

Teachers must describe or explain much which is new to their pupils. Their's must therefore be an elaborated language intended to be explicit. Many children, not accustomed to hearing language as elaborate as this at home, experience difficulty in interpreting what their teachers say and so are likely to be at some disadvantage from the moment they begin school. A speaker modifies what he intends to convey by change of voice or posture, and such changes are often difficult to interpret in the sense intended. Spoken words and the gestures accompanying them may both be ambiguous, and for that reason, difficult to interpret.

R. D. BRAMWELL*

Teaching and Some Aspects of Meaning

Whether by speaking or by writing, efforts to communicate can never be completely successful. No two persons can ever have learnt the meaning of any word in precisely the same circumstances. However, where those trying to communicate have undergone similar experiences or where they make much the same assumptions, their chances of communicating adequately will be good. Indeed, members of any close-knit group — a family or life-long neighbours, for example — need not attempt to be always explicit. Much of what they wish to say to each other is already implied by context of situation, and mere reference to a subject may suffice. In what may be called 'the language of intimacy', a word or two and a glance at a watch could, as we say, 'speak volumes'. Correspondingly, where the backgrounds and assumptions of those attempting to communicate are very different, the difficulties of making each other understand are vastly increased. If they are to communicate at all, they must be explicit. This is most obvious, say, where East tries to meet West, but more insidiously it can occur where both parties are apparently of the same culture and speak versions of the same language.

However indispensable and important they may be, the words we use are never more than one element in a total act of utterance. They appear as peaks of island festoons above broad but partly submerged bases of meaning. Scarcely aware of what we are doing, we interpret tones of voice, facial expressions and other features of context and situation. Intuitively rather than explicitly, our actions are often guided by reference to a principle of context dependence. In brief, we tend to

*Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, The University of Calgary.

act without benefit of academic injunction, upon the maxim that 'who the speaker is, and how he says what he says, and why he says it, are as important as the words he speaks'. In these respects much of meaning must be extra-linguistic.

Even in a homogeneous society, no two individuals have identical schemata, though many are likely to share a number which are comparable. Where substantial differences of culture exist between elements of the same population, the chances that they will share comparable schemata will be much reduced, for culture implies a *weltanschauung*. A great deal more than surface difficulties in word for word translation separate groups distinguished by culture. Formal, explicit elements of behaviour characteristic of one culture, may come to be accepted by members of another, but much of what Edward Hall calls *The Silent Language*¹ remains informal, unanalysed and therefore incommunicable. Assumptions, attitudes, values — in short, schemata divide members of different cultures far more deeply than overt differences of language.

Meanwhile, we tend to assume that English is one language, though we might with advantage accept that nothing so much *separates* the English from the Americans (or from the West Indians for that matter) as their possession of a common language. Writing recently "Through the Eyes of an Immigrant", G. H. Palmer points out that when he arrived in England fifteen years ago he spoke only 'plantation English'. This has says, was 'stringing together English or English-like words with little regard to order so that the onus for interpretation was placed on the listener'. Apparently, many Jamaican children tend to speak mainly plantation English when they enter school in England at five years of age.² Palmer asserts that . . . "a Jamaican child from an average home where only plantation English is spoken could find "school" English and its interpretation as different as Old English is from Modern English."³ So, though both teacher and pupil in England speak English, they are not likely in the first instance to communicate easily for their 'assumptive worlds' are as different as some of the structures of their mother tongues.

Just as languages in the strict sense, differ from one another, so do other potentially meaningful forms of behaviour which accompany them.

¹E. T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959). *Passim*

²Schools Council, England, *Teaching English to West Indian Children*, Schools Council Working Paper 29 (London: Evans/Mathuen Educational, 1970) "The Children' Dialect: Most West Indian children in our schools speak at least two distinguishable varieties of English. With some the differences are small, so that it is unhelpful to talk about two separate varieties, but with many the differences are great enough to lead the average English listener to regard one of these varieties as a foreign language. The children will have their own first dialect, spoken to those with the same dialect background at home and in the street and playground. This will often be a Creole in most cases a Jamaican Creole."

³G. H. Palmer, "Through the Eyes of an Immigrant" *Times Educational Supplement*, August 15, 1969 p. 176.

