of discourse by social structures, and the effects of discourse upon society through its reproduction of social structures. Both the determination of discourse and its effects involve not just elements in the social situations of discourse, but orders of discourse which are the discoursal aspects of social orders at the societal and social institutional levels. People are not generally aware of determinations and effects at these levels, and CLS is therefore a matter of helping people to become conscious of opaque causes and consequences of their own discourse.

This chapter has laid foundations which will be built upon in subsequent chapters. A consequence of seeing discourse as just a particular form of social practice is perhaps that language research ought to be more closely in tune with the rhythms of social research than it has tended to be. In Chapters 7 and 8 I explore linguistic dimensions of social changes with a view to determining what part discourse has in the inception, development and consolidation of social change. But more immediately, I need to put more flesh upon the relationship between discourse, power and ideology which, I have suggested, is at the centre of the social practice of discourse. This is my objective in Chapters 3 and 4, which focus respectively on power and on ideology in their relationships to discourse.

REFERENCES

discourse where participants are unequal - what we might call an unequal encounter. The following is an extract from a visit to a premature baby unit by a doctor (d) and a group of medical students (s), as part of the students' training programme. A spaced dot indicates a short pause, a dash a longer pause, extended square brackets overlap, and parentheses talk which was not distinguishable enough to transcribe.

1) d: and let's gather round, the first of the infants - now what I want you to do is to make a basic neo-natal examination just as Dr Mathews has to do as soon as a baby arrives in the ward. all right so you are actually going to get your hands on the infant, and look at the key points and demonstrate them to the group as you're doing it will you do that for me please. off you go.

2) s: well first of all I'm going to ( ).

3) d: that is do you wash your hands isn't it I. cos you've just been examining another baby (long silence) are you still in a are you in a position to start examining yet ( )

4) s: just going to remove this.

5) d: very good, it's putting it back that's the problem isn't it eh

6) s: come back Mum —

7) d: that's right. OK now just get a little more room by shifting baby, er up the thing a bit more that's very good. well now. off you go and describe what's going on

8) s: well here's a young baby boy, who we've decided is thirty, thirty seven weeks old now, was born two weeks ago, um is fairly active, his eye's open, he's got hair on, his head, his eyes are open

9) d: told me that

10) s: um he's crying or making

11) d: yeah we we we we've heard

that now what other examination are you going to make I mean —

12) s: erm we'll see if he'll respond to

13) d: now look, did we not look at a baby with a head problem yesterday

14) s: right

One immediately striking feature, marked by the square brackets, is the number of times the doctor interrupts the student — in (3), (9), (11), (13), and (19). (There are no square brackets in (13), because there is no actual overlap.) My impression is that the doctor does not interrupt simply because he wants to do all the talking, as people sometimes do. I think he interrupts in order to control the contributions of the student — to stop him beginning the examination before washing his hands, to stop him repeating information or giving obvious and irrelevant information, to ensure the student gives the key information expected.

In what other ways does the doctor exercise control over the student's contributions?

Firstly, in the opening turn, where the nature of what is going to go on in the interaction is announced to the students — including the nature of their own contributions. Secondly, in the way in which the student is explicitly told when to start talking and examining, at the end of turn (1) (off you go) and again in (7). Thirdly, in the equally explicit instructions to the student as to how he should sequence his actions, in (3). Fourthly, in the way in which the student's contributions are evaluated in (5) (very good) and (7) (that's right); positive and encouraging as they are, these are still techniques of control which would be regarded as presumptuous or arrogant if they were addressed to an equal or someone more powerful.

The fifth and final point is that the student is 'put on the spot' in the series of questions of turns (13), (15), (17) and (19). The questions constitute a strategically ordered sequence which leads the student through the routine he has failed to master. Also, the student's
obligation to answer is underscored in each case by a pause (marked by a spaced dot) — brief silences in which all eyes are on him, and which it is definitely his responsibility to end!

Notice too the grammatical forms in which these questions are put: (13) and (15) are negative questions — *did we not, might we not.* Using negative questions is sometimes (depending on intonation and other factors) like saying ‘I assume that X is the case, but you seem to be suggesting it isn’t; surely it is?’ In this case, the student ought to know that X is the case, so asking him questions of this elaborate sort is a way of making him look silly. The power relationship is more baldly expressed in (17), where the reduced question forms (reduced, that is, *from now what do we do? what is the next most important thing?*) sound to me abrupt and curt. Finally, in (19) the doctor uses a *declarative sentence* rather than an *interrogative sentence,* with a *question tag:* *don’t we.* The effect is rather like that of the negative questions.

On the basis of examples of this sort, we can say that power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants. It is useful to distinguish broadly between three types of such constraints on:

- *contents,* on what is said or done;
- *relations,* the social relations people enter into in discourse;
- *subjects,* or the ‘subject positions’ people can occupy.

‘Relations’ and ‘subjects’ are very closely connected, and all three overlap and co-occur in practice, but it is helpful to be able to distinguish them. Our example illustrates all three types of constraint. In terms of contents, the student is required to conduct an examination according to a learned routine, operating (relations) in a professional relationship to his audience and a subordinate relationship to the doctor, and occupying (subjects) the subject positions of (aspirant) doctor as well as student. These constraints imply particular linguistic forms.

But some of these constraints on the student do not appear to involve any direct control being exercised by the doctor. Notice for instance that all the *directive speech acts* (orders and questions) in the example come from the doctor: it appears that the doctor has the right to give orders and ask questions, whereas the students have only the obligation to comply and answer, in accordance with the subordinate relation of student to doctor. Yet the doctor is not directly controlling the student in this respect.

Rather, the constraints derive from the conventions of the discourse type which is being drawn upon. However, in an indirect sense, the doctor is in control, for it is the prerogative of powerful participants to determine which discourse type(s) may be legitimately drawn upon. Thus in addition to directly constraining contributions, powerful participants can indirectly constrain them by selecting the discourse type. Notice that the latter type of constraint is also a form of self-constraint: once a discourse type has been settled upon, its conventions apply to all participants, including the powerful ones. However, that is something of a simplification, because more powerful participants may be able to treat conventions in a more cavalier way, as well as to allow or disallow varying degrees of latitude to less powerful participants.

There are obvious similarities between the text in the example above and the police interview text discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 18) in terms of the unequal power relationships between participants. Compare the two texts, and see what conclusions you can come up with on similarities and differences in the ways in which police interviewers ‘handle’ witnesses and doctors ‘handle’ medical students.

