Classroom talk-- the styles of communication and language and socio-linguistic codes used by teachers and taught. The "underlying semantic of communication" and types of communicative competence required for the satisfactory performance of what Bernstein (1977) described as restricted and elaborated language codes in oral and written pedagogic traditions. Restricted codes are used when there is a shared understanding of the topic and tight specificity of description; elaborated codes such as that used by teachers, involve abstract descriptions that are generalisable and understandable by those not in the community.

Subject talk-- making explicit the recognition and realization rules of specialized competence in particular subjects say for example, science lesson. Students have to learn how to talk science talk and to generate texts that are considered appropriate for science as a discipline. Students need to understand and experience what is required by problem-solving activities in, for example, science lessons. Social class and "race/ethnicity" with gender as a mediating variable however have been found to be important discriminatory factors in the learning of such competences.

Identity talk-- social bonding, humour, casual friendship talk and what Bernstein (2000) described as the "sub voices" of social categories. This type of talk is usually gathered through deep ethnographic work or research on youth cultures. Identity talk is normally created outside the school which is drawn into, recontextualised and expressed in complex ways inside the school. Students use identity talk to cope with their position in the performance and age hierarchies of the school and to explain their relationship to the pedagogy (success or disaffection). Student identity talk can compensate for the isolation and difference created by schools and confrontational or unsupportive teacher-student relations (Arnot & Reay, 2004, 2006b).

Code talk-- students' representations of the rules which govern educational codes and their impact. This talk involves, for example, asking students to describe their identities as learners, the processes of inclusion in the classroom, and the degree of control they have had over the selection, sequencing, pacing and the evaluation of knowledge. Code talk involves talking about the rules of power and control that underly any pedagogy.

Researchers who interview youth tend to tap identity talk believing them to be pedagogic identities. But if the youth they interview are students in school and the interviews are conducted within this environment, it is likely that the voices they tap reflect the negotiated interface between social identities drawn from family life and from local communities and student's pedagogic identities which have been constructed by the school and the rules which govern its form of knowledge transmission.

A different and arguably a better way to get at the impact of social inequality/equality on learning and vice versa, the impact of learning systems on social inequality is to explore not identity talk but **code talk**. Here the aim is to encourage young people to talk about their understanding of the ways in which power and control shape their learning and learning experiences. Given the keen interest in the UK and Australia at the moment in using student consultation to promote more equitable, participatory and arguably emancipatory social relations, a focus on code talk could usefully use student consultation to explore whether such emancipatory social relations are being achieved. The process of consultation, on the one hand, would need to be democratic (i.e. inclusive) but the topic of consultation also needs to tap the extent to which schooling is democratic. The

challenge for researchers is to design a form and focus of student consultation which could be used by teachers to assess not school improvement within a neo-liberal framework focused on competitive individualism and performativity but which assessed the democratic effectiveness of school pedagogies. If student consultation could be used in this way, if we could design the questions and the mechanisms of such consultation, the new consultative model for employing student voice might provide information with which to improve learning. In this case, voice would be allied not with choice but with the exposure of unequal relations of power, and perhaps with the means with which to democratize those relations.

Researching Code Talk: Pedagogic Democratic Rights

In planning the project, we thought critically about what sort of questions we could ask that would elicit young people's understanding of the rules which govern the pedagogy which they were experiencing. We were particularly attracted to Bernstein's concept of pedagogic democratic rights since, although underdeveloped in his work, the notion of such rights could give us a way of critically evaluating not just the rules of the pedagogy in relation to the selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of knowledge, but also the extent to which the pedagogy experienced by students was indeed democratic. A central condition for an effective democratic education system (and one could argue any other public service), Bernstein argued, must be that people have a stake in society, in the sense of both giving and receiving (Bernstein, 1996). They must have "confidence that the political arrangements they create will realize this stake". The questions this raises are, for example: what sort of organisation of

learning would give all students access to the rules underlying the educational code-- in other words the rules which frame the selection, organization, teaching and evaluation of educational knowledge (Bernstein, 1977)? Without access to those rules whether they are about the importance of educational knowledge, the nature of the learning process or the system of evaluation, students particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds would have difficulty appropriating the educational system and educational qualifications. However, not only should all students be able to recognize such rules, they must be able to create a text (a sentence, an essay, a report, an activity) which "realizes" these rules. Recognition of the pedagogic rules is not sufficient for social inclusion-- whatever their background, students should have the capability to deliver an appropriate type of "text" if they are to succeed in that particular type of educational system.

