific set of social power relations and a particular ideological frame in society, and which serves a reproductive function in that society. The 'language' (in the broadest sense) which serves this culture is academic Discourse: a brief account of some of the writings in the field of academic Discourse is given below (see, for example, Zamel and Spack, 1998, for a number of useful papers in the area).

#### 4.2.1 Academic Discourse

One of the most renowned writers on the subject of academic Discourse, Pierre Bourdieu, provides a succinct criticism of the domain in the following quotation:

Destined to dazzle rather than to enlighten, the academic livery of the word fulfils the eminent function of keeping the pupil at a distance. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994, p.3)

Although issue could be taken with the extent to which the language used in an academic context could be simplified without losing its meaning, the point is made that academic language is convoluted, is not accessible to the layperson, and carries a cultural history of exclusivity and privilege. As Bourdieu further explains,

The university field is, like any other field, the locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy, that is to determine which properties are pertinent, effective and liable to function as capital so as to generate the specific profits guaranteed by the field. (Bourdieu, 1988, p.11)

Bourdieu stresses the role that language plays in this regard: “ (a)cademics as a group employ a certain form of language which operates as a given. As a result, they endow a particular set of

linguistic requirements with all the objectivity of an institutional fact” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994, p.36). This language thus serves to ‘consecrat(e) cultural privilege’ (op cit, p.8). Bourdieu makes the further point that academic language (or Discourse) “is no-one’s mother tongue, (yet it is) unequally distant from the language actually spoken by the different social classes” (op cit, pp.8-10).

The social group whose values are favoured in this context is not arbitrary but rather is determined by power structures in broader society. Academic discourse is “primarily a middle-class variety, (and) ... the university discriminates in favour of students acquainted with this discourse” (Leibowitz, 2000, p.22). A similar point is made by Gee: although he points out that the language of education is a form of secondary, rather than primary discourse, in his view, traces of this particular secondary discourse are more likely to be found in middle-class homes. Children from these homes are thus more likely to have familiarity with this discourse, and are likely to experience less conflict in the acquisition process in schooling (1990, p.158). For those without this benefit acquisition of this Discourse is extremely difficult, “if not impossible”, as Zamel (1998, p.208) points out.

Zamel (op cit) argues that Gee’s view can be seen as deterministic: social class origins are reproduced infinitely in this understanding, with little possibility for individual mobility. Her point is that, although success may be rarer than failure, individuals do make the transition, and it is possible for teachers to aid students in this. She argues further that Gee’s view of the major conflicts that individuals will experience in the process conveys a sense of the ‘inevitable’ in the reproduction of this Discourse and the class relations implicit in it. If it is true that individuals through their successful acquisition of the Discourse reproduce that Discourse and the power relations it implies, and if it is also true that individuals from powerless groups will experience extreme personal conflict in their acquisition of that Discourse, teachers might conclude that it is morally wrong to put the student through such a process. She argues that discourse acquisition should be seen not only as a site of reproduction, but also as a site of interrogation of that discourse.

#### 4.2.2 Literacy

The extent of an individual's successful participation in a culture (being an 'insider' to that culture) can be described in the concept of literacy, where literacy refers to an individual's capacity to use language "to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable by the reader" (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p.8). In this definition, the reader's judgment is not arbitrary but "grow(s) out of a set of cultural understandings... (or) 'deep' rules of the culture" (op cit).

If, as has been suggested, the academic context can be seen as a particular culture, then 'studenthood' can be seen as a process of becoming literate. However,

Despite their importance, these cultural understandings are rarely addressed directly in exchanges between academics and their students. They are nowhere codified or written down, and yet they mediate crucially between the student's own knowledge and intentions, and the knowledge and potential meanings that exist within the university. Becoming literate in the university involves learning to read the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour. The converse is also true: most student 'illiteracy' is the result of a misreading of the culture, a failure to observe the appropriate styles of cognitive or linguistic behaviour. (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p.8)

It has been suggested above that the academic culture is fundamentally connected to existing power relations in society: academic literacy thus is a process of becoming acculturated to a specific set of societal power relations. In Gough's view,

‘Academic literacy’... has less to do with being apprenticed to secondary discourse, and more to do with apprenticeship to western rhetorical norms - the shape of thinking and writing and talking which takes on a culturally quite unique form of discourse” (Gough, 2000, p.51).

He suggests that this Discourse is very linear in its organization and structure; with an emphasis on clarity, brevity and sincerity. It also has to be “analytical, original, move rapidly forward, have a unified thesis, avoid unnecessary digressions, and, in essence, present only the most essential information” (op cit). This structure, in his view, derives from a particular ideology that views humans as ‘rational economic entities’. It is this ideology that underlies academic literacy.

This notion of literacy as a cultural reproductive practice is picked up by Geissler (1994), who further suggests that “academic literacy (is) a cultural practice bound to expertise by the cultural movement of professionalization” (p. xii), i.e. that

the cultural movement of professionalization has used the technology of literacy to sustain claims to professional privilege, creating a great divide between expert and layperson. Academic literacy has had this effect... via a dual problem space framework that bifurcated expertise into two distinct components, domain content and rhetorical process. This bifurcated practice, in turn, shapes the distinct activities and representation used by academic experts. In particular, it transforms them from indigenous practices into practices more appropriate for the formal culture of the academy, thereby obscuring the ways in which expertise nevertheless makes use of the resources of indigenous culture. (op cit, p. xiii).