**Power in cross-cultural encounters**

In the example we have been looking at, I think it is safe to assume that the students are able to operate within the constraints on legitimate discourse type imposed by the doctor. But what about unequal encounters where the non-powerful people have cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from those of the powerful people? This is common for instance in ‘gatekeeping encounters’ — encounters such as a job interview in which a ‘gatekeeper’ who generally belongs to the societally dominant cultural grouping controls an encounter which determines whether someone gets a job, or gets access to some other valued objective. In contemporary Britain, for example, it is mainly white middle-class people who act as gatekeepers in gatekeeping encounters with members of the various ethnic (and cultural) minorities of Asian, West Indian, African, etc., origin.

Discourse types and orders of discourse vary across cultures. But in such gatekeeping encounters, white middle-class gatekeepers are likely to constrain the discourse types which can be drawn upon to those of the dominant cultural grouping. Sensitivity to cultural
differences is growing in some cases, but slowly. Interviewers tend to assume, for instance, that interviewees are familiar with dominant ways of conducting interviews. And interviewees’ contributions are correspondingly interpreted on the assumption that they are capable of working out what is required, and capable of providing it, in terms of these dominant conventions. So if an interviewee gives what is felt to be a poor or weak or irrelevant answer to a question, this is likely to be put down to her lack of the requisite knowledge or experience, her uncooperativeness, and so forth; the possibility of miscommunication because of differences in discoursal conventions rarely suggests itself. People may thus be denied jobs and other valuable social ‘goods’ through misconceptions based upon cultural insensitivity and dominance.

The possibilities for miscommunication are ample. For instance, the following snippet is from a simulated job interview for a post in a library with a member of an American cultural minority (C2):

Interviewer: What about the library interests you most?
C2: What about the library in terms of the books? or the whole building?
Interviewer: Any point that you’d like to ... 
C2: Oh, the children’s books, because I have a child, and the children ... you know there’s so many you know books for them to read you know, and little things that would interest them would interest me too.

Text 3.2 Source: Akinasso F N, Ajiotutu C S 1982:124

Notice that C2’s English in terms of grammar and vocabulary is native-like, which in itself is likely to lead the interviewer to dismiss any thoughts of culturally based miscommunication even if those thoughts occurred. But that is a possibility. C2 has failed to interpret the interviewer’s question in ‘the obvious way’ – as an invitation to C2 to show what she could do in her professional work in the library if appointed to the post. But ‘the obvious way’ is the way within a specific culture of ‘the interview’, and there is no inherent reason why people should not show how their work interests relate to their family and other interests in response to a question of this sort.

It may be justifiable to interpret as ‘miscommunication’ the outcome of individual interviews where people are denied jobs or other ‘goods’ partly on the basis of cultural differences. But such outcomes are more regular and more systematic than that would imply, and they would appear to be based upon not only cultural differences in discourse but also upon more overt differences in skin colour and lifestyle. Power in discourse between members of different cultural groupings is in this perspective an element in the domination of, particularly, black and Asian minorities by the white majority, and of institutionalized racism.

Hidden power

The examples so far have been of face-to-face discourse, but a not inconsiderable proportion of discourse in contemporary society actually involves participants who are separated in place and time. This is true of written language generally, but the growth area for this sort of discourse has been the mass media – television, radio, film as well as newspapers. Mass-media discourse is interesting because the nature of the power relations enacted in it is often not clear, and there are reasons for seeing it as involving hidden relations of power.

The most obvious difference between face-to-face discourse and media discourse is the ‘one-sidedness’ of the latter. In face-to-face interaction, participants alternate between being the producers and the interpreters of text, but in media discourse, as well as generally in writing, there is a sharp divide between producers and interpreters – or, since the media ‘product’ takes on some of the nature of a commodity, between producers and ‘consumers’.

There is another important difference. In face-to-face discourse, producers design their contributions for the particular people they are interacting with – they adapt the language they use, and keep adapting throughout an encounter in the light of various sorts of ‘feedback’ they get from co-participants. But media discourse is designed for mass audiences, and there is no way that producers can even know who is in the audience, let alone adapt to its diverse sections. (And since all discourse producers must produce with some interpreters in mind, what media producers do is address an ideal subject, be it viewer, or listener, or reader. Media discourse has built into it a subject position for an ideal subject, and actual viewers or listeners or readers have to negotiate a relationship with the ideal subject.)
But what is the nature of the power relations in media discourse? We can say that producers exercise power over consumers in that they have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented, and (as we have seen) even the subject positions of their audiences. But who precisely are these ‘producers’? Let us take a specific example to try to answer this. Text 3.3 is an article from my local newspaper.

Quarry load-shedding problem

UNSHEETED lorries from Middlebarrow Quarry were still causing problems by shedding stones on their journey through Wanton village, members of the parish council heard at their September meeting.

The council’s observations have been sent to the quarry management and members are hoping to see a improvement.

Text 3.3 Source: Lancaster Guardian, 12 September 1986

Who is actually exercising power in this little article? Perhaps it is the journalist who wrote the piece. But it is well-known that journalists work under editorial control. So perhaps it is the editor, or rather more nebulously the newspaper itself, as a sort of institutional collective. But is the representation of the parish council meeting only the newspaper’s, or is not the newspaper perhaps transmitting someone else’s representation? And if so, does that not give a certain amount of power to that ‘someone else’?

Let us generalize from this example, but keep the reporting of news particularly in mind. It is rather obvious that the people and organizations that the media use as sources in news reporting do not represent equally all social groupings in the population: Government ministers figure far more than unemployed people, and industrial managers or trade union officials figure far more than shopfloor workers. While the unequal influence of social groupings may be relatively clear in terms of who gets to be interviewed, for example, it is less clear but nevertheless highly significant in terms of whose perspective is adopted in reports. If, for instance, industrial disputes are systematically referred to as trouble or disruption, that is systematically building the employer’s perspective into industrial news coverage.

In the British media, the balance of sources and perspectives and ideology is overwhelmingly in favour of existing power-holders. Where this is the case – and it sometimes is not the case – we can see media power relations as relations of a mediated (NB mediated!) sort between power-holders and the mass of the population. These mediated relations of power include the most fundamental relation, the class relation; on balance again, though with all sorts of provisos and limitations, the media operate as a means for the expression and reproduction of the power of the dominant class and bloc. And the mediated power of existing power-holders is also a hidden power, because it is implicit in the practices of the media rather than being explicit.