Bernstein (2000) helpfully distinguished between three pedagogic democratic rights which he associated with effective democratic schooling. These were briefly:

Enhancement: This offers critical understanding and sense of possibility (conventionally associated with critical pedagogies). Bernstein argued that where this right is not met, students may not develop the individual confidence to act.

Inclusion: This involves the right for all to be included: whether socially, intellectually, culturally or personally, in all pedagogic activities. Inclusion involves recognition of the right to be similar and different (to be valued as part of a culture) and, significantly, the right to be unique.

Participation: This right operates more at the political level and represents the right of all students to participate in the construction, maintenance and transformation

of order. For example, students would need to be party to decisions about the ways in which learning and teaching is organised, how students are grouped, and the principles which govern the expressive and moral order of the school.

He summarized the differences between the three pedagogic democratic rights thus:

Pedagogic Democratic Rights		
Rights	*Conditions*	*Levels*
Enhancement	Confidence	Individual
Inclusion	Communitas	Social
Participation	Civic Discourse	Political

Source: Bernstein(2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research and critique* (p. xxi). Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Using these three pedagogic democratic rights, we were able to think about the sorts of questions we asked young people in our project. In the context of personalized learning systems, of a National Curriculum, and of the need to improve teacher-student communication, we wanted the questions we asked of young people to be challenging rather than platitudinous. All too often young people are consulted on what the peripheral issues in a school (changing the colour of their school uniforms, choice of food in the school canteen).

Each of the three themes of enhancement, inclusion and participation were therefore converted into two or three over-riding research questions for the interview and observation schedules. The questions we asked of students are listed below:

Enhancement-- pedagogic identities

- what constitutes a good learner?
- what are the criteria for success as a learner?
- how do students recognise themselves as learners?
- Could students improve their learning? If so how?

Inclusive learning

- What are the (spatial/social) conditions for getting teachers’ attention?
- Is there social equality in terms of student participation in the classroom?
- Do teachers treat all students equally?
- Are there any particular groups of students that are marginalized or feel they don’t fit?

Participation in learning

- Who controls what is taught in schools?
- Who controls how you learn?
- How much can students control teaching (pacing, sequencing, evaluationcriteria)?
- Do you feel in control of your learning? Who is in control?
- Is anyone more likely to have control of their learning?
- Who offers the most important evaluation of your work?
- Can you communicate with the teacher about your learning?

Research Design

We designed a study which would collect students’ code talk in two secondary and two primary schools. We used the questions listed above in three different

qualitative methods (focus group, individual interviewing and an action research project). Below we focus only on the secondary school data and only in relation to the action research phase. The design involved selecting a whole class of 14 year olds and asking them to participate (with their teachers) in a qualitative study that included focus groups discussions, observations of individual pupils in Maths and English classes and an action research project for the students in the lowest achieving students in these subjects.

We chose two secondary schools that differed not just in terms of locale and student catchment area, but also in relation to ideological ethos and student organization and the effects on student intakes in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity. While both secondary schools taught the National Curriculum, the learning experience was considerably different (although becoming less so). What differentiated the two secondary schools was the relative strength of the rules governing student organization and learning settings (Bernstein, 1977).