Thus, in the process of development of a profession, expertise is transformed out of the realm of the layperson and to the realm of the expert through appropriation of content to a specific

discourse form. This understanding echoes Bernstein's definition of pedagogical discourse as "a rule which embeds a discourse of competence (skills of various kinds) into a discourse of social order in such a way that the latter always dominates the former" (1990, p.183, see below).

Geissler's description of a 'dual problem space framework' that "bifurcate(s) expertise into two distinct components, domain content and rhetorical process" (1994, p.xiii) aids in an understanding of how a literacy account fits within a ZPD account of learning. In a literacy account, acquisition is seen to be tacit. Thus, for example, Gee defines literacy as "control of secondary uses of language (i.e. uses of language in secondary discourses)" (1998, p.56), and states that

Any discourse (primary or secondary) is for most people most of the time only mastered through acquisition, not learning. Thus, literacy is mastered through acquisition, not learning, that is, it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful, and functional settings, and teaching is not liable to be very successful – it may even initially get in the way. Time spent on learning and not acquisition is time not well spent if the goal is mastery in performance... (op cit, p.57)

It was suggested in chapter 3 that the tacit nature of acquisition is not fundamentally at odds with the notion of learning in the ZPD if one includes in a ZPD account an understanding that, what is negotiated in the interpsychological domain is not only explicit content, but also the implicit rules and regulations, the 'grammar 2' in Gee's terms (see Chapter 3), of the Discourse. Geissler's account shows that what is explicitly taught in the content domain is the 'domain content', or denotative meaning of a concept. The rhetorical domain tends to rely on acquisition as its primary learning mode. Important in this model though is the understanding that literacy will involve mastery of both domains.

Literacy, thus, can be read as more than simply textual literacy, and in a Discourse account, the process of enculturation can be seen as a process of becoming literate. In an academic context it is academic literacy that is the ‘discourse of competence’ (Bernstein, 1990, p.183). This literacy may not be monolithic however: domain content and rhetorical structure may differ in different disciplines. This is explored below.

#### 4.2.3 Community

Elbow (1998) questions whether there is a single “entity called ‘academic discourse’ which one can define and master” (p149), since to write in any of the disciplines requires ‘not just lingo but doing’ (op cit) of that discipline. Bock (1988), in a distinction similar to that drawn by Geissler between content and structure, suggests that critical to an understanding of texts is both contextual knowledge and language competence and “both are discipline-specific” (p.25, see also Spack, 1998, and Zamel, 1998).

Even within the rhetorical domain, differences between literacy structures may be evident between disciplines: Ballard and Clanchy (1988) suggest that within any task the student must learn “not only the general rules of discourse and argumentation that sustain the culture but also the appropriate disciplinary or sub-cultural rules which govern how thinking and ... language may function in specific contexts of knowledge” (p.14). This points to two levels of linguistic competence that must be mastered:

First there is a generalized literacy of context. This has to do with correctness, coherence, appropriateness of style, voice and other formal features... The second dimension of linguistic competence involves control of the disciplinary ‘dialect’: those meanings, items and forms of language peculiar to the discipline. (p.17)



Literacy, in an academic context, thus has the dimensions of, and presumes mastery of, conceptual structuring and language both within the broader context of academic discourse, and within the specific context of the discipline (what can, and what may, be said within that discourse). Although this would appear to provide a model for delineation of the skills necessary for discourse acquisition in a specific field, attempts to define these specific requirements have not, on the whole, been successful (e.g. Elbow, 1998). In part, this may be due to the fact that disciplinary and language practice is not monolithic and / or unchanging, and is therefore not easy to characterize (Zamel, 1998). In part, it may also be due to the fact that, even within disciplines, there are differing conventions and styles, leading to a lack of definition of what is meant by 'academic discourse' (Elbow, 1998).

Blanton (1998) suggests that the question is not "what academic discourse is, and ... what students need to know in order to reproduce it", rather she suggests that the issue is "what academics readers and writers do" (p.224). Her point is that academic discourse is less of a linguistic phenomenon than a speech community: "the collective formed by shared values, interests, underlying assumptions, and language use" (p.220). This understanding is important: differences in the meanings constructed in different disciplines may be less evident in the textual form than they are in the values associated with that text. Garwin (1989) for example, in a local study of legal academic discourse found no evidence of the existence of a specific register connected to that use.

This may be unsurprising: as is suggested below, by virtue of its exclusive focus on lexicogrammatical form, register analysis may not capture the context surrounding text production. Differences may thus be found less in register than in the specific communicative event of which the text is a part. As Bhatia (1999) notes:

The essence of a genre-based analysis of linguistic behaviour in professional contexts is not entirely in the lexico-grammar, not even in the structural form that we perceive in the

analytic exploits of one genre or the other; it is in the cumulative knowledge of the conventions that allows one to make choices in the disciplinary content, lexico-grammar and generic form, amongst other things, to achieve a specific set of communicative purposes. (p.35)

The task of becoming literate is thus one involving both linguistic and cognitive competence, however the concept of literacy is less concerned with specific lexico-grammatical form than it is with value and meaning associated with particular contexts (e.g. Taylor, 1988). To this understanding can be added that it is not only the conventions, but also the practices situated within communities that carry the meanings of those communities (e.g. Walkerdine, 1997, see below).