Let us make the case more concretely, though, in respect of the example above. What I want to focus upon is causality: who is represented as causing what to happen, who is represented as doing what to whom. The grammatical form in which the headline is cast is that of nominalization (see p. 124): a process is expressed as a noun, as if it were an entity. One effect of this grammatical form is that crucial aspects of the process are left unspecified: in particular, we don’t know who or what is shedding loads or causing loads to be shed – causality is unspecified.

The first paragraph of the report makes things clearer, but not much. Causality is attributed to unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow Quarry. This itself contains unspecified causality again, for unsheeted implies the failure of a process to happen – someone did not put sheets over the loads, when (one assumes) they ought to have done. It is difficult to take literally the notion that the lorries are the cause of the problem, and it is evident that in a different representation it could be this ‘someone’ – presumably the quarry management or people under their control. Yet the quarry management figure only in the second paragraph in this representation as in receipt of the council’s observations, a term which again avoids attributing any responsibility (it might have been complaints).

The report (and maybe the meeting it reports, though one cannot be sure) seems geared to representing what might have come across,
from a quite different perspective, as the antisocial consequences of unscrupulous corner-cutting on the part of the quarry owners, in a way that presents the consequences without the causes, or the responsibilities. The power being exercised here is the power to disguise power, i.e. to disguise the power of quarry owners and their ilk to behave antisocially with impunity. It is a form of the power to constrain content: to favour certain interpretations and ‘wordings’ of events, while excluding others (such as the alternative wording I have just given). It is a form of hidden power, for the favoured interpretations and wordings are those of the power-holders in our society, though they appear to be just those of the newspaper.

Let us take another and rather different example. The extract in Text 3.4 is taken from the beginning of a front-page newspaper article during the Falklands war.

How is Jenny Keeble represented here? What picture of army officers’ wives do you get from this extract? What impression of Major Keeble do you get from the photograph? Do you find yourself having to negotiate with an ideal subject position built into the text by its producer? What is that position?

What is at issue in the representation of Jenny Keeble is another form of constraint on content: such representations cumulatively stereotype ‘army wives’ and more generally the wives of favoured public figures, and so constrain the meanings people attach to them. The process is profoundly sexist: it works by attaching to Jenny Keeble attributes which are already conventionally definers of ‘a good wife’. Notice that at no point here (or in the rest of the article) is Jenny Keeble explicitly said to be ‘a good wife’, or an admirable person; the process depends entirely on an ‘ideal reader’s’ capacity to infer that from the list of attributes – she expresses confidence in her husband’s professional abilities, she is concerned for his safety, she ‘prays’ he has ‘done enough’, she tries to ‘maintain an air of normality for the children’s sake’. But this indicates that what is being constrained is not only contents but also subjects: the process presupposes an ideal reader who will indeed make the ‘right’ inference from the list, i.e. have the ‘right’ ideas about what a ‘good wife’ is. Texts such as this thus reproduce sexism, provided that readers generally fall into the subject position of the ideal reader, rather than opposing it.

Not all photographs are equal: any photograph gives one image of a scene or a person from among the many possible images. The choice is very important, because different images convey different meanings.

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Text 3.4 Source: Daily Mail, 1 June 1982

In this example, for instance, I find my attention drawn particularly by the Major’s eyes; he is looking straight ahead, looking the reader in the face, so to speak, rather appraisingly, with a serious expression mitigated by a hint of a smile at the corners of his mouth (possibly a cynical one). Notice the ambiguous function of the caption: does it register for us what the picture ‘says’, or does it lead us to ‘read’ the picture in that way? Be that as it may, the photograph in its verbal matrix shows me that Major Keeble is all I would expect a leader of an elite military unit to be.
Look at some further examples of the way in which images and words interact in the press, on television, on hoardings, and so forth. Can you spot particular techniques for giving particular impressions of people?

The hidden power of media discourse and the capacity of the capitalist class and other power-holders to exercise this power depend on systematic tendencies in news reporting and other media activities. A single text on its own is quite insignificant: the effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth. Thus through the way it positions readers, for instance, media discourse is able to exercise a pervasive and powerful influence in social reproduction because of the very scale of the modern mass media and the extremely high level of exposure of whole populations to a relatively homogeneous output. But caution is necessary: people do negotiate their relationship to ideal subjects, and this can mean keeping them at arm’s length or even engaging in outright struggle against them. The power of the media does not mechanically follow from their mere existence.

Is the hidden power of the media manipulative? It is difficult to give a categorical answer to this question: sometimes and in some ways it is, sometimes and in some ways it isn’t. We can perhaps approach the problem by asking from whom exactly the power of media discourse is hidden: is it just audiences, or is it not also at least to some degree media workers? There are of course cases where media output is consciously manipulated in the interests of the capitalist class — a case which is often referred to is that of BBC Radio during the British General Strike in 1926, when the BBC openly supported the Government in a context where the class issues were clear to its Director-General, Lord Reith. But for many media workers, the practices of production which can be interpreted as facilitating the exercise of media power by power-holders, are perceived as professional practices with their own internal standards of excellence and their own rationalizations in terms of the constraint of the technical media themselves, what the public want, and other factors. Indeed, the professional beliefs and assumptions of media workers are important in keeping the power of media discourse hidden from the mass of the population.

Power is also sometimes hidden in face-to-face discourse. For instance, there is obviously a close connection between requests and power, in that the right to request someone to do something often derives from having power. But there are many grammatically different forms available for making requests. Some are direct and mark the power relationship explicitly, while others are indirect and leave it more or less implicit. Direct requests are typically expressed grammatically in imperative sentences: type this letter for me by 5 o’clock, for instance. Indirect requests can be more or less indirect, and they are typically expressed grammatically in questions of various degrees of elaborateness and corresponding indirectness: can you type this letter for me by 5 o’clock, do you think you could type this letter for me by 5 o’clock, could I possibly ask you to type this letter for me by 5 o’clock. There are also other ways of indirectly requesting — through hints, for instance: I would like to have the letter in the 5 o’clock post.

Why would a business executive (let us say) choose an indirect form to request her secretary to type a letter? It could be, particularly if a hint or one of the more elaborate questions is used, for manipulative reasons: if the boss has been pressurizing the secretary hard all day, such a form of request might head off resentment or even refusal. But less elaborate forms of indirect request (can you/will you/could you type ...) are conventionally used in the sort of situation I have described, so the question becomes why business executives and other power-holders systematically avoid too much overt marking of their power. This leads us to the relationship of hidden power and social struggle, which is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

The examples I have given in this section are of hidden power being exercised within discourse. But what I have called the ‘power behind discourse’ is also a hidden power, in that the shaping of orders of discourse by relations of power is not generally apparent to people. This is an appropriate point, then, to move behind discourse.

