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"What kind of a flower is that? " A contrasting model for critiquing lessons

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The author examines various problems faced by the trainer and the trainee in the course of observation of teaching. He points out the need for a conceptual framework within which to view the characteristics of specific communications and describes the multi-dimensional coding system, which he has developed out of this need. Hubert Eichheim, co-editor.

Background

I think you will be better able to understand my point of view in this presentation if I first tell you a little bit about my background. In 1961, I was sent to a teacher training college Nigeria. One of my tasks there was to observe teachers doing practice teaching. After the lessons, I had to critique the teachers and make suggestions for alternative practices. I have been doing the same thing ever since.

Characteristics of Critiques and Lessons

In my work in Nigeria, and in my critiquing since Nigeria, I have noticed many of the same things, though I have now done what was originally asked to do in Nigeria in a dozen different countries. One of the things I always find is that teachers consider suggested alternatives implied judgments of their own teaching. A suggestion to try silent reading in place of oral reading is seen as a veiled judgment of oral reading. Whether the suggestion follows a judgment or oral reading such as " that was a great lesson, but why not try some oral reading" or whether the suggestion is communicated with the most delicate modal such as in this example, " I wonder whether if silent reading were possible you might want to try some", most teachers think that a criticism is being made each time a suggestion is made.

Of course, one reason teachers often think a criticism is being made is that one often is being made. Comments about lessons often are evaluative. These I think are typical: " the first part went well, but later some of the students weren't so involved" or " the questioning was good because it was brisk, but the dictation was given at a much slower pace and so weak." These comments show another characteristic of critiques I noticed in my stay in Nigeria and have continued to notice. The comments tend to be general in nature and rarely contain the actual communications made in the lesson either to add specificity to the critiques or to support a criticism being made.

The principal's attitude towards the text, the limitations of an examination students have to take, the lack of time for covering certain material, the limitations of the students, the fact that there is too much to do without support -- all of these types of items are more likely to be mentioned during critiques than actual student or teacher communications from the lessons being critiqued.

I have also found the critique lacking in variability. They seem to follow certain patterns of communication the same way classes do. In the class, the teacher is in charge and asks questions, gives reactions and makes all the announcements about what is to be done and how it is to be done. In critiques, observers do these very things. When I have asked teachers to critique their own lessons or those of fellow teachers they not only make some of the same suggestions I might make but they make the comments in general terms, they evaluate and they tend to avoid the use of specific communications from the lessons.

The final thing I have noticed is that over time teachers change very little in spite of either the source of the critique or the number of suggestions made. Of course, some always follow some suggestions a few times. As you know, just as students begin to see what their teachers want them to do and children see what their parents expect, so teachers get to know what they think visitors like, especially if the visitors are inspectors or supervisors. On the days of external examinations of teaching, I have seen teachers take carloads of pictures and objects to teach with though on a regular basis it was hard to find them using a sketch on the blackboard, much less a series of pictures or objects. But if they have heard that a particular inspector wants visuals, they bring them on the day of the practical examination!

Premises and Purposes of my Observation System

My early observations and the lessons learned from them as well as the subsequent observations I have made have led me to believe that what I needed for my own critiquing of others' lessons, as well as for my own teaching, was a conceptual framework within which I and those I worked with could view certain characteristics of communications. Such an instrument would need to meet criteria that would take into account the problems I thought the usual methods of teacher preparation did not. Consequently, the framework would have to provide me with a means to avoid judgments, to be precise in descriptions and be tied to actual communications made, rather than to other variables not under the control of the teacher such as the backgrounds of the students or the principal's attitude.

Since I noted a lack of variety in both lessons and critiques I observed, the framework would also need to be capable of helping those using it to generate a wide range of alternative communications. Additionally, the framework would have to aid teachers in seeing how each suggestion others made or they themselves generated was related to what they did and to each other alternative so that the suggestions would not be forgotten so easily.

The idea that rules -- unconscious conventions -- control much of what we do is central to my thinking and one reason I think it is so critical for us all to be able to generate deliberate alternatives. Remember, one of my beliefs is that both in critiques

and in classes most of what we do we do not because we are either clever or stupid but rather because invisible rules control most of what we do. Those who do things we consider particularly good or poor are those who either accidentally or deliberately alter the normal patterns. This is true whether we are discussing new trends in art, short stories, advertising, teaching or anything else. Invisible rules control much of what we do in classes and critique sessions just as much as they control how we act and what we say in other settings and just as much as animals are controlled by invisible rules in elaborate mating rituals, for example. (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1974)

One way to become conscious of the rules that control us is to break them. This can be done by generating alternatives in a deliberate way both in our teaching and in critiques. When we substitute one pattern of communication for another, the alternative often produces a consequence different from the usual. Each time this happens, we can assume we have discovered a rule we usually follow. Another reason for generating alternatives is to provide variety, either for its own sake or as a means of discovering consequences different from the usual ones and in some cases ones we will prefer. If we only try orange juice for breakfast every morning we can never learn about any other juice.

There are two types of alternatives. One can be generated on the basis of descriptions within classrooms. For example, if you notice that you always ask students to underline words they do not understand, one alternative is to do the opposite: ask them to cross out and obscure words they do not understand. If students always speak in class and never draw or write, then tasks that require the use of these visual mediums can be substituted for those which require only aural/oral mediums like speaking.

Another type of alternative can be generated in classrooms by observing communications in non-teaching settings and substituting some of them for those usually found only in teaching settings. For example, if you look at readers outside of teaching settings such as classrooms and libraries, in lounges, people's homes or on trains, for example, you no doubt notice that many of them read with a lot of noise around or music.