The understanding developed in this section is that academic Discourse cannot be reduced to a description of linguistic features, either in general terms or within the specificities of discipline and genre. As Hutchings (1998) notes,

The discipline is like a sub-culture and its discourse is made up of: codes (linguistic, intuitive, creative etc.), conventions (essay structure, research, referencing, reporting, etc.), concepts (main ideas and debates in the discipline etc.), values (what qualifies as knowledge or evidence, and caring, etc.), canons (primary texts and theories / authorities...), and skills (both cognitive and linguistic...). (p.112)

### **4.3 Text and Context**

Context, as Gee (1999b) defines it is “everything in the material, mental, personal, interactional, social, institutional, cultural and historical situation in which the utterance was made that could conceivably (have) influence(d) (it)” (p.54). Reciprocally, a text can be defined as a “historically

specific realisation of discourse (which) signals any institutional practice or technique, patterns of general behaviour, forms of transmission and diffusion, and pedagogical or knowledge forms, in and through which meaning is produced” (Singh, 1993, p.40). Context thus, to some extent, determines text, or rather, the types of text that are made possible in that context. Mutually, text, as an instance of Discourse, to some extent constitutes society and culture (although it may not be the only means by which society and culture are constituted, Scollon, 2001, p.141). This relationship is explored below through the work of Halliday (1978).

In Halliday’s social-semiotic perspective of language, a text cannot be understood independently of its meaning, and that meaning is fundamentally related to the function the text is performing in context. Context, in his view, determines meaning on two levels: through the context of culture, which is the broader social context (“cultural history”) within which the text is produced, and through the context of situation, which is the specific “environment of the text” (Halliday, 1989, p.6, drawing on a distinction originally made by Malinowsky, 1923)

The context of culture consists of all the aspects of culture, including institutions, ideologies and structures, relevant to a particular utterance and which provide the ‘backdrop’ against which any context of situation must be interpreted. Ivanic (1997) explains: “(t)he context of culture for any social act consists of a set of ‘contexts’ embedded in each other” (p. 42) from worldwide social phenomena, through local instances, institutions and specific practices.

The context of situation can be described in terms of “(f)irst, what is actually taking place; secondly, who is taking part; and thirdly, what part the language is playing” (Halliday, 1978, p.31). Together these constitute the ‘register’; i.e. “which kinds of situational factor determine which kinds of selection in the linguistic system” (p.32). The important question, according to Halliday, is not what features of language are determined by register, but rather “which kinds of situational factor determine which kinds of selection in the linguistic system” (p.32).

These situational factors can be described in terms of three aspects: field, tenor and mode. In Halliday's words:

Field refers to the institutional setting in which a piece of language occurs, and embraces not only the subject-matter in hand but the whole activity of the speaker or participant in a setting... Tenor refers to the relationship between the participants... not merely variation in formality, but such questions as permanence or otherwise of the relationship and the degree of emotional charge in it... Mode refers to the channel of communication adopted: not only the choice between written and spoken mode, but much more detailed choices. (op cit, p.33)

These factors predict the linguistic features likely to be associated with any context of situation: "(f)ield, tenor mode are determinants and not components of speaking: collectively they serve to predict text, via the intermediary of the code, or to predict what has been called the register (p.62).

Halliday further distinguishes between three "functional components" of the semantic system through which meaning is conveyed: the ideational component relating to representation of the world, which is subdivided into logical and experiential meaning; the interpersonal component, where language performs an interactional function; and the textual component, which includes semantic and grammatical patterns, thematic structures, and rhythm and metric structure. These connect to the situational factors in the following manner:

the field is expressed through (or activated by, 1978, p63) the experiential function ..., the tenor is expressed through the interpersonal ..., and the mode is expressed through the textual function in the semantics (1989, p.25).

Using Halliday's model then, context of situation can be described linguistically through the concept of register. Register can be described in terms of situational factors expressed through meaning functions or potentials of language. In his view, through the concept of register, text and context predict each other.

The linking of text and context is, however, not an exact science. Halliday points out that a situation will not be perceived in the same manner by all participants: different individuals may associate different kinds of meanings with different contexts. What is important in this model then, particularly with regard to pedagogy, is, for different participants, "which types of situation serve as the gateway to more abstract and generalisable contextual meanings" (op cit, p.29). As he explains,

Although each child's language-learning environment is unique, he also shares certain common features with other children of a similar social background; not merely in the superficial sense that the material environments may well be alike – in fact they may not – but in the deeper sense that the forms of social relation and the role systems surrounding him have their effect on the kinds of choices in meaning which will be highlighted and given prominence in different types of situation... All children have access to the meaning potential of the system; but they may differ, because social groups differ, in their interpretation of what the situation demands. (Halliday, 1978, pp. 25 - 27).

The importance of Halliday's work in providing the basis for much subsequent work on the connection between context and text cannot be overestimated. However, and relevant to this study, it could be suggested that his model does not go sufficiently beyond the text to account for the text. Bhatia (1993), for example, suggests that register analyses, because of their limited focus on the lexico-grammatical features of text varieties, although in some instances providing useful descriptions of contextualized text,

remain severely constrained by their emphasis on surface features and do not provide adequate insights about the way information is structured in a particular variety. (That is) they fall some way short of offering an explanation of why a particular variety takes that form that it does (pp.5-6).

Bhatia suggests that the notion of 'genre' aids in this understanding, where genre is defined as "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs" (op cit, p.13, following Swales, 1990). Genre analysis is thus primarily characterized by a focus on 'communicative purpose', and seeks to find significant 'form-function correlations' (p.11) in language use. This analysis provides a means of moving beyond the surface-features of language to deep description, and ultimately explanation, by asking the question "(w)hy are specific discourse-genres written and used by the specialist communities the way they are?" (p.11), or "how do (identified) linguistic features realize social realities in a particular field of study or profession?" (p.18).