POWER BEHIND DISCOURSE

The idea of ‘power behind discourse’ is that the whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power. In this section I begin with just one dimension of this — standardization, the process which I have already referred to
in Chapter 2, whereby a particular social dialect comes to be elevated into what is often called a standard or even ‘national’ language. I will focus upon standard British English.

Standard language

I suggested in Chapter 2 that we ought to see standardization as a part of a much wider process of economic, political and cultural unification, which was tied in with the emergence of capitalism out of feudal society in Britain. There is an economic basis for this connection between capitalism and unification: the need for a unified home market if commodity production is to be fully established. This in turn requires political and cultural unification. Standardization is of direct economic importance in improving communication: most people involved in economic activity come to understand the standard, even if they don’t always use it productively. It is also of great political and cultural importance in the establishment of nationhood, and the nation-state is the favoured form of capitalism.

The social dialect which developed into standard English was the East Midland dialect associated with the merchant class in London at the end of the medieval period. This underlines the link to capitalism, for these feudal merchants became the first capitalists, and the rise of standard English is linked to the growing power of the merchants. The beginnings of standard English were very modest in comparison with its pre-eminence now: the emergent standard form was used in very few places for very few purposes by very few people. Standardization initially affected written language, and has only gradually extended to various aspects of speech — grammar, vocabulary and even pronunciation.

We can think of its growth as a long process of colonization, whereby it gradually ‘took over’ major social institutions, pushing out Latin and French, vastly extending the purposes it was used for and its formal resources as a result, and coming to be accepted (if not always widely used) by more and more people. By coming to be associated with the most salient and powerful institutions — literature, Government and administration, law, religion, education, etc. — standard English began to emerge as the language of political and cultural power, and as the language of the politically and culturally powerful. Its successful colonization of these institutions cannot be separated from their modernization in the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism, or from the growing power within them of the emergent ‘middle class’ (bourgeoisie).

Standard English developed not only at the expense of Latin and French, but also at the expense of other, ‘non-standard’ social dialects (and the expense of the other languages of Britain — Welsh and Gaelic, and especially since the Second World War many others, including a number of Asian languages). Standard English was regarded as correct English, and other social dialects were stigmatized not only in terms of correctness but also in terms which indirectly reflected on the lifestyles, morality and so forth of their speakers, the emergent working class of capitalist society: they were vulgar, slovenly, low, barbarous, and so forth. The establishment of the dominance of standard English and the subordination of other social dialects was part and parcel of the establishment of the dominance of the capitalist class and the subordination of the working class.

The codification of the standard was a crucial part of this process, which went hand-in-hand with prescription, the designation of the forms of the standard as the only ‘correct’ ones. Codification is aimed at attaining minimal variation in form through setting down the prescribed language code in a written form — in grammars, dictionaries, pronouncing dictionaries, spelling books. The highpoint of codification was the second half of the eighteenth century, and much of the readership for the vast numbers of grammar books and dictionaries which were produced at the beginning of the industrial revolution came from the industrialists and their families.

There is an element of schizophrenia about standard English, in the sense that it aspires to be (and is certainly portrayed as) a national language belonging to all classes and sections of the society, and yet remains in many respects a class dialect. The power of its claims as a national language even over those whose use of it is limited is apparent in the widespread self-deprecation of working-class people who say they do not speak English, or do not speak ‘proper’ English. On the other hand, it is a class dialect not only in the sense that its dominance is associated with capitalist class interests in the way I have outlined, but also because it is the dominant bloc that makes most use of it, and gains most from it as an asset — as a form of ‘cultural capital’ anal-
ogous to capital in the economic sense, as Pierre Bourdieu has put it.

Standard English is an asset because its use is a passport to good jobs and positions of influence and power in national and local communities. This applies naturally enough to standard English as a written form, but also to standard spoken English including the use of forms of Received Pronunciation (RP) — the type of pronunciation which most politicians, television and radio reporters, university teachers, senior industrial managers, senior civil servants use, which is precisely my point!

As I have suggested at one or two points above, people generally may acknowledge the dominance of the standard language, but that does not mean that they always use it, or indeed accept it in the full sense of the term. In fact it meets stiff resistance from speakers of other social dialects, as well as from speakers of other languages in modern multilingual Britain. (See the last section of this chapter.) This in itself indicates that the schizophrenia I have referred to is sensed by people — people know it is someone else’s language and not theirs, despite the claims to the contrary. However, it does not mean that people are aware of the power basis of standardization: they may know the standard in a sense belongs to the dominant bloc, but the responsibility of the dominant bloc for articulating and defining the relationship and pecking order between languages and social dialects is generally hidden.

We quite often hear nonstandard social dialects on radio and TV these days, but my impression is that certain key broadcasting roles are still restricted to standard spoken forms. Listen out for accents other than Received Pronunciation (RP for short). In what ‘capacities’ (e.g. newsreader, interviewer, announcer, interviewee, entertainer) do non-RP-speakers mainly appear? Do they tend to appear in particular sorts of programme (such as news, comedy shows, quizzes, documentaries)? Are there certain capacities and types of programme which don’t feature non-RP-speakers? What about TV advertisements? Are there particular roles within them which are open to non-RP-speakers?

Power behind discourse: a discourse type
I want now to shift focus, still with reference to ‘power behind discourse’, and look at a particular discourse type as ‘an effect of power’ — as having conventions which embody particular power relations. The example I have chosen is the discourse of medical examinations, and more specifically gynaecological examinations. I focus especially on how medical staff and patients are positioned in relation to each other in the conventions of the discourse type, and how this positioning can be seen as an effect of the power of those who dominate medical institutions over conventions, and so over staff as well as patients.

According to one account of gynaecological examinations, participants are subject to contradictory pressures: staff feel obliged to treat patients in a nonchalant and disengaged way, as technical objects, in order to establish that their interest in their bodies is medical and not sexual; yet they also feel obliged to treat the patient sensitively as a person to cancel out the indignity of treating her as a technical object, and to try to overcome her likely embarrassment given the overwhelming taboo on exposing one’s sexual organs to non-intimates. These contradictory pressures are evident in the conventions for the discourse type.