In the predominantly white middle-class city school, which we called *Greenfield*, students in students aged 12-13 in Year 8 were grouped into sets (homogenous ability groupings) according to students' attainment in specific core subjects such as Mathematics or English. Many working-class students found themselves in the lowest sets, whilst the middle-class students dominated the upper sets. Despite such firm structuring, students were nevertheless encouraged to value individual and personal achievement and autonomy. In this school, students identified clearly with the concept of the good learner and, across social class, seemed to be able to articulate a highly individualised notion of learning and motivation. The delivery of the National Curriculum, whilst not easy, was likely to be less problematic for a school in which grammar

school traditions (selective schools with a highly academic orientation) were part of its history. The presence of professional middle-class students meant that successful educational results could be achieved.

In contrast, the teaching of a strongly segmented curriculum in a predominantly working class and multiracial secondary school (*Mandela*) would be highly disruptive of its collectivist ethos. The school had the reputation of being a "laid back" school, popular with the new middle classes but with a large working class and multi-ethnic intake. Teaching and learning in the school downplayed individualized competition and personalization (part of the legacy of inner city comprehensivation). The staff at this school were vocal in their commitment to the kinds of egalitarian values around equality and a broad humanistic curriculum. Teaching was still mainly mixed ability. In this inner city school students encountered a curious mixture of strong egalitarianism, mixed ability teaching and a desire to be inclusive whilst experiencing a strongly classified and bounded school curriculum. On the other hand, it had become normative for students to expect and be given a degree of control in relation to the curriculum they now have far less control.

In both schools, we were given considerable help by the Year Tutor of Year 8 (13-14 year olds) to identify groups of 5 or 6 students. All students in one tutor group participated in two group discussions. Sixty two children were involved in a total 24 discussion groups. The groups were single sex but they were also different in that some groups were predominantly composed of higher, middle or lower achieving students. Across the two schools, the twelve consultation groups had markedly different social compositions. There were single sex groups of boys (one mainly high and one low to medium ability)

and three groups for girls (high, Muslim and medium/high ability) of girls. The ability groups did not necessarily tie in closely to social class backgrounds since two out of the six groups (middle to high) contained students from different social class backgrounds. In contrast, group 3 with low to middle ability boys and group 4 with low ability Muslim girls contained working class students only.

Action Research

At a later point in the fieldwork, we observed five Year 8 students in English and Mathematics classes and then interviewed them individually. The focus group and individual interviews generated different perspectives on the same issues. The focus groups provided valuable insights into social processes and dynamics, whilst the individual debriefing interviews provided insights into particular students' understanding and experience of teaching and learning in specific classes. The two different types of interview, together with participant observation of lessons, allowed for a process of triangulation. We looked for the reinforcement of findings as well as contradictory evidence across all three sources of data. (The findings are discussed in Arnot & Reay, 2004, 2006a, & 2006b)

In the final stage of the project reports summarising the findings of the focus group interviews were fed back to the teachers and students in the two schools. Planning meetings were organised with the year tutors and English and Mathematics teachers in both Greenfield and Mandela schools in order to design an intervention which worked with the concerns of the students in both

schools (see Arnot et al., 2003). The actions we took are described below and form the basis of the rest of this paper.

Written Lesson Evaluations: An Action Research Initiative

We were well aware that it was not ideal to expect students from working class backgrounds to engage in talking with and to teachers when they may not be skilled in expressing themselves or they did not completely trust their relationship with teachers. Other forms of consultation need to be used if such students are to voice their concerns about their learning. The final stage of our project therefore involved teachers in collecting written responses from students about their learning. Getting this strategy right seemed particularly important for students who would have trouble commu- nicating, who would be shy, defensive, insecure with talk, or who would not wish to talk to teachers.

We focused therefore on trying to improve the communication of teachers with the lowest achieving mainly working class students in their classes. Students were invited to evaluate their Mathematics and English lessons using a simple evaluation sheet (see box below). They were asked at the end of the lesson to take five minutes to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the pace, the levels of interest and difficulty of the lesson which they had just had. They were also asked to rate their own understanding and learning in the lesson. This consultation exercise was novel for teachers and students. The debriefing interviews we conducted later showed how students valued being consulted by their teachers about their learning. Students also confirmed the importance of recognising the diversity of their experience in the classroom and these students' personal and social vulnerabilities when talking about their learning to teachers.