With regard to the psychological, Bahtia suggests that

(t)he communicative purpose is inevitably reflected in the interpretative cognitive structuring of the genre, which, in a way, represents the typical regularities of organization in it. These regularities must be seen as cognitive in nature because they reflect the strategies that members of a particular discourse or professional community typically use in the construction and understanding of that genre to achieve specific communicative purposes. This cognitive structuring reflects accumulated and conventionalized social knowledge available to a particular discourse or professional community. In this sense it is different from the organization of presupposed knowledge in an individual... (op cit, p.21)

For the purpose of this study, Halliday's theory provides an understanding of how meaning and text are related through function-in-context of text. In addition, it provides a means of empirically structuring an analysis: the functional components of a text can be described through his distinction between the textual, ideational and interpersonal meaning components. The role that context plays can be examined through his distinction between the broad socio-cultural background or context of culture, and the context of the specific event, or context of situation. It has, however, been suggested that Halliday's theory does not provide an adequate means of accounting for extra-textual context and how this enables / constrains textual meaning. His theory thus does not sufficiently show how, in Ivanic's (1997) terms, "words get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agendas and goals" (p.39). This is examined below.

#### **4.4 Interaction**

The brief account of Halliday's writings presented above provides an understanding of the relation of text and context. It has been suggested, however, that this understanding does not go sufficiently beyond the text to account for its production: to some extent, it lacks an account of the interaction between the two: of why and how text and context relate. This section provides a brief account of two means of examining how language functions in context to reproduce social structure. How social relations are reproduced at the level of the text is explored through the work of Fairclough (1989). The work of Bernstein (1975, 1990) shows how, in a pedagogical situation, structure itself acts to position the individual.

#### 4.4.1 Mediated relations

The role of the social in constraining the particular instance of an utterance is explored by Fairclough (1989). Fairclough suggests that, fundamentally, power relations within society are both realised and mediated through discourse: “the connection between class relations and discourses is a mediated one, mediated precisely by the various discourse types of the social institutions in a society” (p.40). Thus, the relationship between language and society is “internal and dialectical ... Language is part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena” (p.23).

Fairclough distinguishes text from discourse: where text is a product, discourse includes not only the text but also the processes of its production and interpretation, as well as the social practices that constrain those processes (note that this understanding of ‘text’ may be more restricted than the understanding adopted elsewhere in this research). He points to three levels of social conditions which determine discourse: “the level of the social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse; and the level of the society as a whole”(op cit, p.25). In order to show how discourse is reflexively determined at these levels he draws on Foucault’s notion of ‘orders of discourse’: “an order of discourse is really a social order looked at from a particularly discursive perspective – in terms of those types of practice into which a social space is structured which happen to be discourse types”(p.29).

Discourse in practice thus, through these orders of discourse, draws upon broader discourse types: discourse in a particular social situation is structured by socially constituted orders of discourse (single or multiple) at the institutional level. These orders of discourse are shaped by power relations in social institutions and in society as a whole:



In addition to the order of discourse of a social institution, which structures constituent discourses in a particular way, we can refer to the order of discourse of the society as a whole, which structures the orders of discourse of the various social institutions in a particular way. How discourses are structured in a given order of discourse, and how structurings change over time, are determined by changing relationships of power at the level of the social institutions or of the society. Power at these levels includes the capacity to control orders of discourse... (p.30)

Discourse in practice is thus both shaped by power relations at a broader level, and is the site at which these relations are enacted. The means through which this power operates is partly ideological, since orders of discourse ‘embody particular ideologies’ (p.28) in society. Thus, social structures at societal and institutional level determine discourse primarily through ideology: “practices which appear to be universal and commonsensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become naturalised.” (p.33)

This ideological operation ensures that the expression of power in society functions through consent rather than coercion: there is a “high degree of ideological integration between institutional orders of discourse within the societal order of discourse” (p.36).

Text analysis is thus, in Fairclough’s view, only one aspect of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis should address, in addition to the level of the text itself, the levels of interaction, which is the level of context immediately surrounding the text itself and includes the interpretative/ productive processes in that situational context, and the level of social context, which determines the social conditions of that production and interpretation. Addressing these three levels allows discourse analysis to move beyond description to explanation: whereas description is focussed on the level of the text itself, an interrogation of the relationship between the levels of text and interaction enables interpretation. Finally, an examination of the relationship between the levels of interaction and social context allows

the analysis to acquire the status of explanation.

As a product of the broader orders of discourse in which it is produced, the text itself provides an indication of these relations of its production through 'traces' and 'cues' evident in the text of that productive / interpretive process. Fairclough outlines four referential values that may be expressed by the text's formal features: these are experiential, relational, expressive, and connective values. The latter relates primarily to the level of the organisation of the text itself. The other three values are connected to aspects of social practice which may be "constrained by power (and which have) associated structural effects" (p.140):

A formal feature with experiential value is a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented. Experiential value is to do with content and knowledge and beliefs ... A formal feature with relational value is a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse. Relational value is (transparently!) to do with relations and social relationships. And, finally, a formal feature with expressive value is a trace of and a cue to the producer's evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of the reality it relates to. Expressive value is to do with subjects and social identities..." (op cit, p.112)

Experiential, relational and expressive features in language thus provide traces and cues of the content, relation and subject dimensions of meaning respectively, and have associated structural effects on knowledge and beliefs, social relationships, and social identities respectively. However, Fairclough cautions that "one cannot extrapolate from the formal features of a text to these structural effects upon the constitution of a society" (p.140): these effects are mediated both by discourse, and by the social context of the discourse through 'members' resources' (a notion akin to cultural models) in the interpretative process.