For instance, the constraints on the settings of gynaecological examinations are of major significance in guaranteeing that the encounter is indeed a medical one and not, for instance, a sexual one. Such examinations can legitimately be undertaken only in ‘medical space’ — a hospital or a consulting room — which implies the presence of a whole range of medical paraphernalia which help to legitimize the encounter. There are also constraints on the subjects who can take part: there is a restricted set of legitimate subject positions, those of the doctor, the nurse, and the patient, and strict limitations on who can occupy them. There are requirements for modes of dress which reinforce properties of the setting in defining the encounter as medical, and (as we shall see) for ‘demeanour’. There are constraints on topic — questions from medical staff on bodily functions and sexual experience must relate strictly to the medical problem at issue, disallowing for instance the sort of topical development we find elsewhere which would allow a transition to a general discussion of one’s sex life.

The sequence of activities which constitutes the examination is highly routinized, following a standard procedure, and this routine property extends also to the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the ways in which medical staff relate to patients. Medical staff show their disengagement in the quality of their gaze, the professionally appraisive (rather than aesthetically evaluative) way in which they look at the patient’s body. It emerges also in the brisk, efficient
handling of the patient’s body by the doctor, and, too, in ques-
tions and requests to the patient which, for example, deperson-
alize the patient’s sexual organs by referring to, say, the vagina rather
than your vagina.

But efforts of medical staff to balance disengagement with
sensitivity, in accordance with the pressures referred to above, are
also evident in their discourse. They often avoid using terms which
might embarrass patients, by euphemizing (Did you wash between
your legs?) or by relying upon deictic expressions (When did you first
notice difficulty down below?). And doctors use a soft, soothing voice
to encourage the patient to relax (when they say things like now
relax as much as you can, I’ll be as gentle as I can), which contributes to
‘personalizing’ the examination. It is important to emphasize that
despite the impression some patients may have that they are really
being given individual treatment, these are just as much routine
devices as those mentioned in the previous paragraph.

So far I have referred mainly to ways in which medical staff are
positioned, but the same is true for patients, as the following
resume of how medical staff think patients should behave in
gynaecological examinations will indicate.

The patient’s voice should be controlled, mildly pleasant, self-
confident and impersonal. Her facial expression should be attentive
and neutral, leaning towards the mildly pleasant and friendly side, as
if she were talking to the doctor in his office, fully dressed and seated
in a chair. The patient is to have an attentive glance upward, at the
ceiling or at other persons in the room, eyes open, not ‘dreamy’ or
away, but ready at a second’s notice to revert to the doctor’s face for a
specific verbal exchange. Except for such a verbal exchange, however,
the patient is supposed to avoid looking into the doctor’s eyes during
the actual examination because direct eye contact between the two at
this time is provocative. Her role calls for passivity and self-
effacement. The patient should show willingness to relinquish control
to the doctor. She should refrain from speaking at length and from
making inquiries which would require the doctor to reply at length. So
as not to point up her undignified position, she should not project her
personality profusely. The self must be eclipsed in order to sustain the
definition that the doctor is working on a technical object and not a
person.

Have you ever been in a position where you were expected to behave
at all similarly? How were those expectations communicated to you?
Have male readers ever felt themselves required to ‘eclipse the self’ in

Let us now bring power into the picture. The medical staff and
particularly the doctor exercise power over the patient (and over
other medical staff, in the case of the doctor) within encounters
based upon this discourse type, in accordance with its conven-
tions, which attribute rights to control encounters to medical staff
and especially doctors. And as part of their power, the medical
staff are likely to impose the discourse type upon patients, in the
sense of putting pressure on them in various ways to occupy the
subject position it lays down for patients, and so behave in certain
constrained ways. These are aspects of power in discourse, but
what I am interested in here is power behind discourse: the power
effect whereby this discourse type with these properties comes
to be imposed upon all of those involved, medical staff as well
as patients, apparently by the medical institution or system itself.

But the power behind the conventions of a discourse type
belongs not to the institution itself (whatever that would mean)
but to the power-holders in the institution. One indication of this
is the policing of conventions, the way they are enforced, both in
the negative sense of what sanctions are taken against those who
infringe them and in the positive sense of what affirmations there
are for those who abide by them. The policing of conventions is
in the hands of institutional power-holders, at various levels.
Thus in the case of medical examinations, it is mainly the medical
staff who come into contact with patients, and are power-holders
in relation to them, who enforce patients’ compliance with
conventions, while the compliance of medical staff themselves is
enforced by those higher in the institutional hierarchy – through
procedures for disciplining people and dealing with professional
malpractice, through promotions, and so forth.

Consideration of the ways in which conventions are shaped by
those who have the power behind discourse takes us on to the
concerns of Chapter 4, because such shaping is achieved through
ideology. In our example, the conventions which position medical
staff and patients in relation to each other can be regarded as
embodying the dominant ideologies of medicine as a social insti-
tution, i.e. the ideologies of those who control medicine.

Evidently, what a doctor is, what a nurse is, what a patient is,
what constitutes ‘professional’ behaviour towards patients, and

so forth, are all matters which are open to argument. The conventions for positioning staff and patients in gynaecological examinations are premised upon the way in which the dominant ideology answers these questions. I come to how this is done in Chapter 4.

But the sense in which these conventions are an effect of power behind discourse does not end there. The same conventions can be regarded, from the perspective of the societal (rather than the institutional) order of discourse, as a particular case of a general tendency in the way in which ‘professionals’ and ‘clients’ are positioned in relation to each other, in a variety of institutional settings and discourse types where people who have some official status in institutions (‘professionals’) come into contact with ‘the public’ (‘clients’). The contradictory pressures upon medical staff to treat patients on the one hand nonchalantly as ‘technical objects’, and on the other hand sensitively as persons, are not I think (as the account of gynaecological examinations I referred to suggested) a peculiarity of the circumstances of gynaecological or even more generally medical examinations - though those peculiar circumstances would seem to give these pressures a special colouring. One finds techniques for efficiently and nonchalantly ‘handling’ people wherever one looks in the public institutions of the modern world. Equally, one finds what I shall refer to as a synthetic personalization, a compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people ‘handled’ en masse as an individual. Examples would be air travel (have a nice day!), restaurants (welcome to Wimpy!), and the simulated conversation (e.g. chat shows) and bonhomie which litter the media. These general tendencies in the order of discourse of modern society accord with the nature of its power relations and modern techniques for exercising power, as I shall show in some detail in Chapter 8.

Power and access to discourse

The third and final aspect of ‘power behind discourse’ that I want to look at is not to do with the constitution of orders of discourse and their component discourse types, but with access to them. The question is, who has access to which discourses, and who has the power to impose and enforce constraints on access?