We tend to think of these forms of behaviour as meaning everywhere what they mean to us. In fact, to the people of one culture, a given gesture will mean one thing; to people of a second culture, quite another. These forms of behaviour have then, no universally accepted meanings. Hall elaborates this point in a recent article. His father, he says, 'was of the opinion that not to look at people "straight between the eyes" implied shiftiness or untrustworthiness.' However, when he 'discussed eye behaviour with a black colleague' that colleague observed "When I punish my boy *I look at him* and when I look at him I'm mad. I look at his eyes and they grow big and he *knows I'm mad*".⁴ Imagine, Hall continues, what it is like "to be a black child or a Navaho child confronted with an adult white person who gives cues with his eyes, his hands and his tone of voice, all indicating in your dialectology (not in his) that there is anger".⁵ Patterns are changing the teachers here and in the white world of the occident are becoming less ethnocentric. They are beginning to realise that culture encompasses more than beliefs and *mores* in the conventional sense and that *how* they talk and *how* they listen does shape meanings for their pupils who respectively, listen and talk.

What may be obvious to the point of appearing trite at an *intercultural* level, may not be anything like so obvious at an *intraculture* level. Yet any culture has its sub-cultures which may depart in significant respects from the putative cultural norms. Recent studies of so-called class differences in England have led educational sociologists to distinguish between restricted and elaborated codes of usage. Children from working class homes may be exposed to and constrained to use almost exclusively, a restricted form of English sufficient for the needs of those who live together in a narrowly circumscribed life-space, a small world of few but intimately shared interests.⁶ Most people know from their own experience that the closer their relationship with spouse or friend, the less their need to dot all "i's" and cross all "t's" — the less their need, in fact, to work out fully all intended meaning. Restricted code, which 'maximises identifications with others', is a language largely of implicit meanings.⁷

Bernstein distinguishes restricted code 'from other modes of speech and notably an elaborated formal code, by the rigidity of its syntactical structure and the limited and restricted use of structural possibilities for sentence organisation'.⁸ In particular, some of its most marked fea-

⁴E. T. Hall, "Listening Behaviour: Some Cultural Differences", *Phi Delta Kappan*, (March 1969), p. 380.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶J. P. De Cecco *The Psychology of Language, Thought and Instruction*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967) p. 89.

⁷B. Bernstein, "Social Structure, Language and Learning", *Educational Research* (The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales) Vol. III, No. 3, June 1961 p. 166.

⁸B. Bernstein, "Aspects of Language and Learning in the Genesis of the Social Process", *Language, Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Psychology*, D. Humes, editor (New York, Harper and Row, 1964) p. 252.

tures are — short, grammatically simple sentences, often left trailing; the repetition of the most common conjunctions (so', 'then', 'and', 'because'); infrequent use of subordination to break down the initial categories of the main subject; and a limited use even of common adjectives. One further feature is especially significant. It is that — like garrulous Mrs. Bates in Jane Austen's *Emma*, a person speaking a restricted code is likely to ramble and may be unable 'to hold a subject through a speech sequence'.⁹ As we might expect, these features are almost the converse of those which characterise a so-called elaborated, formal or 'chancellery' code.

Bernstein insists that restricted code is not a substandard variety of language spoken exclusively by a limited number of individuals in a population. To some extent, everyone uses it at various times. For example, all use it for day to day purposes in the home. The point then is this — that while children in middle class homes hear and speak both restricted and elaborated codes, children in many working class homes hear and speak almost *nothing but* restricted code. Unhappily for them, the elaborated *formal* language is considered the typical and dominant speech form in any society. A *fortiori* it is the language of school, for the teachers' craft (as we still conceive it) revolves around the presentation of material which his pupils do not yet share with him. While his work remains what it is now, the teacher must be largely concerned with explicit meanings. Here then is *subcultural clash* in the making. The pupil's use of a restricted 'linguistic code different from the one (employed in and) promoted by the school has more than once prompted teachers to say with an air of resignation 'they just don't understand'.¹⁰

It is not simply that the pupils 'don't understand' their teachers. Sometimes it happens that teachers 'don't understand' their pupils. Almost inevitably, those who rely heavily upon a language of implicit meanings at home experience grave difficulties in expressing themselves at school. In particular, they are likely to experience difficulties in *writing* for that requires a more elaborated use of English. A 'composition' written by someone less often in touch with those who must formulate their thinking in more elaborated ways will appear comparatively *jejeune*. Indeed, such a 'composition' may well show a lack of any firm command of vocabulary, grammar and syntax. However a teacher is not entitled on that account to assume that the author of the composition is *innately* less able than another of comparable age who already writes 'well'. What the teacher *can* say of such an author is that he is much less favourably placed to take advantage of what the school now has to offer him. From this root, 'Headstart' and similar programmes have all drawn their sustenance.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰E. T. Keach, R. Falton, and W. E. Gardiner, editors, *Education and Social Crisis: Perspectives on Teaching Disadvantaged Youth* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967) p. 136.