Fairclough's account thus aids in understanding how discourse at a social level functions through ideology, or through the values attached to the text, to constrain meanings available through the text. What is made available through this understanding is an account of how, through ideological action, power relations in society are reproduced. As Hodge and Kress (1993) put it:

Language is an instrument of control as well as of communication. Linguistic forms allow significance to be conveyed and to be distorted. In this way hearers can be both manipulated and informed, preferably manipulated while they suppose they are being informed. Language is ideological in another, more political, sense of that word: it involves systematic distortion in the service of class interest. (p.6)

Fairclough's account thus explains how, in Gee's words:

Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society ...(and how) (c)ontrol over certain Discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society. (1990, pp.144 - 145)

#### 4.4.2 Relations and regulations

Fairclough's account offers an insight into how power operates in context through language to reproduce social relations. Bernstein (e.g., 1975, 1990) offers an account which suggests how the relations thus expressed act at the level of the individual.

Within social relations, Bernstein distinguishes between distribution of power (between contexts) and principles of control (within contexts). In this regard, the fundamental question that Bernstein attempts to answer is

how the distribution of power and principles of control (at the social level) are transformed, at the level of the subject into different, invidiously related, organising principles, in such a way as both to position subjects and create the possibility of change in such positioning. The broad answer given by this thesis is that class relations generate, distribute, reproduce and legitimate distinctive forms of communication, which transmit dominant and dominated codes (as positioning devices), and that subjects are differentially positioned by these codes in the process of acquiring them. (Bernstein, 1990, p.13, brackets my addition)

Codes, as positioning devices, are thus ‘tacitly acquired regulative principles’ which control relevant meanings (or ‘orientations to meanings’ which can be described as either elaborated or restricted), forms of their realisation and evoking contexts. Codes regulate relationships between contexts, and through these, relationships within contexts. Relationships between contexts determine distributions of power and are defined in terms of the strength of classification or boundaries between contexts. The principle for distinguishing between contexts is expressed in recognition rules.

Relationships within contexts refer to the form of the specific context and thus to the principle of control operating within a context. This Bernstein terms ‘framing’, which, in an educational context, “refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship” (Bernstein, 1975, p.159). The “principle for the creation and production of the specialised relationships within a context” (Bernstein, 1990, p.15) is expressed in realisation rules.

For Bernstein, the specific form of the social relationship thus provides the ‘positioning’ within which recognition and realisation rules will be realised by the subject. At the interactional level,

(t)he features that create the speciality of the interactional practice (i.e. the form of the social relationship) regulate orientations to meanings, and the latter generate, through selection, specific textual productions.....Further, the selection, creation, production and changing of texts are the means whereby the positioning of subjects is revealed, reproduced, and changed. (op cit, p.17)

It is therefore within specialised interactional practices and the textual productions associated with these that “invisible (social relations) can be recovered from the visible” (op cit, brackets my addition). Within specialised instructional practices, Bernstein distinguishes between instructional and regulative discourse:

(t)he former refers to the transmission of skills and their relation to each other, and the latter refers to the principles of social order, relation and identity. Both these aspects of pedagogical discourse may be described in terms of classification and framing concepts, a variety of pedagogic structures may be generated according to their organising principle, that is, in terms of their underlying code. (Daniels, 1995, p.520)

Bernstein further elaborates on the types of educational codes generated through classification and framing by distinguishing between sub-types of codes generated through curriculum practices. In this regard he distinguishes between collection codes, which “involve strong classification” between contents, and integrated codes, which “involve a marked attempt to reduce the strength of classification” (1975, p.160). These concepts relate to the individual level through the ‘socialising consequences’ expected to arise out of the adoption of a particular sub-code.

Fundamental to Bernstein’s account is the notion of a ‘pedagogical device’ which

provides the intrinsic grammar of pedagogic discourse through distributive rules,

recontextualising rules and rules of evaluation. These rules are themselves hierarchically related in the sense that the nature of the distributive rules regulates the recontextualising rules, which in turn regulates the rules of evaluation. These distributive rules regulate the fundamental relation between power, social groups, forms of consciousness and practice, and their reproductions and productions. The recontextualising rules regulate the constitution of specific pedagogical discourse. The rules of evaluation are constituted in pedagogic practice. (Bernstein, 1990, p.180)

Pedagogical discourse, within this understanding, “is a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition” (op cit). As such, although pedagogical discourse is a site of struggle reflecting both conflict and consensus, “discourse is an autonomous category and exists independently of the consciousness or intention of individual teachers and students” (Singh, 1993, p.41).

Bernstein’s account shows that “what determines the *actual* cultural-linguistic configuration is, essentially, the social structure, the system of social relations, in the family and other key social groups, which is characteristic of the particular subculture” (Halliday, 1978, p.24, italics added). Moreover, since Bernstein’s codes are “identified by reference to their semantic properties... the semantic properties of the code can be predicted from the elements of social structure which, in fact, give rise to them” (op cit, p.31). Bernstein’s account suggests also an empirical language by means of which these relations can be described: at the social level, he shows how the theoretical notions of power and control are realised in classification and framing, which in turn, at the specific context level of a particular curriculum, are expressed as integrated or collected codes. These codes position the interpsychological context and the pedagogical device, and determine recognition and realisation rules, which will be realised at the individual level. Bernstein suggests that this is a causal relationship: “(t)he features that create the speciality of the interactional practice (i.e. the form of the social relationship) regulate orientations to meanings, and the latter generate, through selection,

specific textual productions” (1990, p.17).