You might also see many of them reading with their feet up on tables or lounging in soft chairs rather than sitting upright in straight chairs or at desks. You might further see them eating or drinking as they read and looking up from their pages occasionally. Well, if for no other reason, the substitution of alternatives found outside of a language classroom inside a classroom might be worth trying because at least some of the students will want to use the target language outside of the classroom for some of their communications. And in some cases, as in the examples I just gave from silent reading, we might find that the alternatives provide consequences different from those normally experienced.

One problem with the alternatives just mentioned is that like any suggestions given, they begin to make up an extremely large list if they are noted in a sequential way and not tied to any framework. And the number can be so long that it is hard to see how anyone could remember them. This is why I said earlier that a conceptualization is needed that will allow alternatives as well as present practices to be seen in relation to each other.

Another problem with the alternatives just mentioned is that they might imply judgments just as the normal suggestions do. But if the purpose of using the alternatives is to describe communications in order to discover rules rather than to improve teaching, then these alternatives need not be considered judgments but simply means of discovering rules. As rules are discovered, often by breaking them, teachers may begin to see the consequences of different rules and may begin to use some alternatives more than others. But a central difference between the critiquing I am suggesting and most critiquing is that my goal is not in the first instance to improve but rather to help a teacher see what is happening so that he can have more control over what he does. The alternatives are aids to discover rules in the first instance, not ways to improve teaching.

Since the discovery of alternatives requires that a careful description of what actually occurred takes place, the emphasis on alternatives eliminates another problem I see in critiques: the lack of attention to what actually happened. Discussing the principal's choice of books and other variables the teacher has little control over is difficult when the aim of the critique is to substitute alternatives to replace communications that took place. Such communications can only be replaced when it is clear what they were. Critiques that have as their goal the generation of alternatives contain more descriptions of what actually took place and less discussion of other variables than the usual critiques because they require description.

Characteristics of Observation System

Introduction

So, now you have a bit of my background, and I have tried to sketch out briefly the premises on which my observation system is based and the uses I have always believed it is important to put it to. Now, I want to tell you some characteristics of my observations system. Along with this I will state a few ways I use the system in critiquing. It is important to keep in mind that I have developed this system so that it can be used to observe and describe communications both in teaching and nonteaching settings. It is also important to remember that it is to be used by teachers though it can also be useful for systematic and sustained research by others. Said another way, the instrument is designed to describe communications specifically in a general way that is useful for those without a great deal of time and at the same time is designed to be used by those who want to describe in specific terms very small details of communications and who have the time to do just this because they are paid to do it-- researchers, for example.

Source and Target of Communication

Since the instrument is designed to meet so many goals it is of course multi-dimensional. It contains categories for five separate characteristics of communications. The first characteristic, the obvious one that almost all systems describe, is the source of communication: who or what is communicating to whom? Often teacher and students are considered as sources of communications. But I have another category to account for books, noises and other sources of communications: Other. An alarm on a clock I'd code other, for example.

Because my system is designed for use both in and out of teaching settings, the word teacher does not refer only to a person who's paid to teach but to anyone who is in charge or who takes control. When I go to a hotel and I ask for directions from the clerk, he assumes the role of teacher. If I just talked to the clerk about the weather, then we are communicating as peers and I would code both of us student. So student means peer as well as a person in the role of a student.

Unit of Analysis

The second thing I code, really what I code along with the source and target of communication, is the purpose of the communication. I use Arno Bellack's purposes: structuring, soliciting, responding and reacting. (Bellack, 1966) These four move types determine the unit of analysis as well. Whenever the purpose of a communication changes, another unit starts. Structuring and soliciting, as the word suggest, are initiatory moves and responding and reacting are reflexive moves. Communications that set the stage for subsequent communications or review what has occurred but do not require any responses are coded structuring moves. The captain's announcements on a plane are one example and the introductory notes in a concert program or playbill are another.

Asking questions, giving commands or requesting either actions or any other types of responses constitute soliciting. They are different from structuring moves because solicits require responses. Providing answers to questions, complying with requests or commands are all considered responses. Any communications that do not fit in any of these three categories and are reflexive in nature are considered reacting moves.

If you code the source and target and move type of the communications in Excerpt 1 Green Cakes, the meaning of the move types and the great amount of information revealed by the coding of just these two characteristics of communications will become clearer. Compare your coding with mine, printed below the excerpt.

Excerpt 1 Green Cakes

Setting: The living room of an apartment. Two four-year-old boys are sitting on the floor next to a tea table on which they have just been playing a game. After the game the following exchange takes place.

1. Joseph: What do you do at Janie's party?
2. Rodney: (Tugging at the edge of his short pants as he speaks.) She had a big cake.
3. Joseph: What kind?
4. Rodney: (Spreading his arms widely.) A big one.)
5. Joseph: What kind of a big one?
6. Rodney: A real big one (Said emphatically)

7. Joseph: (A big perplexed.) What color were it? (Touching his lips with wandering fingertips.) What color were it?
8. Rodney: Green.
9. Joseph: (Waving his hand disdainfully.) Aw, you dumb. They ain't no green cakes.

Key:

t to s sol; 2. s to t res; 3. t to s sol; 4. s to t res; 5. t to s sol; 6. s to t res; 7. t to s sol; 8 .& 9. s1 to s1 and t rea.

Though this dialogue took place outside of a classroom, there are elements in it that are parallel to the usual pattern in some classrooms. One person is assuming the role of a teacher, asking questions and providing feedback. The other is being treated like a student. I label Joseph as the teacher because he initiates the conversation. But one could argue that it is a student to student exchange.