The myth of free speech, that anyone is ‘free’ to say what they like, is an amazingly powerful one, given the actuality of a plethora of constraints on access to various sorts of speech, and writing. These are part and parcel of more general constraints on social practice - on access to the more exclusive social institutions, their practices, and especially the most powerful subject positions constituted in their practices. And in terms of discourse in particular, on access to the discourse types, and discoursal positions of power. In a sense, these ‘cultural goods’ are analogous to other socially valued ‘goods’ of a more tangible nature - accumulated wealth, good jobs, good housing, and so forth. Both sorts of goods are unequally distributed, so that members of what I referred to in Chapter 2 as the dominant bloc (the capitalist class, the ‘middle class’, the professions) have substantially more of them than members of the working class - they are richer in cultural capital (see p. 57).

Religious rituals such as church services will serve to illustrate constraints on access. You can only officiate at a church service if you are a priest, which is itself a constraint on access. Furthermore, you can only get to be a priest through a rather rigorous process of selection, during the course of which you must show yourself to meet a range of ‘entry conditions’ - being a believer, having a vocation, having some academic ability, conforming to certain standards of honesty, sincerity, sexual morality, and so on. These are further constraints on access.

Religion is not really that much different in this respect from medicine, or education, or law. Medical examinations, or lessons, or litigation, may not be as ritualized as a religious service, but nevertheless there are strict constraints on who can do them, and strict constraints on who can acquire the qualifications required to do them. In principle (as well as in law and in the rules of the professions), anyone is free to obtain such qualifications. But in practice, the people who do obtain them come mainly from the dominant bloc. For most people, the only involvement with medicine, education or the law is in the capacity of ‘client’ - patient, pupil or student, legal client – and ‘clients’ are not really ‘insiders’ in an institution.

Another less institutionally specific example of unequally distributed cultural capital is access to the various reading and writing abilities that can be summed up with the word literacy. Literacy is highly valued in our society, and a great deal of
socially important and prestigious practice takes place in 'the written word'. Access to a high level of literacy is a precondition for a variety of socially valued 'goods', including most rewarding and well-paid jobs. Yet it is evident that access to literacy is unequally distributed — indeed, an estimated one million adults in Britain lack 'basic literacy skills', as defined by UNESCO, and the overwhelming majority of these are working-class people.

Among the more obvious and visible effects of constraints on access is the way in which having access to prestigious sorts of discourse and powerful subject positions enhances publicly acknowledged status and authority. One reason for this is that becoming a doctor or a teacher or a lawyer is generally regarded as a purely individual achievement which merits the 'rewards' of status and authority, with social constraints on who can achieve these positions being correspondingly glossed over. As support for this view, people often refer to the fact that training in these professions involves spending years acquiring special knowledge and skills. Thus professional knowledge and skills act as emblems of personal achievement, mystifying social constraints on access — as well as being membership cards for those who achieve access, and a means of excluding outsiders. The discourses of these professions, including specialist vocabularies or jargons, serve all these functions.

Conversely, exclusion of people from particular types of discourse and subject positions lowers their publicly acknowledged status, but also as I suggested above their job and other social 'prospects'. Let us go back to the position of cultural minority groupings in interviews, which I was discussing in the section Power in cross-cultural encounters. I probably gave the impression that there is a great deal more homogeneity within cultural groupings than there really is. In fact, many white working-class British people from the dominant cultural grouping are as unfamiliar with the conventions of interviewing as members of black or Asian communities. But it is increasingly the case, as a result of the spread of interviewing practices across social institutions and the more intensive use of them within many institutions, that everybody is expected to be able to deal with interviews — from the interviewee end, of course! Those who cannot, either because of their cultural experience or because they belong to generations for which access to interviewing was constrained, are likely to be socially disabled.

The educational system has the major immediate responsibility for differentials in access. In the words of Michel Foucault, 'any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry'. And what is striking is the extent to which, despite the claims of education to differentiate only on the grounds of merit, differentiation follows social class lines: the higher one goes in the educational system, the greater the predominance of people from capitalist, 'middle-class', and professional backgrounds. The educational system reproduces without dramatic change the existing social division of labour, and the existing system of class relations. However, it will not do to blame the education system for constraints on access, or to attribute to it alone power over access. This power is diversified through the various social institutions, not just education, and its origins are, as I have been implying, in the system of class relations at the societal level.

Constraints on access: 'formality'

'Formality' is one pervasive and familiar aspect of constraints on access to discourse. Formality is a common property in many societies of practices and discourses of high social prestige and restricted access. It is a contributory factor in keeping access restricted, for it makes demands on participants above and beyond those of most discourse, and the ability to meet those demands is itself unevenly distributed. It can also serve to generate awe among those who are excluded by it and daunted by it.

Formality is best regarded as a property of social situations which has peculiar effects upon language forms. As a property of social situations, it manifests in an accentuated form the three types of constraint upon practice which I have associated with the exercise of power: constraints on contents, subjects, and relations. In terms of contents, discourse in a formal situation is subject to exceptional constraints on topic and relevance, and in terms of more or less fixed interactive routines. In terms of subjects, the social identities of those qualified to occupy subject positions in the discourses of formal situations are defined more rigorously than is usual, and in terms of public positions or statuses, as in the constraints referred to above on who may officiate at a
religious service. In terms of relations, formal situations are characterized by an exceptional orientation to and marking of position, status, and ‘face’; power and social distance are overt, and consequently there is a strong tendency towards politeness. Politeness is based upon recognition of differences of power, degrees of social distance, and so forth, and oriented to reproducing them without change.

The peculiar effects of formality on language forms follow from these accentuated constraints. We find levels of structuring of language above and beyond what is required in non-formal discourse. This extra structuring can affect any level of language. For example, the allocation of turns at talking to participants may be regulated by a formula (e.g. participants must speak in order of rank), whereas in conversation people work it out as they go along. Or encounters may have to proceed according to a strict routine which lays down stages in a fixed sequence. There may be requirements to do with the rhythm or tempo or loudness of talk – people may have to talk at a particular speed, for instance; or to do with the grammar of sentences – highly complex structures may be favoured. There is likely to be a general requirement for consistency of language forms, which will mean for instance that the vocabulary must be selected from a restricted set throughout. There is also a heightened self-consciousness which results in care about using ‘correct’ grammar and vocabulary, including a whole set of vocabulary which is reserved for more formal occasions, and is often itself referred to as ‘formal’.