Please tell me how you found the lesson by circling one number for each line							
The pace of the lesson	Too Slow	1	2	3	4	5	Too Fast
The interest of the lesson	Very Low	1	2	3	4	5	Very High
Difficulty of the lesson	Too Easy	1	2	3	4	5	Too Difficult
My understanding	Very Low	1	2	3	4	5	Very High
My learning	Very Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Very good
Name ....…....…Lesson............……......…......Date..………..…….................							

This stage of the research lasted between four to five weeks in the final term in all the schools in our study. The evaluation sheets were returned to the researchers who gained an impression of how students answered the sheets. Finally all the teachers involved in the project were interviewed in order to gain their perspectives on the value of the intervention.

Findings

Talking about Being Consulted

Differential social class and gender access to code talk, to the rules which govern learning has been one of the major findings of the project which we have described in a range of publications. Here we hope to give a flavor of what lower achieving mainly working class students in both schools think about the consultation process itself. The increased demand for communication between teachers and students implied by both the verbal and written consultation process we initiated put considerable pressure on these students in a context

where they felt at a disadvantage. Our short debriefing interviews at the end of the action research stage reveal both these negative aspects but also the potential for using consultation to help such students.

What is clear is that working class students face many difficulties, whether within ability sets or mixed ability classroom, in engaging in a dialogue about teaching and their learning. These difficulties indicate that it is the exceptional working class student who would be able to articulate the criteria necessary to "work" the elaborate modes of classroom communication expected of teacher and taught. As indicated earlier, even the modes of teacher-student communication assume recognition of the rules of the classroom discourse and realisation of the rules in terms of classroom talk, communication style, seating rules, friendship rules, motivation appearance, homework styles, etc. Students reveal in their interviews their knowledge of the many underlying rules which govern pedagogic communication (the relationship between transmission and acquisition). They are themselves aware that in order to communicate effectively with teachers, they needed the following:

- Communicative competence
- High level of interpersonal skills
- Taking responsibility for their own learning
- Reflexivity about their learning and progress
- Patience waiting for face to face communication

and,

- Continuity of teachers
- Respect and trust of students on the part of the teacher

Below we focus on firstly, students' communicative competence and interpersonal skills, and secondly, taking responsibility for their learning.

Students' Communicative Competence and Interpersonal Skills

Students reported experiencing considerable difficulty in answering the teacher properly when asked about their learning. Students replied that "it's all fine"-- saying "only good things" to teachers. Also the demands of the teacher to be their friend suggests that the informality of the relationship can be frustrating and confusing for low achieving students as they move between lessons and different teachers. This requires considerable interpersonal skills.

Carrie, for example, was hindered by her view that it was rude to criticise people:

> Qu: Do you think now you would be able to tell the teacher what he could do to help improve your learning?
> Carrie: No 'cos it would be like "Uh I don't think you're teaching me right, you should do that and that". They might get offended.
> Qu: Would that be bad?
> Carrie: Yeah.
> Qu: Why?
> Carrie: Because it's not nice, if you say, 'like your lesson is rubbish' and they're... like get upset about it.

Students were afraid of repercussions, either of hurt feelings, detention or not being liked by the teacher. Feedback to teachers needed to be honest, constructive and polite. This was even more important given the threat of the teacher's power.

Telling the teacher what she thought about a lesson would be "rude" and she "didn't want to get detention". Kelly believed that the teacher would say, "if you can't say anything nice, then get out of my class". Kylie valued the formal written method of consulting precisely because it gave her the space and time to protect her from the wrath with which the teacher might respond to any criticism:

> Qu: Do you think you can tell the teacher what you think about his lessons, if you did not like his lesson?
> Kylie: (laughs) I probably wouldn't…if you did he may shout at you.
> Qu: Why?
> Kylie: I don't know, he'd be like, if you told him he'd probably be angry. But maybe on these sheets...but like if you write "Oh I didn't like this lesson-- maybe you can do a bit better," …he wouldn't be so angry.
> Qu: Do you think there's a difference between writing it and telling him?
> Kylie: Yeah, yeah.
> Qu: Why?
> Kylie: He can't shout.