Just as any setting can become a teaching setting, as Excerpt 1 illustrates, so all settings in classrooms are not necessarily teaching settings as Excerpt 2 *Before class* illustrates.

Code the sources and targets of communications and move types in Excerpt 2 and compare your coding with mine, printed below the excerpt.

Excerpt 2 Before Class

Setting: Language classroom before the teacher arrives.

One student brought some nuts which he and another student are beginning to eat.

1. (Nuts are n a bag on a desk and students take the nuts.)
2. Carlos: These are great.
3. Yoko: Yeah. But are they oily.
4. Carlos: They're fattening too. I' am already overweight and real ly don't need them.
5. Yoko: I like these as wel as two legged nuts! I like them both.
6. Carlos: I like peanuts better than these.
7. Yoko: My father likes them better too. They go better with be

Key:

1. other and students str; 2. s 1 to s 2 rea; 3. s 2 to s 1 rea; 4. s 1 to s 2 rea; 5. s 2 to s 1 rea; 6. s1 to sz rea; 7. s 2 to s 1 rea.

Just looking at the source and target of communication and the move types can aid in discovering some rules and generating some alternative sequences of moves. For example, one obvious alternative that Excerpt 1 *Green Cakes* illustrates is students can serve in the role of teachers. At a very early age students solicit and react. But though they can communicate with these purposes, the target language obviously presents new challenges. Such teaching does force the use of a great many solicits and reactions. These two types of communications are rare for students in their roles as students because the most frequent moves of students is, of course, resoonding.

Excerpt 2 *Before class* suggests that if structuring by other -- in this case nuts -- a series of peer to is communicated peer reactions is likely to follow. After a concert -- another structuring move that would be coded other -- one often hears a series of reactions too. As more and more similar patterns or sequences are noted it is possible to make generalizations about the likelihood of certain sequences. These generalizations are descriptions of rules. (Fanselow 1978)

Mediums used

Though the move is the basic unit of analysis I use, it is not the only unit I describe. Another unit I use is a message. A move can have from one to any number of messages. The number of messages in a move is determined by the three other characteristics of communications I note: the mediums used to communicate, the way the mediums are used and the content the mediums communicate. Each medium used in more than one way or that communicates more than one area of content signals a separate message.

It might seem strange to describe the mediums in an observation system designed in the first instance for language classes. And realize that the term medium itself is a bit strange as well. But in fact mediums other than language are very central to communication even in language class. Remember, the nuts in Excerpt 2 set the stage for the students' comments. And without the green cake in Excerpt 1, Rodney would not have had anything to talk about.

I place mediums in one if three major categories. One is linguistic -- the print in front of you, words you hear others say. Another is non-linguistic, like a picture or a nut or noise or music. Gestures and tone of voice constitute the third one, which I call para-linguistic. Another medium I note is the absence of the others or simply time; I call this category silence. The categories of mediums, together with the source and target of communication and move types are shown in Table 1 in the form of a substitution table so that you can begin to see the framework within which I describe the communications I observe and ask others to observe.

Table 1

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIONS IN SETTINGS				
1. Who communicates?	2. What is the pedagogical purpose of the communication?*	3. What mediums are used to communicate content?	4. How are the mediums used to communicate areas of content? **	5. What areas of content are communicated? **
	to structure		1 attend	
teacher		linguistic		language
	to solicit		2 characterize	
individual student		non-linguistic		life
group of students			3 present	
	to respond		4 relate	procedure
whole class		para-linguistic		
		silence	5 re-present	subject matter
	to react		set	

* These four pedagogical purposes are from Bellack.
 ** The uses and areas of content are presented alphabetically rather than in any hierarchical order.

**See Appendices 1 to 4 for subcategories of the 5 characteristics of communication.*

Now it is conceivable, you see, that in teacher preparation, just at a very global level, the teacher can, by focusing on the mediums used in student responses, see that, say,

speech is the only medium being used. Because the coding instrument shows both what the mediums are that are used in a particular series of communications as well as those that are not used, alternatives are built into the system.

If I find a teacher consistently reacts by saying, for example, "very good", I simply point to linguistic in Column 3 and say, "You have been reacting with this type of medium each day. Tomorrow, communicate your reactions with a paralinguistic medium instead." As the two mediums are contrasted, the teacher can both begin to deliberately alter them in class and begin to see what consequences seem to follow each alternative. Over time, the teacher can substitute non-linguistic mediums such as say pointing to a green sheet of paper after correct responses and a red sheet of paper after incorrect responses. Finally, the teacher can react by doing nothing, which would be coded silence. As the major categories of mediums are distinguished, the sub-categories of course can be used. As the note on Table 1 indicates, the sub-categories of the mediums, with examples, are shown in Appendix 1.

Perhaps at this point, you are bothered by the absence of any judgments in the suggestions that alternatives be used. Well, as I said before, I think the most central step in changing teaching is for those involved to see what occurs. Noting the mediums in general terms at first and then in detail does in fact over time provide teachers with a means to see the relative values of different mediums for different needs. But before the relative values of different mediums can be seen, they all have to be used. And they have to be used in a great range of ways. Ultimately, the teaching act is performed in a series of split second decisions. Most of these are normally quite unconscious. By deliberate manipulation of the mediums, and other characteristics of communications as well, it is possible to gain more and more conscious control over many of our split second decisions during the act of teaching because deliberate use of alternatives prevents us from acting in our normal ways and thus allows us to first see and later break out of some of the invisible rules that control much of what we do.