The following text is an extract from a transcript of part of the United States Senate investigation into the Watergate affair, and is part of the testimony of one of President Nixon’s most senior aides, John Ehrlichman:

(1) **Q:** Mr. Ehrlichman, prior to the luncheon recess you stated that in your opinion, the entry into the Ellsberg psychiatrist’s office was legal because of national security reasons. I think that was your testimony.

(2) **A:** Yes.

(3) **Q:** Have you always maintained that position?

(4) **A:** Well, I don’t know –

(5) **Q:** Well, do you recall when we had our first interview in my office, and we discussed this issue you expressed shock that such a thing had occurred, and indicated that you had informed Mr. Young or Mr. Krogh to see that this thing should not happen again but you did not take any action such as ordering the firing these people because of the general sensitive issues that were involved. Do you recall that?

(6) **A:** Well, that is not on the ground of illegality, Mr. Dash. I do not think you asked me at that time whether – what my legal opinion was, for whatever it was worth. What you were asking me was what I did, and that is what I did.

(7) **Q:** Well, if it was legal you would ordinarily have approved it would you not?

(8) **A:** Well, no, the thing that troubled me about it was that it was totally unanticipated. Unauthorized by me.

(9) **Q:** Who was it authorized by?

(10) **A:** Well, I am under the impression that it was authorized by Mr. Krogh, but it is not based on any personal knowledge.

(11) **Q:** Well, now, as a matter of fact, Mr. Ehrlichman, did you not personally approve in advance a covert entry into the Ellsberg psychiatrist office for the purpose of gaining access to the psychoanalyst’s reports?

(12) **A:** I approved a covert investigation. Now, if a covert entry means a breaking and entering the answer to your question is, no.

**Text 3.5 Source:** *New York Times, 1973:512*

The questioner is challenging Ehrlichman, yet in a manner which is perhaps constrained by the formality of the situation. How is it constrained? What aspects of the language are indicative of formality?

The taking of turns is constrained within a question-plus-answer pattern, with Dash asking and Ehrlichman answering. Any challenges or accusations and attempts to refute them must be fitted into this format. Turn (7) is a challenge, for instance, but it is forced to be an implicit and indirect challenge because Dash has to put it in question form. Consequently it comes across as restrained. This is a case of formality limiting the nature of relations between participants. Perhaps the other linguistic feature which is most strikingly indicative of formality is the vocabulary – the consistent selection of ‘formal’ words. The opening turn, for example, may in a less formal scenario have started: *John*, you were *making out* before lunch that . . . Notice also the polite title + surname modes of address that are used (Mr Ehrlichman).
Formal situations could be regarded as adding an extra constraint to the three I have associated with the exercise of power—a constraint on language form—as well as heightening the three. This means that discourse, and practice generally, in formal situations are difficult and demanding; they depend on special knowledge and skill which has to be learnt. Many people do not acquire even the necessary knowledge and skill to occupy peripheral positions in formal situations, and consequently find formal situations per se daunting and frightening—or ridiculous! A formidable axis is set up between social position and knowledge; since those in prestigious social positions do learn to operate formally, an easy conclusion for those who don’t is “I can’t because I’m not clever enough” rather than “I can’t because I’m working class.” Thus formality both restricts access and generates awe. However, I shall discuss in the final section a contrary trend in contemporary society against overt marking of power and thus against formality.

SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN DISCOURSE

In this section I add a vitally important proviso to what has gone before. Power, ‘in’ discourse or ‘behind’ discourse, is not a permanent and undisputed attribute of any one person or social grouping. On the contrary, those who hold power at a particular moment have to constantly reassert their power, and those who do not hold power are always liable to make a bid for power. This is true whether one is talking at the level of the particular situation, or in terms of a social institution, or in terms of a whole society: power at all these levels is won, exercised, sustained, and lost in the course of social struggle (see Ch. 2, p. 34).

Let us begin with a text where struggle is overt—an interview between a youth (y) suspected of involvement in a crime, and his headmaster (h).

(1) h: Why didn’t you go straight down Queen Street?
(2) y: I’m not walking down there with a load of coons from St Hilda’s coming out of school.
(3) h: Why’s that?
(4) y: Well that’s obvious, isn’t it? I don’t want to get belted.
(5) h: Well there isn’t usually any bother in Queen Street, is there?

(6) y: No. None of us white kids usually go down there, do we? What about that bust-up in the Odeon carpark at Christmas?
(7) h: That was nearly a year ago, and I’m not convinced you lot were as innocent as you made out. So when you got to the square, why did you wait around for quarter of an hour instead of going straight home?
(8) y: I thought my mate might come down that way after work. Anyway, we always go down the square after school.

Compare this with the premature baby unit text in the section Power in discourse at the beginning of this chapter, in terms of the degree of control exercised by the headmaster over the youth’s contributions, and the extent to which they both stick to the discoursal ‘rights’ and ‘obligations’ you would expect in such an interview—for instance, I don’t think you would expect the youth to ask questions and the headmaster to answer them.

There are various ways in which y exercises more control over the discourse than one might expect, exceeds his discoursal ‘rights’ and does not fulfill his ‘obligations’. Firstly, he challenges h’s questions on two occasions (turns 2 and 4) rather than answering them directly, though an answer is implied in 2 and offered after the challenge in 4. Secondly, in turn 6 y asks a question which h answers: as I said above, you would expect neither y to ask nor h to answer questions. Thirdly, the answers which y does give to h’s questions go beyond what is directly relevant in turns 6 and 8: recall that in the medical text, a requirement of relevance is strictly enforced by the doctor. Fourthly, y shows no sign of adapting his style of talk to the relatively formal setting; he appears to treat the interview to an extent as if it were a conversation, and to treat the policeman as a peer. This is most evident in y’s vocabulary (belted, kids, bust-up) and especially in his use of the racist word coons. I think we would expect people who would use this sort of vocabulary with their friends to be influenced by the setting, occasion, and the power and distance separating them from the police to avoid it.

H does maintain quite a lot of control nevertheless. Most of the questions are asked by him, and some at least are answered fairly complacently, indicating a level of adherence to conventional rights and obligations. It is always possible in cases of this sort that the person with institutional power—h in this case—is tactically yielding some ground in order to be able to pursue a longer-term strategy. Perhaps this is how we should interpret h’s failure to
immediately challenge or dissociate himself from the racist coons: by letting it pass, he appears to be accepting it.

