

Language Use

Bernstein

Language

- Important to educational success
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Clear communication & explanation
- Idea that language skills should be developed within the family

Bernstein (1971)

“Restricted code”

- Language used informally
- Everyday language
- May be ungrammatical & limited in extent
- Context understood by speaker & listener
 - Detailed explanation unnecessary
- Used by both w/ & m/class

“Elaborated code”

- Language used in formal context
- Provides detail & explanation
- Wider vocabulary
- Mainly used by the m/class

Educational Success

- Language of education is the elaborated code
 - m/class children have an advantage
 - Use code at home and therefore schoolwork is easier

Criticisms

- There are wide differences between upper & lower m/class and upper & lower w/class
 - Difficult to make generalisations because of diversity
 - Society has changed since Bernstein's theory
 - Gaine & George (1999)
- Few examples provided – a myth of m/class superiority? – Rosen (1974)
- Different rather than superior – Labov (1973)

Further Reading

- Sociology Themes & Perspectives (5th ed.), Haralambos & Holborn, pp.832-4
- Sociology in Focus, Taylor et al, pp.297-8