Uses of mediums

The next thing I look at is how the mediums are used, the fourth characteristic. I ask the question, "How are the mediums used?" The first major distinction between different uses of mediums I make easily by simply noting whether the mediums are taken in or produced. In silent reading, tasting, touching, smelling and looking at pictures mediums are simply attended to, not produced. When we engage in these receptive activities I say we are a-ing it. By classifying the taking in of all mediums in the same category, I hope to highlight the fact that some of the predictions we need to make when a-ing a linguistic medium such as print might be similar in some ways to the predictions we make when we look at pictures, listen to music or read the expressions on people's faces. Obviously, seeing the word smoke, looking at smoke and smelling smoke require some different mental processes. We can recognize smoke, yet not be able to read the word in a language we do not know, for example. But equally obvious is the fact that each activity requires taking something in. What makes the difference is which medium we in fact take in. By classifying the taking in of all mediums in the same category, I want to highlight the similarities and differences between different types of a-ing and at the same time further highlight the fact that the mediums in Column 3 can combine with any of the uses in Column 4 just

as the words in each column in a substitution table can combine with words in adjacent columns.

For the productive activities, I make use of Searle, though when I originally developed the categories I had not yet read him. (Searle 1969) While reading *Speech Acts* I was excited to find that his categorization of different kinds of talk loosely matched my categories. First, Searles says you can talk. For instance, saying " This is a piece of chalk" is one example of talking. I call this *p-ing* it. Then, you can characterize talk; you can say, " Chalk is a noun" for example, or " *Is* is a copulative verb." I call this *c-ing* it. Then, you can also explain talk; that is, make a generalization or a rule about talk. You can say, for example, " all copulative verbs have certain characteristics and one of them is that they have more than two forms." That's a generalization about copulative verbs or another kind of rule. I call this *r-ing* it. *R-ing* it essentially requires a combination of a lot of *c-ing* and a lot of *p-ing* it. One looks at many characteristics of things and many things and then one is ready to make a generalization about the examples and their characteristics.

The other way we produce, both in language classes, shop classes and subject matter classes, as well as outside of classes, is by *re-ing* it. Searle does not speak of this use of mediums.

One example of *re-ing* it is copying. Another one is repeating what another has said or done, or imitating what another has done. You can re it in speech, with gestures or actions or any other medium. To cite one example of the results of lack of attention to re-ing it with gestures I will share my experience with Americans who learn Japanese. I can often tell whether a person's teacher was a man or a woman by the way the person bows. Japanese woman bow with their hands crossed in front of them while men bow with their hands at their sides. Many non-Japanese imitate not only their teachers' speech but also their gestures, even though the teacher may not ask them to imitate their gestures. When I see American men bow like Japanese women usually find after talking with them that indeed they did have female teachers.

One can even re silence. In fact, one alternative to telling a class in a loud voice to be quiet is to stand totally still, say nothing and just wait. Some students imitate the silence in much the same way that visitors to hospitals and sick people imitate the silence they meet in these settings. Again, by simply looking at what is done, coding the communications and then substituting a different medium, use or source or purpose, one is provided with an alternative. And, with the same categories, one can describe communications outside a classroom or teaching setting that on the surface may seem quite different but with the categories becomes simply a rearrangement of the same basic elements.

As you can see in Table 1 FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIONS USED IN SETTINGS, the categories are arranged in alphabetical order; they are not listed hierarchically. You can also see, I have used words to stand for the abbreviations I just introduced: *a-ing* equals *attend*, *c-ing* equals *characterizing*, *p-ing* equals *presenting*, *r-ing* equals *relating* and *re-ing* equals *re-presenting*.

Looking at the mediums in Column 3 and the uses in Column 4 in different moves can not only point out characteristics of communications we often fail to notice, but

also can show relationships between communications that on the surface seem to have nothing to do with each other. In classrooms, one reaction to a student response is to repeat what the student says with rising intonation. For example, if a student says, "I am go home." a teacher is likely to say, "I am go home?" with rising intonation. The words--a linguistic medium--are used to one message. But the intonation--a *paralinguistic medium*--is used to a separate message. When I order ice-cream, the person behind the counter often repeats my order with rising intonation much as a teacher repeats a student response, both when it is correct and incorrect.

The exchange might go like this:

Customer: Two cones.

Clerk: Two cones?

Customer: Hum. One vanilla, one chocolate.

Clerk: One vanilla, two chocolate?

When the wrong number of cones or the wrong flavors are handed over, the customer sees what he was asked about earlier. Often, no difference is heard between the words used in the order and in the repetition of the order. But when the cones come -in my system a non-linguistic medium -- then the difference is discovered. Well, might it be that it is more likely in general that differences between messages are more likely noticed when visual mediums are used rather than simply spoken words or rising intonation? Might written words on the blackboard make it more likely that a difference will be noticed in a classroom just as ice cream cones are more likely to be noticed outside of a class than simply words appealing only to the ears? Do appeals to more than one sense or a different sense have a different impact?

Let me take another common communication that can be described using the mediums and uses in combination in a way that is likely to make teachers see more clearly what they are doing. When saying a pair of words, phrases or any units, one normal pattern is to use rising intonation after the first sample and falling after the second. For example, it is likely that most people say "Are these the same or different -- beach (rising intonation) beach (falling intonation)? " Well, to the student who listens well, they are different in intonation and the same in pronunciation and spelling. I would code the communications this way:

t to s: *la* & *pa*

s to t: *la*

The words said are *la*. The *pa* equals *para-linguistic aural*, the rising and falling intonation, which in this case communicates a separate message.

