

# Operationalizing Grammaticality in Sociology using SFL

Kathy Lockett

University of Cape Town, South Africa

[Kathy.Lockett@uct.ac.za](mailto:Kathy.Lockett@uct.ac.za)

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# Introduction

- Methodology: Internal language of description: Bernstein's sociology of education (Pedagogic Device, knowledge types, grammaticality) + Maton's LCT ; External language of description: SFL (Field & Tenor of Discourse only)
- Empirically: Compare & contrast 'grammar' of 2 3<sup>rd</sup>yr Sociology knowledge discourses
- Urban Studies (knowledge code ER+ SR-)  
Diversity Studies (knower code ER- SR+)

# Research Questions

- What are the features of the grammars of these two sub-disciplines? How exactly do their knowledge claims differ?
- How does the grammar of the knowledge in the Field of Production manifest itself in the Evaluative Rules in the Field of Reproduction?

# Method: Selection of texts and focus of analysis

<b>Pedagogic Device</b>	<b>Texts selected</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>
Field of Production	key reading for essay	experiential & interpersonal meanings, objects of knowledge, definitions, Classification values
Field of Recontextualisation	course outline, essay task, discussion with lecturer	interpersonal meanings, Framing values
Field of Reproduction	3 marked student essays (top mark, average mark, low mark)	Framing: degree of explicitness of the Evaluative Rules

# Method: Unpacking Grammaticality

1. **Goal** of the text, reasons for its selection
2. **Definitions** of key concepts (How is the world represented? What are the objects of study? Classification value of definitions?)
3. Injunctions for **apprehending and analysing data** (How does one come to know? What referents in the real world stand for concepts in the theory? How are these captured? How is the data experienced, what methods are used to analyse and manipulate it? How is evidence constructed?)
4. **Confirmation or refutation of knowledge claims** by the community of knowers (Is the knowledge falsifiable? How is the theory proven? What are the rules for doing so?)

# Urban Studies Text

*Hamnett, C. (1996) Social Polarisation, Economic Restructuring and Welfare State Regimes **Urban Studies**, Vol.33 No.8 (1407-1430)*

- **Urban Studies:** key journal, a central text for theorising the nature of inequality in cities.
- Introduces students to international debate around nature and causes of social polarisation in global cities.
- Purpose: to challenge dominant theory on social polarization by disproving that economic restructuring (the loss of middle income manufacturing jobs to low-paid service jobs) is the main cause of both income and occupational polarisation within the paid labour force in global cities.
- Reports on analysis of trends in census data for London (1981-1991).
- Demonstrates that social polarisation takes different forms in different cities; a multi-causal phenomenon e.g. effects of the welfare state on income and occupational structures

# Summary of Analysis of Urban Studies Text (see Table 1)

- A world of abstract nominalisations sitting as Tokens & Values in Relational Processes: identity, existence
- But marked Material Processes (high Modality) show that abstractions can be unravelled back to precise numeric values in given categories that stand for material empirical realities – i.e. referents in the real world can be stably identified (definitions C+)
- Procedures (C+) allow data to be captured, observed & manipulated via descriptive stats (regularities of specified variables - trends) provide evidence to confirm/ refute for knowledge claims
- Work with empirical data shows high Modalisation (C+) – a relatively strong Grammar, some degree of Verticality
- Price paid : reduction, objectification of human experience (inequality) to quantities
- Claims about causality at structural level (inferred inductively) Relational Processes (low Modality) to make modest claims about indirect, context-dependent & multi-causal relations – that hold only for specific cities or national contexts
- Capacity to generalise across time & space is constrained cos works in open systems – limits capacity for Verticality

# Traces of the Grammar in Fields of Recontextualisation & Production

## Course outline

- Voice: Agentless Passive (students addressed as absent individuals) stipulates compulsory, precise and explicit behaviour
- RD (F+) based on implicit, positional hierarchical relations?