The problem with existing modes of questioning students in the classroom was, as Abby pointed out, that some students are more able to speak the language of school (a language of learning) and are therefore listened to more by the teacher:

> Abby:...I think the teachers listen to, like who knows the most... because the naughty people... because they don't like care... (then) there's people who actually want to learn; they know what to do but they just don't

somehow and then there's bottom people are like “Please help”... then the teacher's actually busy with the top group because they find it easier to talk to them instead of the others.

Qu: Why?

Abby: I think it's because of detail, because they just say the same language to the top people and then to like lower people, the bottom set, when they talk they find it harder, hard or something like that. A bit long, they have to say the same thing over and over again.

Qu: What is the best way, do you think to get teachers to listen?

Abby: Um, they should, like put up their hands and ask them to come over, and things like that, but if they should refuse then they should, like, tell them again, but if they're not getting them to listen then I think they should either go up to them outside of class, or go up and tell them, “please could you tell me a bit more because I don't like, um, like understand”.

There were a number of dangers of asking for help in understanding if the teacher had already explained it to the whole class. The student could easily be accused on not listening. If the problem only involved one word, then the student was more likely to ask for help. If the problem involved the whole activity, then the student was in danger of being embarrassed in front of the whole class, if he/she asked for help publicly. Request for help could also be misunderstood.

Our research project revealed time and again the problem of the lack of trust between teacher and students which in some settings can limit or threaten consultation practices. In Mandela school, this lack of trust was linked to power relations between teacher and taught:

Malachi: Sometimes I put ‘it was very good’ so you stay in the teacher's good books. They are asking for your true opinion, but obviously you can't give them your true opinion, otherwise they will dislike you and always watch out for you.

Kenny: Yeah, yeah, you couldn't be truthful. But I liked doing it 'cos you gave us questions about stuff and that's interesting, because we've talked about our viewpoints which we don't normally get to do. And we've got a chance to speak for ourselves, not just sit in the corner and listen to the teacher.

Qu: So you never get a chance to voice your opinions in the school?

Malachi: No.

Kenny: 'Cos we're all seen as fools.

Malachi: Like people treat you like fools, but they still teach you.

Kenny: Teachers thinks-- I'm the King, you are my slave. I teach you. I tell you what to do, I tell you what to get, you get it. So it's sort of like-- I'm the teacher, you are the student, I tell you what to learn and you learn it. But it ain't that easy.

On the whole, students reported that communication and teacher authority tended to be one way the majority of the time-- with students responding to teacher questions about their learning progress. Some teachers offered higher assessment of student's work and progress than the latter believed to be the case. In this environment, the formal mechanism of evaluation we set up meant that some students felt they were communicating more accurate information (rather than impressions) of their learning to teachers. They were all keen to let the teacher know how they really felt.

For those who felt they were not good at communicating with the teacher, or excluded from the inner circle of "good ones" with whom the teacher found it easy to communicate, the formal modes of student consultation and evaluation could be valuable. Some student recommended a box in which comments could be placed so that their views would be heard, but not personalised.

Taking Responsibility for their Learning

The action research component of our study suggested that young people liked not just to be consulted but also to influence events leading up their learning. The attempts by teachers to consult students and to use a friendly and casual approach were welcomed by the students, and many responded well to teachers who took the time to chat with them and write positive comments on their work. Many had acquired confidence in themselves because of this. The corollary of this strategy in Greenfield is that student learning and achievement is understood to be the responsibility of individuals.