Realizing that we use many mediums as well as words to communicate is a truism. The mediums and uses can be used to translate this truism into precise descriptive language. To say two words or phrases with falling intonation takes deliberate effort since it is necessary to break the normal rule we follow in presenting contrasting pairs

of anything. Specific attention to the mediums and uses can both help reveal rules we follow and can also be used to provide alternatives to anyone interested in substituting different mediums and using them in different ways.

The mediums and uses can be used to vary the messages in any type of move and communicated by any source. If students are consistently responding only with speech and if they are using speech only to present content, one alternative is to have them characterize in their responses. Rather than giving answers to questions such as "Use plumber in a sentence" they can be asked a series of questions that require nothing but a yes or no about a vocabulary item being taught. For example, the teacher, or another student, can state a fact such as " these people work with water." The students are required to respond with either a yes or a no. Such a response requires no knowledge of grammar because one does not have to form a sentence. Responses such as "he work the water" are thus avoided as are tangents in which such errors of grammar are treated to such a degree that the lexical information about the word in question is forgotten.

If a series of questions are asked-- "these people use planes, these people repair sinks, these people repair phones" --students can begin to see characteristics of plumbers and at the same time receive practice in making judgments about information, an activity that many believe is crucial in understanding anything.

But aside from the argument that such a series of tasks may aid people to make predictions, the more important point is simply that if ninety percent of student responses require the use present, one obvious alternative is to require more responses that require the use. characterize. In the same way, if all responses require only speech -- a linguistic aural medium, one obvious alternative is print -- a linguistic visual medium. Another is non-linguistic visual: pictures, objects or graphs. Obviously, asking a student to draw a plumber or act the way a plumber would with a broken pipe are not original suggestions. What is slightly original is to show how these different tasks can on one level be considered simply different combinations of four mediums and five uses.

Content communicated

The last characteristic I code is the content communicated by the mediums used in different ways. To keep matters simple, I use only three major categories of content: life, procedure and study. Formulas of greeting and other types of ritual language, personal feelings or information and general knowledge I classify life. Any matters of administration, law, bureaucracy and directions I classify procedure. Communicating a topic of instruction, whether language, other academic subjects, hobbies or skills I classify study. Life and study can be likened to Dewey's experience and education or Barnes' world knowledge and school knowledge. (Dewey 1938; Barnes 1976)

Dickens' description of a class in Gradgrind's school in *Hard Times* illustrates both the separate categories and the tension between them in any teaching setting. Try coding the content of the messages in the moves in Excerpt 3 Facts. Use z for life, p for procedure and s for study. Compare your coding with mine, printed below the excerpt.

Excerpt 3 Facts

Setting: A large, stone-walled classroom with desks in rows and a very high ceiling. Mr. Gradgrind, the master teacher, is present along with another teacher. Sissy Jupe, the student being asked about horses, has been described earlier. She lives in a room with wallpaper decorated with horses. Her father raises horses, or trains them at least, and so she rides them frequently, feeds them and cleans up after them. She has had extensive experience with horses!

Content

1. Now, what I want is, facts. Facts alone are t to students str wanted in lif e.

2. Girl number twenty --who is that girl? t to students sol

3. Sissy Jupe, sir. s to teacher res

4. Sissy is not a name. t to student rea

5. It's father as calls me Sissy, sir. s to teacher rea

6. Then he has no business to do it. t to student rea

7. What is your father? t to student sol

8. He belongs to the horse riding, if you please sir. s to teacher res

9. We don't want to know anything about that here. t to student rea

10. Give me your definition of a horse. t to student sol

11. (Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.) s to teacher rea

12. Girl number twenty unable to define a horse.

Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in t to student rea reference to one of the commonest of animals!

13. Some boy's definition of a horse? t to students sol

14. Quadraped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth. s to teacher res

15. Now, girl number twenty, you know what a horse t to student rea is.

Key:

1. procedure; 2. procedure; 3. Procedure; 4. study; 5.life;
6. procedure; 7. life; 8. life; 9. procedure; 10. study;
11. life; 12. procedure; 13. study; 14. study; 15. procedure.

To describe communications at a larger level, a zero column can be added to the left of Column 1 in Table 1 on page 8 and Table 2 in the Appendix. This could be used, say, to code the functions or sequences of moves. We might say the first group of six moves is depersonalized, for example. And the set of the next twenty moves is simply to give information. The next fifteen moves might have the function of establishing control over the class. So we are not limited to the five columns.

We can add features of communications to further distinguish items that are obviously different but coded the same way. The features can be added to a sixth column, to the right of Column 5 in Table 1 on page 8 and Table 2 in the Appendix. In addition to showing that some messages are in the target language and some in the native language, communications that are incorrect can be noted. Those that seem to be jokes can too, as can other features that distinguish messages that are obviously different from each other.

Further considerations

There are times, either when doing research or when critiquing lessons as part of a program of teacher preparation, when two communications are obviously different in some way, yet the major categories in Table 4 do not reveal any differences and the differences are beyond those obvious ones such as target language or native language and other differences noted as features of the communications. In these cases, the subcategories in Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4 can be used. When the subcategories are used, of course, people begin to say the system is complex. But the major method that I use in developing the subcategories is simply to say " Are these two communications the same or different in a particular way?" If you forget the subcategories, and even if you forget the major categories, I think the critical thing that my observation scheme reminds us of is simply that in all of our work the task is simply to classify communications that seem to be the same or different from each other in some way.

The advantage from my point of view to a multidimensional coding system such as mine, rather than a uni-dimensional one such as Flanders' system is that you can generate so many more differences. You see, even with just the major categories, if you just multiply 3 sources -- teacher, student and other, or material times 4 move type you get 12 possible combinations. And then 12 possible combinations times the 4 major categories of mediums is 48.