## **4.5 Subject and self**

Learning, as a process of negotiation and modification of meaning, fundamentally involves change at the individual level. As Wenger (1998) says, “(b)ecause learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person” (p.215). One could add to this that in a discourse account, learning is a matter of increasingly thinking and acting in a manner appropriate to that of the target Discourse.

### **4.5.1 Individual and social self**

It was suggested in Chapter 2 that, in any account of learning which places emphasis on the semiotic and mediated nature of thought, it is necessary to foreground the distinction between the biological and the social organism. The biological self is captured in Vygotsky’s notion of the natural line of development which, although providing constraints for development, merges with the cultural line of development in ontogenesis. The result is the social self, biologically constrained, but not socially independent. As Halliday suggests:

(t)he distinction we are drawing here is that between the behaviour of the individual, his actions and interactions with his environment (especially that part of the environment which consists of other individuals) on the one hand, and on the other hand his biological nature, and in particular the internal structure of his brain. (Halliday, 1978, p.12).

Biological constraints are not the focus of this study. Rather, appropriate in any interactional account

of human development, and particularly one which places emphasis on the role of language in that development, is the unit of the 'social self'. This social self is, to some extent, externally constructed: as the Bernstein account above suggests, subjects are positioned by structure. Fairclough (1989) adds that in occupying these positions, subjects reproduce structure. Thus,

there is a sense in which we can say that the teacher and the pupil are what they do. The discourse types of the classroom set up subject positions for teachers and pupils, and it is only by 'occupying' these positions that one becomes a teacher or a pupil. Occupying a subject position is essentially a matter of doing, or not doing, certain things, in line with the discursive rights and obligations of teachers and pupils – what each is allowed and required to say, within that particular discursive type. So this is a case where social structure, in the particular form of social conventions, determines discourse. But it is also the case that in occupying particular subject positions, teachers and pupils reproduce them; it is only by being occupied that these positions continue to be a part of social structure (p.38).

Walkerdine (1997) suggests that it is not only within structures and institutions that subject positions are created. She shows how subjects are produced within particular social practices; practices which carry their own historical trajectories, and which "operate with their own relations of signification and modes of regulation" (p.65):

All practices are produced through the exchange of signs and are both material and discursive. They are not simply created in language. I am suggesting that actual practices are created through their embodiment of the truths (created in relation to that particular social structure), i.e. the relations of signification within that practice... produce different subject positions and different truth conditions (pp.61 - 65).



Subjects are thus defined through their “participation in an activity, by their roles in the social practices that constitute this activity, whether as agent or affected... The person-in activity is therefore partly specific to that activity and captures the sense in which we are different selves” (Lemke, 1997, p.45).

Although social practices may determine social positions, these positions are not determinative at the individual level, rather, there is a simultaneous co-construction of self by the individual in context: “(t)he subject is not coterminous with subjectivity, the condition of being a subject, and an important issue is how to understand this relation...” (Walkerdine, 1997, p.62). As Fairclough notes, the “operation is not only in one direction, the subject interacts with discourse position in terms of choices made between different discursal positions” (1989, p.38).

The individual is thus an active constructing agent in his / her own ‘constitutedness’, and can, to a certain extent, “choose which discourse(s) to be in at which times” (Gee, 1990, p.145). This understanding provides the possibility of an analysis of conflicts at the individual level in discourse acquisition, and of how these conflicts may affect this acquisition.

However, this ‘choice’ that individuals exert is not unrestricted, but is dependent upon the discursal resources available to the individual. As Halliday suggests, different linguistic forms “induce in their speakers different ways of relating to objects and persons” (1978, p.25). These different ways of relating are, according to Halliday, not to be found in the words or in the sentence structures themselves, but rather “in the relative emphasis placed on the different functions of language, or, to put it more accurately, the types of meanings that are typically associated with them” (op cit):

(t)hey are...differences of interpretation, evaluation, orientation... (of the) generalised situation types which have the greatest significance for the child’s socialisation and for his interpretation of experience. (1978, p.105).

This points to the fact that, in addition to the dimensions of social role-in-context, and co-constitution of self-in-context, the social self itself has a historical dimension, constituted along a trajectory, a point made also by Lemke (1997):

Individuals, as organisms, as social subjects, as personal identities, are constructs and products of the activity of the larger self-organising system, the community and its semiotic ecology; they are not pre-given, natural units of analysis or organisation. In each case, they are also constructions of continuity along developmental trajectories from interaction / activity to interaction / activity... These trajectories are themselves defined by the extent to which events earlier along them create the conditions of possibility and shape the possible forms of participation of the trajectory entity in events further along them... (pp.47 -49)

Trajectories themselves then, through the positional experiences that make up the trajectory, may provide a form of individual positioning. Depending on an individual's historical trajectory, the individual may, through choice, act in conformance with the system.