Clearly non-verbal consultation processes have a particular value for students who are not adept in using existing modes of classroom communication effectively. However, Nick a working class student who often got into trouble and was in the lower sets, remained wary even in the written evaluation and gave a middle "3" rating for all items in order to make the teacher "feel good". The danger of falling out with the teacher was, for him, serious. In such cases, evaluation sheets may need to be anonymous but handwriting can, of course, disclose identity. Nevertheless, he found he had gained by filling out the small evaluation sheets:

Qu: Did you mind filling in the sheet?

Nick: Not at all, it was helping me realise what I was thinking about my maths

Qu: What do you think you learnt by filling these sheets out?

Nick. I learned that I can make it, that I could try to do my best, even on a bad day, because that would make the teacher happy, my parents and me happy. Even if it's not my main subject, if there's no interest in it.

Qu: Are there ways that doing these sheets have improved your learning?

Nick: Yes, it's given me a lot of time, on those three sheets, to think about what I've been doing and how it affected my learning in other classes, and in maths, and how it affected the teacher thinking about me.

Similarly Craig, struggling in English, found that filling in the evaluation sheets "made me think" and connect his learning to what was happening in the class. He described the exercise as "fun" and "interesting"-- "It's better, I saw what I did". He was able to say "what I don't understand" and what "what I am learning". Craig and John liked to see the progress they were making over several lessons as John said: "Writing it down and looking back on it, seeing that I've been doing pretty well. I know that I can do the work he sets me". Other students suggested that more questions should be added to the form for suggestions on how to change the lesson.

The potential of extending this strategy over time was recognised by a number of students, including Craig, in terms of the value of monitoring learning progress:

Qu: Are there ways that doing these sheets have improved your learning?

Craig: Um, um. I don't know. It might do, like we've done four weeks and

> you've seen how you done, then for the next four weeks you'll know what you can do, so yeah, it could help ya.

Like Craig, John could see that he was getting better and learning more things, and even making him feel a bit more confident. When asked how he knew it affected his confidence, he replied that "sit there and writing it down and looking back on it, seeing that I've been doing pretty well. I know that I can do the work he sets me". Nick and Craig enjoyed the activity but wished their teachers had given the task more time at the end of the lesson:

> I would have preferred having time to think about all the classes, how they should be, what we can actually do. We had to do it in a minute, because like when he gave it to us, we couldn't concentrate on it. You didn't really have time to do it. (Craig)

Insufficient time to hear student voices, whether verbal or on a written evaluation form again confirmed most students' lack of control over their learning:

> Danny: It was annoying though because like, every...like, we was late for our next lesson 'cos he did it at the last minute.
> Dean: He didn't give you enough time to fill it out.
> Robbie: And he was rushing us.
> Bernie: You get the sheet and he was-- "You have to hurry up now. You have to hurry up".
> Dean: Didn't give us enough time to fill them out.

> Danny: Didn't give us enough time to think about what you are doing.
> Dean: So you have to quickly rush it.
> Hasmi: He only gives you about thirty seconds.
> Ben: If you got five minutes you could really think about-- am I really good at learning or...?
> Balo: Then it would be worth it if you had enough time.

Most students at Greenfield, however, who were interviewed about their involvement in the project also appreciated the fact that more responsibility had been placed on them in relation to their learning. Writing down on paper their own thoughts about their learning was clearly valued by most of the students in the project with some even suggesting that more questions should be added about what they wanted changed in the lesson. When asked if the evaluation sheets in Maths and English had helped her improve her learning, Kelly replied:

> Well, yeah, in a way, cos you think, "Have I really learnt anything?" and then you think, "Well I'm not sure, maybe" or "Yeah, I have". And then next lesson you come and you think, "Well, the last lesson I learnt a lot, I want to learn a lot this lesson'" And then so on, so on, so on. You want, like, do you best, don't ya? You think "I want to do better than this" so you put more effort.

Giving themselves scores meant that some students were motivated to try and improve their learning. Students at Greenfield commented that it was good