Then, 48 times 5 uses in Column 4 provides a great number of differences that you can show very easily with just the major categories.

Some applications

Tallying

With Table 1, we can describe from one to five characteristics of any communication. Without a tape or transcript, it is not possible to describe all five characteristics. But it is possible to code one or two characteristics live. For example, if you want to see what content students are communicating in responses and reactions, you simply need to make two columns, one headed response and the other reaction. Under each, write an l for life, a p for procedure and an s for study each time a student responds or reacts. Tallying these three characteristics live provides a quick index of what areas of content are most frequent in reflexive student communications. Are the frequencies similar across all levels taught by the same teacher? Do reading classes contain more life? Are the proportions different according to the level of the classes? What differences are there between classes set up with different aims that use different books and syllabuses? These are just a few of the questions that a tally of content could help answer.

Of course, a tally is just the first step. And again, a high frequency in one category is not better than a high frequency in another. For example, if you bring drinks to a classroom with older people, they'll most likely communicate life a great deal, especially if the teacher sits in the back of the class. As you code, you will begin to see that some communications are hard to fit in either category because they contain attributes of more than one category. You will begin to see that areas of content are sometimes integrated, and then see the types of activities that produced the communications of this type. Activities that produced responses and reactions that at the time communicated genuine information and contained patterns of language that were being introduced can be noted.

Thus, tallying categories can lead to the generation of alternatives in still another way-- through the substitution of activities that consistently produce communications that contain either different proportions of say areas of content or contain the integration of two areas of content.

Manipulating messages

While tallying is possible for noting some characteristics of communication, transcribing communications or re-listening to them on tapes may be necessary for noting all five characteristics. Once communications are transcribed and coded the categories can be used to manipulate the original communication just as words in substitution tables can be used to manipulate a basic sentence. Let's say that you were interested in structuring moves, for example. One pattern you might find is this: teacher structures with a linguistic aural medium used to present procedure. An example of this could be " Today, we're going to have a test." Now, by definition, one aspect of structuring is to give directions since structuring moves prepare for subsequent behavior. Knowing this, it is hard to imagine that, say life, or study could be substituted for procedure. But another alternative to substitution is addition. Stating what the test was to be about would add study as in " Today, we're going to have a test on films." One way to add life as well would be to add still another statement: " Today, we're going to have a test on films -- I know how much you hate tests and like films; I prefer films to tests too."

If the structuring moves that were transcribed already contained a great number of messages, similar to the one I just presented with all three categories of content in it,

then, the obvious alternative would be to subtract messages rather than to add them. But whether you add, subtract, substitute or integrate and combine categories, the major purpose in the first instance is simply to describe what is. Unless we do that, we do not know if we are changing.

Observing outside the classroom

If coding the five characteristics of communications in teaching settings does not suggest variations, or if one grows tired of tallying and manipulating communications only in teaching settings, another tack is to collect and code communications -- structuring moves for example -- in non-teaching settings. Masters of ceremonies on game shows on television, at concerts and at many other public performances structure. Noting the characteristics of these moves will suggest alternatives for teaching settings.

And at the same time, clearer, more precise differences and similarities between teaching and non-teaching settings will emerge. The usual practice of describing communications only in classrooms, I think, ignores the usefulness of contrast in all learning.

Conclusion

I'd like to conclude with an example of the application of my system that shows how the system can aid in revealing relationships between communications in different settings that a surface description may not reveal. The example is from the area of feedback. If you were to drop me in a parachute almost anyplace in the world, and I observed someone trying to open a door in an unfamiliar place and the person pulled a door that needed to be pushed, nine times out of ten another person would either say "push" or would push the door for the stranger. What happens in the classroom? I think we follow a similar rule.

When a student makes a mistake, what do we tend to do, nine times out of ten? Well, usually, we give the answer. We sometimes indicate "no" which is less necessary in the case of an unopening door. The lack of movement is a kind of "no". So, in my system, both inside and outside of the classroom *present* communicated by the teacher is very likely after an error.

To tell teachers in a critique to do something else when in fact the treatment of some errors in a particular way seems to be a rule that most of us seem to follow both inside and outside classrooms is unlikely to have any long lasting effect. This rule, like many we all follow, is probably very deeply ingrained.

Even some who think they have a different philosophy and believe that giving an answer is not good, often do, because feedback, like most of teaching, is not always conscious and deliberate. By coding communications and deliberately substituting alternatives we are more likely to become conscious of what we do and so better able to alter and control what we do.

One might ask "Why is the extra step needed to translate comments into this language?" Or, one might ask "Why not just look at communications precisely?"

"Why ask teachers to use the terms in Table 1 rather than their own terms?" Well, the terms in the table provide a conceptualization which can help reveal relationships that may otherwise remain obscure. And in placing communications in categories, one becomes so involved in the process of classifying that it becomes difficult to make judgments at the same time. Furthermore, if suggestions are not placed in a framework they are likely to be forgotten. But most critical is my belief that deliberate control and added variety, and thus real change can come only when teachers themselves describe their own and other's communications in a range of settings precisely and non-judgmentally and substitute alternative communications that at once break the rules we are controlled by and reveal the rules that control us.

Said another way, what I am advocating is simply a process similar to one that has made responses possible to the question in the title, "What kind of a flower is that? " As a botanist uses a framework to classify flowers, so I am advocating a framework to classify communications. In classifying flowers, precise, non-judgmental descriptions of multiple characteristics are required just as I think such descriptions are useful in critiquing. Botanical taxonomies put flowers that on the surface seem different together-- strawberries and roses in the same family, for example. And my framework does the same thing with communications. Finally, new varieties of flowers come about by understanding the characteristics of the flowers and the rules they follow in their life cycles. Control of flowers--keeping weeds under control or making sure some flowers produce desired crops are discovered are possible only after the rules they follow are discovered.