Because students believe what they are told, explicitly and implicitly, about the world that are entering, they behave in ways that fulfill the prophecies the system makes about them and about that world. This is the link-back that completes the system: students do more than accept the way things are, and ideology does more than damp opposition. Students act affirmatively within the channels cut for them, cutting them deeper, giving the whole a patina of consent, and weaving complicity into everyone's life story. (Kennedy, 1982, p.591)

#### 4.5.2 Identity

Through a focus on social role in context and activity, and on historical trajectory and individual choice, the previous section suggests that there is a multiplicity of social selves which any individual can be, and is, in different social situations. As Gee points out, the ‘whats’ (“distinctive social practices... for a given time and place”) are fundamentally connected to the ‘whos’ (“the very voice or identity of people who speak and write and think and act and value and live that way”) (1990, p.30), and Discourses thus involve not only activities, but also identities: “characteristic ways of acting-interacting-feeling-emoting-valuing-gesturing-posturing-dressing-thinking-believing-knowing-speaking-listening (and, in some Discourses, reading- and-writing as well)” (op cit, p. 38).

Gee further points out that a “given Discourse may involve multiple identities” (op cit). The individual’s participation in multiple Discourses, simultaneously and over the life-span period, will further increase the socially (co-)determined possibilities for selfhood open to that individual. Any act of learning, as an act of Discourse acquisition, will affect those possibilities:

Discourse practices are always embedded in the particular world view of particular social groups; they are tied to a set of values and norms. In apprenticing to new social practices, a student becomes complicit with this set of values and norms, this world view. The student is acquiring a new identity, one that at various points may conflict with her initial enculturation and socialisation, and with the identities connected to other social practices in which she engages. (op cit, p.67)

However, the notion of an individual trajectory in terms of which life and social experiences are structured suggests that, although the individual is comprised of multiple social selves, a sense of coherence at the individual level is possible. Gee distinguishes between situated identity or “the multiple identities we take on in different practices and contexts” and core identity, “whatever

continuous and relatively fixed sense of self underlies our contextually shifting multiple identities” (op cit, p.39). With regard to the latter, Wenger (1998) connects this ‘core identity’ to learning in the following manner:

Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person, or conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person. Even the learning that we do entirely by ourselves eventually contributes to making us a specific type of person. We accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity. It is in the formation of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy. (op cit, p.215)

Identity, as Wenger defines it, is comprised of five fundamental aspects which cover both the ‘situated’ and the ‘core’ aspects that Gee refers to, and capture in addition a sense of both multiplicity and self-determination:

Identity as negotiated experience (we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves); identity as community membership (we define who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar); identity as learning trajectory (we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going); identity as nexus of multimembership (we define who we are by the ways we reconcile our various forms of membership into one identity); and identity as a relation between the local and the global (we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and of manifesting broader styles and discourses). (p.149)

He thus presents a comprehensive picture of identity which is comprised of a multiple of different strands, acting together both within and across contexts to define a sense of self.

The readings above suggest, as Ivanic (1997) does, that discourse has come to be seen “as the mediating mechanism in the social construction of identity” (p.17) and that “discourses are the site in which identity is manifested” (p.18). Seen another way, it is possible to say that identity is the means through which discourse is realised at the individual level. The relationship between identity and discourse thus appears to be reflexive in much the same way that the relationship between language and reality is: Gee says that “language simultaneously reflects reality... and constructs it” (1998, p.82). It does not seem incongruent to suggest that discourse simultaneously reflects identity and constructs it.

Ivanic’s (1997) central argument is that “(w)riting is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody” (p.32). She draws from the work of Fairclough and Halliday, amongst others, to position her stance on identity. Although using Halliday’s social-semiotic perspective on language she notes that he spoke only of identity with regard to the interpersonal meaning of language. She suggests that this is an inadequate account, and that identity can be seen in terms of all three meaning functions of language:

I am suggesting that social identity consists firstly of a person’s set of values and beliefs about reality, and that these affect the ideational meaning which they convey through language. Social identity consists secondly of a person’s sense of their relative status in relation to others with whom they are communicating, and this affects the interpersonal meaning which they convey through language. A third component of social identity is a person’s orientation to language use, and this will affect the way they construct the

message. Looked at from the other direction, the ideational, interpersonal and 'textual' meanings conveyed by language all contribute towards constructing the participants' identities. (op cit, p.40)

Ivanic distinguishes between four aspects of identity in writing: three describe "aspects of the identity of an actual writer writing a particular text" and one relates to "abstract, prototypical identities available in the socio-cultural context of writing" (p. 23), which she terms 'possibilities for selfhood'. The first of the 'aspects of the identity of a particular writer' she identifies is 'autobiographical self', which relates to the notion of identity as trajectory: it is the writers identity as it is expressed as a function of their life-history. The second of these aspects is 'discoursal self', or the particular Discourses, with their related values and beliefs (cultural models) that are expressed in the writing. The third aspect of identity of a particular writer is that of 'self as author', which relates primarily to the sense of authority conveyed by the author in the particular writing context. All three are circumscribed by the possibilities for selfhood (subject positions) available in the socio-cultural context of the writing:

These three 'selves' are all socially constructed and socially constructing in that they are shaped by and shape the more abstract 'possibilities for selfhood' which exist in the writers' socio-cultural context. (p.24)

If, as has been suggested, identity reflects discourse, or rather, identity reflects the multiple discourses to which an individual belongs, or is in the process of becoming enculturated to, this should be evident in the texts in the form of the three aspects of identity of the actual writer. Although the author's construal of possibilities for selfhood may be inferred directly from the text, these possibilities may be more directly read from an analysis of the context, or the 'literacy event', of the writing process.