## Interview (graduate attributes, Evaluative Rules)

- Method, procedures for obtaining, measuring, working with evidence to demonstrate trends - ID (F+)
- Logical reasoning, theory to be proven/ backed up by evidence, understand complexity of causality

## Marking of Essays

- Emphasis on interrogating evidence in texts, providing adequate evidence for own conclusions, knowledge claims
- Evaluative Rules (F+)
- Knowledge code confirmed

# Diversity Studies Text

*Young, I. M. Five Faces of Oppression in Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W.J. et al (2000) Reading for Diversity and Social Justice. An anthology on racism, antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and classism. New York and London: Routledge*

- Written by a well-known feminist
- To provide students with key concepts used on a course that hopes to engage with their personal & social identities
- Purpose: Academic: to define & explain oppression (& its 5 faces) as a structural concept, concludes with *Applying the Criteria*  
Hortatory: part of a political project, neither disinterested or value-free

## Summary of Analysis of Diversity Studies Text (see Table 2)

- *A priori* stand-point: Normative judgment/ value commitment: social systems are already unequal, unjust, (Material Processes for suffering of the oppressed) & should be challenged, high obligation put on reader /students
- Dominance of Mental Processes: cognitive – empirical data experienced thro insight c.f. sight (observation). Social reality (& common sense beliefs) are deconstructed, knower ‘sees through’ naturalised empirical reality & ‘reads’ these as signs of hidden power structures (that constitute social reality)
- Relational Processes (highly modulated) make strong claims made about causal relations operating at deep structural level
- The cultivated knower is the research instrument
- Empirical, objective definitions & procedures vague (C-), not operationalisable – a weak Grammar
- Claims are not empirically falsifiable, no rational means to confirm/ refute knowledge claims – incommensurability of paradigms/ discourses based on different stand-points & values, limited resources for Verticality

# Traces of the Grammar in Fields of Recontextualisation & Production

## Course outline

- Students addressed as *Actors/ Subjects* (use of 1<sup>st</sup> names in marking) invited to *learn & engage* (F- hierarchical relations via personal means of control)
- Course based on *principles of co-operative learning*  
Modality: obligation: high: *you will be expected to approach the course as a team, all classes will be participatory, you will be assigned to base groups* (F+ of RD)
- 2 days per week for *hot topics & experiential activities* (C-)

## Interview (Knower mode, dispositions)

- *students must find their own voice, position themselves in society, come to know from an empathetic position, critical thinking, sensitivity, respect, justice, fairness and a bit of outrage*

# Traces of the Grammar in Fields of Recontextualisation & Production

## Marking of Essays

- Competent use of ‘diversity literacy vocabulary’ required (F+)
- Top marks for articulating the complexity of the ‘dumb blonde’ stereotype: a construction of white patriarchy, an idealised, racialised sex object who can also use her looks to attain privileges (weak essays completely missed this) Evaluative Rules implicit (F-)
- Despite weak grammar, requirements for a certain kind of knower are strong (derived from RD (F+)??)

# Discussion

- Analyses using SFL showed 2 sub-disciplines (supposedly in same discipline) with contrasting means for making knowledge claims
- Urban Studies: realist epistemology, works inductively from empirical to causal (without achieving generalisation) achieving legitimacy thro using technical instruments & procedures to provide evidence for claims
- Diversity Studies: idealist epistemology, works retroductively from causal to empirical, winning legitimacy thro elegant theorising and moral high ground
- Use of SFL can provide richer description of the 'grammar' of knowledge discourse (than BB's 'strong'/ 'weak' poles)
- Relationship bet rules of grammar in FoP and in FoR&R requires further research: FoP sets possibilities & constraints for the contingent, context-dependent formulation of the pedagogic discourse?
- Practically: could be a resource for informing curriculum & pedagogic strategies in HE
- Challenge: to develop a robust but accessible meta-language for analysing curriculum knowledge