The disadvantage of the question "What kind of a flower is that? " is that it implies that the main aim is to come up with a name or label. Because of the emphasis on the categories or labels both in much classroom observation work and in botany, the ability to learn names and labels and apply them is all too often considered the central aim. But both in critiques and in botanical work the central aim is the process of classification and the use we put the results of our classification to.

The process of discovery, not the discovery itself, is the central aim. Paradoxically, the learning of the terms has to be emphasized in order for the relationships they show, the rules they imply and the alternatives they suggest, to be revealed. But when the importance of the process rather than the mastery of the labels and names is not emphasized, too many get bogged down in naming, even for its own sake. Should you be interested in more information and exercises on some of the topics I have just briefly described in this presentation, I have provided an annotated list of materials available for more work with the observation system in the bibliography. Working through some of these materials will make the terms second nature to you so that you will not only be able to "name flowers" but also free and able to relish the process of seeing them differently, developing new varieties and generating different arrangements of those with which you are already familiar.

One thing we could all do to make it easier for us all to understand each others' systems better would be to establish a clearing house through which we could exchange tapes, transcripts and coded protocols we have each collected and developed. We each spend a lot of time collecting and transcribing more and more tapes of classes and other examples of communications in other settings. If we all used each others' we could save time transcribing, obtain wider samples and compare

descriptions of the same data based on the use of different instruments. Perhaps the British Council or the Goethe Institute could serve as such a clearing house, or else the institution of one of the participants in this meeting. I would be willing to explore the possibility of developing such a clearing house at my own institution if others would consider it convenient and useful and neither of the sponsoring institutions of this meeting were able to develop a clearing house.

Table 2 Subcategories of FOCUS: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION USED IN SETTINGS

FOCUS: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION (Major Categories with Subcategories)						
Source/Target	Move Type	Medium	Use	Content		
			attend	a	life	f
			listen	al	formula	ff
			read silently	ar	general knowledge	fg
			smell	as	personal	fp
			taste	at	procedure	p
			touch	ah	administration	pa
			view	av	check	pc
teacher	t		view	av	classroom behavior	pi pi
			characterize	c	difficulty factor	pd
			differentiate	cd	name	pn
			evaluate	co	roles	po
		linguistic			size	ps
individual student	s _i s _i	aural	examine	cx	teaching direction	
			illustrate	ci	use	pu
	structuring	visual	label	cl	teaching rationale	pr
		other	present	p	time/space	pe
group of students	g _i g _i		elicit	pe	transition	pt
	soliciting	nontinguistic	query	pq	work	pw
			question	p?	other	pp
		aural			study	s
entire class	c	visual	state	ps	language	l
	responding	nv	relate	r	context	lc
		other	explain	re	dialects	ld
	reacting	paralinguistic	infer	ri	discourse	lo
		p	reproduce	d	format	la
other	o	aural	change	pa	functions	lf
	bearing	pv	medium	dc	genres	lj
		visual	same	ds	grammar—form	lx
text	x	other	medium	ds	grammar—meaning	lz
		po	set	s		
		silence	example	se	lexis	ll ln
					mechanics	lm
test	e		less than 1	sl	punctuation	lq
			one word	so	register	lr
			part	sp	rhetoric	le
			sentence	ss	sound	ls
			sentence	ss	speech production	lh
			extended	st	style usage	lk
			discourse	st	ties	lt lv
			text	sx	ways of life	lw
					unspecified language	lu
			unknown	su	other areas	o
					unspecified content	u
					use	u
						e
						p
						r
						d
						s

Appendix 1 Subcategories of source and target

teacher

student

group of students

entire class

other

--person in charge of a class

--person who assumes the role of teacher by taking over

--an informant used by a teacher to aid instruction

--a visitor used by the teacher to aid instruction

--paid aide in a class

--individual student clearly identified because of being in a class

--person in any setting who is trying to learn something or do something and is being helped by another who is not a peer

--any person treating another as a peer in any way

--a part of any class, either formed by common interests or assigned to act in a group by the person in charge

--the number of players on the field that are only part of a larger team

--a part of a band or any other organization that at times acts independently of the entire organization

--all the individuals acting or being treated as part of one organization

--texts

--roads, sidewalks and other structures that provide frameworks for us to communicate -j n

--tools, typewriters, and other objects we use that communicate any kind of content with one of the four purposes

--a fire alarm, blinking lights or any other signals that structure, solicit, respond or react and communicate content

--pictures, printed messages such as EXIT that communicate content and perform one of the four purposes

Note: the teacher, student or groups or classes can be male, female or mixed; the communications can be transmitted by the sources not only in many mediums but electronically, through an amplification system or just with natural means; alternative means for delivering the moves can be noted if you have an interest in comparing consequences and seeing whether rules change when such features of the sources change.