## 4.6 Empirical frame

In chapter 3, it was suggested that in order to understand individual development, an understanding of the mediated nature of this development is necessary. It was further suggested that language performs this mediating function, and that what is mediated is not just isolated ‘word meaning’, but the broader social context, including the relations acting in that context. This understanding has been examined further in this chapter, and it has been suggested that:

- Social structures are mediated through social relations in context.
- Culture is the lens through which these social relations are transmitted.
- This culture will be evident in the form and meaning of individual utterances, expressed as Discourse(s).
- The individual is a site where differing relations, cultures and Discourses are manifested, contested and reproduced. Individual utterances will thus reflect these differing Discourses.
- A ‘situation’ is a specific instance of the meeting of culture (or context) and the individual, and will include activity and practice in that situation.
- Understanding of the situation will be constrained at the individual level by the meaning potentials available to the individual, through their historical trajectory and contextual positioning.
- Certain meanings will be privileged in certain contexts, and individual learning will be constrained by the extent to which that individual has access to those meanings.
- Ultimately, learning involves cultural moves and identity shifts which will be expressed through meaning in individual utterances, i.e. will be evident in the D/discourse of the individual.

In a psychological account, it is important to add that the ZPD, in this account, is a meeting of two,

individual but socially constrained, sets of meaning, and it is through negotiation between the two sets of meaning that learning occurs.

These understandings contribute to the research logic of this study in the following manner:

In order to construct a genetic account of concept development in this study, on the basis of the understandings adopted in the study, four domains requiring investigation can be identified:

Firstly, it has been suggested that an understanding of context is crucial to understanding relations within that context: these relations are expressed within texts. There is a reciprocal relation between text and context, such that context predetermines the conditions of text production, and text reifies that context. From Halliday, the distinction between context of culture (as the broader context of culture from which social relations are derived) and context of situation (specific to the situation of the interaction) has been adopted to aid in empirical analysis in this study. The broader context of culture, in this analysis, is examined in Chapter 5: a literature survey on the subject of legal education has been conducted to provide an indication of the relations operating in that domain.

Crucial also to the framework is an understanding of the role that cultural models play in framing situated meanings within the learning process. It has been suggested that learning involves a Discourse shift. As such, it necessarily involves movement from one cultural model understanding to another. Although cultural models are not directly accessible to empirical study, an examination of the situated meanings brought to the task by the participant should provide an indication of cultural model, and thus Discourse, changes. Since it has been suggested that such cultural model understandings may play a vital role in aiding or impeding the learning process, to the extent that the existing cultural model held by a student is compatible with the cultural model espoused in the target discourse, the shift required will be more obtainable. The research thus, in chapter 6, attempts to plot situated meanings associated with the task (context and concept) by students at the outset of study.



This section of the research is necessarily tentative: the attempt to plot ‘meanings’ directly from student texts with no reference to primary cultural data may be flawed in a number of ways.

The context of situation frames the interaction, and it is this interaction which is crucial in understanding the formation of intersubjectivity in a psychological account. The insider’s task definition and the concept mediation provided within the context of situation in this study is examined in chapter 7.

In chapter 8 an attempt is made to plot individual student development in the concept. Chapter 9 examines this individual development, as a function of context and trajectory (cultural models), and questions whether the frame adopted in this research enabled a reading of ‘development’ in the context.

Other methodological understandings outlined in this chapter and which inform aspects of this research include the following:

From Halliday is drawn the understanding that meaning is conveyed through the functional components of the text: the distinction between the textual, ideational, and interpersonal aspects of text has been drawn upon in order to frame the analysis. The analysis in chapters 7 and 8 uses these categories to plot concept and Discourse values evident in the texts. Within the ideational function, evidence is sought of both concept structure and associated values. The term ‘relational’ has been used rather than ‘interpersonal’: the term is preferred since it more clearly allows for a plotting of both interactional and positioning moves within this interpsychological domain. Textual functions are not themselves a focus of analysis, but are examined to the extent that they provide insights into the other dimensions.

It has, however, been suggested that Halliday’s account does not go sufficiently beyond the text to

account for text production. In this regard, the work of Fairclough has been adopted: Fairclough shows how discourse in practice draws on broader social orders which are shaped by power relations in social institutions or society. This provides a connection between power and social structure on the one hand and texts on the other, and by this means, broader social relations are transmitted, via language. Thus understanding is useful in Chapter 7 as an approach to the analysis of textual mediation.

The framework has also fore-grounded a distinction between domain content and rhetorical process in the formation of expertise. The distinction is crucial in that it allows for a distinction to be drawn between the content of the concept and the form of the Discourse within which the concept exists. Both of these dimensions, it is argued, are integral to an understanding of the scientific concept in Discourse terms. Chapters 7 and 8, in plotting the mediation and development in the context, attempt to work simultaneously with the notions of concept structure and Discourse form.

Through Bernstein, it has been suggested that contextual relations and structures not only determine text, but also act to position the individual in the context. Thus, through social relations, structures, practices and Discourses, certain subject positions in society are reproduced. However, the process is not entirely deterministic at the individual level: there is a simultaneous co-construction of self in the context, by the individual, through choices made regarding subject positions taken. Whilst choices made are dependent on possibilities created through the individual's previous exposure to differing positions, the notions of choice and trajectory allow for an understanding of individual identity which is not co-determinous with subjectivity. This notion of identity allows for an examination of the psychological within the social, without reduction of the domains. This allows for an understanding of how it is, in Vygotsky's terms, that the individual plays an active role in internal reconstruction of external operations.

Finally, it has been suggested that learning necessarily involves identity and identity shifts. Evidence

of explicit identity positioning and shifts in this identity positioning is thus sought in analysis of student texts.