But are we to regard such a case as just a struggle between an individual youth showing how unimpressed he is with school authority by flouting conventional constraints, and a headmaster adopting tactics to deal with that? Recall the distinction on p. 25 of chapter 2 between three levels of social organisation: situational, institutional, and societal. This seems a fair description of what is going on at the situational level. But it misses the social pattern to which this individual example seems to belong: the youth seems typical of many young people, and the tactics which the headmaster uses are perhaps fairly standard for dealing with this sort of situation. In other words, the extract can also be interpreted in terms of struggle at the institutional level. Moreover, we could surely find other pieces of discourse from quite different institutional settings — the law and the family might be examples — showing analogous struggles between young people and ‘authority’; correspondingly, one can see the text both as an example of social struggle at the institutional level within the school as a social institution, and as an example of a more general struggle at the societal level between (certain groupings of) young people and power-holders of various sorts.

Of course one cannot get far in investigating social struggle between young people and the schools, or young people and public authorities more generally, on the basis of a single piece of discourse! What I am suggesting, however, is that any given piece of discourse may simultaneously be a part of a situational struggle, an institutional struggle, and a societal struggle (including class struggle). This has consequences in terms of our distinction between ‘power in discourse’ and ‘power behind discourse’. While struggle at the situational level is over power in discourse, struggle at the other levels may also be over power behind discourse.

I referred earlier in the chapter to a tendency against the overt marking of power relationships in discourse — a tendency which is of considerable interest from the perspective of social struggle. Let me illustrate it with a well-known grammatical example, the so-called ‘T’ and ‘V’ pronoun forms which are found in many languages — French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian among the European languages — but not (modern) standard English. These languages have two forms for the second-person pronoun where standard English has just the one, you, and although these forms are in origin just singular (T) and plural (V), both have come to be used for singular reference. Let us take French as an example. Its T-form (tu) and its V-form (vous) are now both used to address a single person. At one stage, the difference between them was one of power: tu was used to address subordinates, vous to address superiors, and either (depending on the class of the speakers) could be used reciprocally between social equals.

More recently, however, there has been a shift towards a system based upon solidarity rather than power: tu is used to address people one is close to in some way (friends, relations, co-workers, etc.), and vous is used when there is social ‘distance’. There is tension between the power-based and solidarity-based systems: what happens, for instance, if you want to address a social ‘superior’ who you are close to (your parents, say), or a subordinate who is socially distant (e.g. a soldier, if you happen to be an officer)? The answer used to be that you would use vous and tu respectively on grounds of power, but now it is that you would probably use tu and vous respectively on grounds of solidarity.

The particular development of T/V away from the power-based system towards the solidarity-based system seems to be in line with long-term developments across whole ranges of institutions which have been documented in various languages: a movement away from the explicit marking of power relationships. For instance, this is true in Britain for higher education, for a range of types of discourse in social services, and now for industry — where Japanese management techniques which eliminate surface inequalities between managers and workers are increasingly influential. It is of course easy enough to find unreformed practice in any of these cases, but the trend over three decades or more is clear enough.

Does this trend mean that unequal power relationships are on the decline? That would seem to follow if we assumed a mechanical connection between relationships and their discoursal expression. But such a conclusion would be highly suspect in view of the evidence from elsewhere that power inequalities have not substantially changed — evidence about the distribution of wealth, the increase in poverty in the 1980s, inequalities in access
to health facilities, education, housing, inequalities in employment prospects, and so forth. Nor is it credible that those with power would give it up for no obvious reason.

One dimension of power in discourse is arguably the capacity to determine to what extent that power will be overtly expressed. It is therefore quite possible for the expression of power relationships to be played down as a tactic within a strategy for the continued possession and exercise of power. That would seem to be a reasonable interpretation of the conscious and deliberate adoption of Japanese management styles referred to above. This is a case of hiding power for manipulative reasons — see the section on Hidden power above. But can it account for the longer-term trend across diverse institutions and indeed across national and linguistic frontiers? It is hardly credible to interpret it as an international conspiracy!

What both the optimistic explanation that inequality is on the way out and the conspiratorial explanation fail to take into account is the relationship between power and social struggle. I would suggest that the decline in the overt marking of power relationships should be interpreted as a concession on the part of power-holders which they have been forced to make by the increase in the relative power of working-class people and other groupings of formerly powerless and disregarded people — women, youth, black people, gay people, etc. (That shift in power relations has been checked and partly reversed in places during the crises of the late 1970s and 1980s.) However, this does not mean that the power-holders have surrendered power, but merely that they have been forced into less direct ways of exercising and reproducing their power. Nor is it a merely cosmetic tactic: because of the constraints under which they have been forced to operate, there are severe problems of legitimacy for power-holders.

Discourse is part and parcel of this complex situation of struggle, and we can deepen our understanding of discourse by keeping this matrix in mind, and our understanding of the struggle by attending to discourse. I shall explore for instance in Chapter 8 the way in which certain discourse types acquire cultural salience, and ‘colonize’ new institutions and domains, a perspective which I briefly aired in Chapter 2. Shifting patterns of salience are a barometer of the development of social struggle and a part of that process. For example, counselling is a salient discourse type which has colonized workplaces, schools, and so forth. This is superficially indicative of an unwonted sensitivity to individual needs and problems. But it seems in some cases at least to have been turned into a means to greater institutional control of people through exposing aspects of their ‘private’ lives to unprecedented institutional probing. The apparent sensitivity to individuals is a concession by power-holders to the strength of the (relatively) powerless; the containment of counselling is their counter-offensive. See Chapter 8 for examples and further discussion.

Access to prestigious discourse types and their powerful subject positions is another arena of social struggle. One thinks for instance of the struggles of the working class through the trade unions and the Labour Party around the turn of the century for access to political arenas including Parliament, and by implication to the discourses of politics in the ‘public’ domain. Or of the struggles of women and black people as well as working-class people to break into the professions, and more recently the higher echelons of the professions.

Struggles over access merge with struggles around standardization. I suggested earlier that an important part of standardization is the establishment of the standard language as the form used in a range of ‘public’ institutions. In the context of the increasing relative power of the working class in Britain after the Second World War, certain concessions have had to be made to nonstandard dialects in some institutions — in broadcasting and some of the professions, for example, certain forms of relatively prestigious nonstandard speech are tolerated. Again, cultural minorities have demanded rights for their own languages in various institutional spheres, including education, and these have again resulted in certain limited concessions.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter I have argued on the one hand that power is exercised and enacted in discourse, and on the other hand that there are relations of power behind discourse. I have also argued