Appendix 2 Subcategories of Mediums

Linguistic Aural

Elements of words: letters, phonemes, syllables

Individual words: names of objects, commands, comments, examples; vocalizations: OK, hum, uh, and other pauses, markers and fillers

Words in groups: phrases, sentences, paragraphs, dialogs

Linguistic Visual

Printing or lettering of aural mediums above, plus punctuation

Transcribing (phonetically) of aural mediums above

Writing of aural mediums above, plus punctuation

Ideograms; characters

Linguistic Other

mediums that appeal to other senses; drawing a letter on a hand with a finger, letters made of sandpaper to feel

symbolic systems: Braille, signing, Morse code; noise from animals: barking, meowing, roaring, squeaking

Non linguistic Aural

noise from things: clapping, footsteps, ringing bell, rustling leaves, screeching wheels, ticker tape noise from people: belch, cough, humming, whistling, to demonstrate sounds organized "noise": chanting, music

Non linguistic Visual

Real: clothing, darkness, food, furniture, light, live things, objects, people, rods, rooms, speech organs, things with moving parts or electric power

Representational: cartoons, pictures, silent movies, sketches, snapshots, television without the sound; Schematic: blank spaces, diagrams, erasing, globe, layout; map, underscoring~ intonation contours

Non linguistic Other

Symbolic: color on gas cylinders, cracked glass to show broken; shape of a stop sign, symbols such as a \$ or π ; logos from corporations; smells, temperature & other items that appeal beyond the ear and eye

Para Linguistic Aural

laughing, tone of voice, volume of voice, whimpering
Supra-segmentals: emphasis on a word; rising intonation in a statement

Para Linguistic Visual

Facial expressions, gazing, gestures, movement of the body, posture, skin color, tilt of the head

Para Linguistic Other

Doing things with objects, space--distance from others, touching people

Silence

Implicit communications--students know they are to repeat when a model is given

Start-stopping in mid-sentence expecting another sentence to finish

Wait time--doing nothing but waiting before or after others have communicated

It is in our head--that we bring to the other mediums from experience (size, electronic, mechanical, distorted, natural, authentic, etc.)

Appendix 3 Subcategories of Use

Attend

taking in communications made in any medium

--listening

--silent reading

--smelling

--tasting

--touching

--viewing

Characterize

communicating about content or things to distinguish them or set criteria or limit choices

--differentiate: indicating that communications are the same or different

--evaluate: prescribing or indicating that communications are true or false, correct or incorrect; responding to yes/no or either/or questions

--examine: counting or locating parts of words; emphasizing; diagramming sentences

--illustrate: giving attributes of items; making judgments that are not explicitly good or bad

--label: naming parts of speech or assigning category names to any groups

Present

communicating content itself directly

-present elicit: communicating questions, commands or requests one knows the answer to

--present query— asking questions to explore

--present uestion--open ended question or ones that do not fit the other subcategories

--state: communicating declarative sentences, responding to questions with words or phrases or giving answers in any way that does not fit in the other categories

--

Re present—same medium

communicating what another has in the same medium, with or without thout changes

-expanding: adding words, phrases or other units to phrases or sentences provided by another

--imitating: copying, repeating or in any way re-presenting what another has presented with no changes

--paraphrasing: restating or rewriting what another has communicated in one 1 s own words but keeping the meaning as close to the original as possible

--substituting with .or without change: changing words, letters or any other units whether the change requires altering the original pattern or not

--transforming: changing the order of letters, words or larger units

Re present—change medium

change medium

--:reading orally,

--doing dictations

-- naming objects

--drawing words or sentences that are said or in print

--making noises to show meanings of words or larger units that are said or read

--gesturing to show meanings of words heard or seen

or in any other way changing one medium into another

Relate

communicating in such way that higher level mental processes are required

--explain: giving long definitions of words or concepts, making generalizations or developing and stating rules

--interpret: making inferences, synthesizing

--editing: making technical changes in material

Set

What is referred to

--an example

--a reading passage

--a picture

-a recording

--food or drink

Appendix 4 Subcategories of Content

Life

--life public

politics

music

news, etc.

--life personal

background

education

likes and dislikes, etc.

--life formulas

Good morning.

So long.

Hello.

Please.

I'm sick. I'm a dentist and have two sisters. I hate rice. (factual or fictional--feelings or information--about work or life) Truman took long walks. Huck Finn was really clever. Rent control is bad. (factual or fictional--issues or information)

Procedure

--administration assign roles check class behavior:

social difficulty factor nurturing salute teaching direction teaching rationale
time/space me.

transition

Answer the roll. We're going to have a test. Rules for games. Pretend you are angry.
You are the customer and you the clerk.

Do you understand? I don't follow. It's not clear. Rising intonation.

Say it louder. I can't see the board.

You are making too much noise. Don't throw paper on the floor! This is easy. The
next exercises are really difficult.

You can do it. You're coming along fine.

Ali ... Maria ... (Calling the names of students or groups.)

Repeat. Take this dictation. Tell me what this is. Define it.

We are doing this exercise because it will lead to clarification. (Waiting for an
answer, a train or a question.) Finish quickly. Come here & other comments about
measures of space or time.

OK, Now ... umm ...

Language

--cultural

--functional

--grammatical

--lexical

-Function words, inflections, reduced forms, sentence types, word order, morpho-phonemic signals, tense, etc.

--literary

--mechanical

--rhetorical

--Figurative, grammatical, historical, humorous, idiomatic, ironic, etc.

--segmental sound/letter correspondence

--Consonants, consonant clusters, syllabification, vowels, etc.

Study other

--School subjects other than language such as biology, history, etc.

--Special areas such as art, crafts, hobbies, music, sports, etc.

--Teaching -Studying actual transcripts or tapes of teaching

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Contains the rationale for an observation system and provides definitions and examples of the categories.

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Contains a description of behaviors that certain learning principles and personal assumptions imply, described in everyday language but developed using the framework of the observation system described in the presentation you just read.

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Shows how the observation system can be used to describe feedback and generate alternative ways of providing feedback. Describes and codes examples of feedback in teaching and non-teaching settings.

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