The difficulty goes deeper than this discussion might so far have suggested. Exclusive dependence on a restricted code as a medium of thought and expression implies an accompanying lack of "opportunity to acquire a foundation of the basic concepts and skills which teachers take for granted in their classroom instruction."¹¹ As Lawton points out "the real educational cultural problem . . . is essentially . . . that restriction in the control over a language involves a restricted view of the universe, (and) a restricted mode of thinking".¹² The result therefore is a lack of cognitive readiness even among the intellectually most able of those who depend upon this code. Like their fellows, they suffer from a "restricted ability to benefit from educational processes." These pupils therefore are likely to gravitate to slower moving streams in a school, and there, partly because their teachers demand less of them, they fall further and further behind the attainments of their more fortunate peers. They suffer educationally from what we might call a 'cumulative deficit effect'.

So far this discussion has turned largely on the cognitive effects of using a restricted code almost exclusively. However, not merely the cognitive, but cultural features of all kinds, are both shaped and expressed through language. Those who rarely use any but a restricted code may have a somewhat different *weltanschauung* from that of the rest of the population. This will include differences of outlook, *mores*, and even morals. Children who belong to such a subculture may thus be strangers to the behaviour and values as well as to the thought of pre-dominantly middle-class schools.

Up to now those investigating this and related problems do not seem to have given much attention to differences between extra-linguistic aspects of 'meaning' as manifested by different subcultures. Does substantial use of a restricted code, for example, go hand in hand with a greater use of shruggings, nudgings and winkings? Suppose it does and suppose further that a boy making much use of this code is obliged to suppress these when he is talking to his teacher ('Stand still boy!' or 'Take your hands out of your pockets when you are talking to me'!) does this add to his more obvious difficulties in communicating? Again, does someone relying on implicit meanings stand closer to someone he is addressing than someone speaking an elaborated code? Finally, how might such behaviours affect the teacher who might have learnt in his *milieu* to expect something different? As Bernstein points out in a recent article referring primarily to spoken language . . . "Many of the contexts of our schools are unwittingly drawn from aspects of the symbolic world of the middle class, and so when the child steps into school he is stepping

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹²D. Lawton, *Social Class, Language And Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) p. 76.

into a symbolic system which does not provide for him a linkage with life outside".¹³

* * * * *

The spoken word has associated with it two features missing from the written word. The spoken word is addressed in a certain way to someone in particular and is usually accompanied by some form of action, whether partly suppressed or not. To this extent it has a social context or a context of situation of which it is an element and to which it also contributes. As Hughes explains in his *Science of Language*, "not all the information conveyed . . . in such a situation . . . will necessarily be conveyed by language".¹⁴ The same words whispered with a wink or shouted with a thumping of the table will *not* convey the same meaning. As the French might put it, *C'est le ton qui fait la musique*.

In his discussion of 'the function of a spoken word in a given situation', Gardiner considers not only "all the other words in the sentence, 'but also' the intonational form . . . the name given to those differences of tone, pitch, stress and etc., with which combinations of words having a certain syntactic over-meaning are habitually spoken."¹⁵ Clearly, Sir Alan refers here to common intonational patterns in the making of statements, the issuing of commands, the asking of questions, the intoning of ritualistic formulas and the like.¹⁶ Among what Hughes calls prosodic or suprasegmental features of the spoken word, he counts speed and volume of utterance. "An angry man," he says, "usually talks more loudly ('raises his voice') while conspirators proverbially whisper" . . . This, he continues, "is not part of the information or message strictly so-called, which is conveyed by the language; yet (it) communicates a great deal" about the situation whether we call it message or not.¹⁷ Accent, pitch, voice cadence, pauses, help the listener to grasp the message intended, and they tell him much about the speaker — whether he is calm or excited, hypocritical or sincere *in any given situation*.

English is certainly a difficult language to write correctly. What most of us who own it as a mother tongue do not recognise is that it is 'almost in a class by itself as regards prosodic complexity'. According to Lee Whorf, English is "one of the most complex languages on earth" in this respect. On the whole, he says, "it is as complicated as most polysynthetic languages of America . . . The complex structure of English is largely covert, . . . Foreigners learning English have to absorb it unconsciously

¹³B. Bernstein, "A Critique of the Concept of Compensatory Education", *Education for Democracy*, D. Rubinstein and C. Stoneman, editors (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970) p. 120.

¹⁴J. P. Hughes, *The Science of Language: An Introduction to Linguistics*, (New York: Random House, 1962) p. 156.

¹⁵A. Gardiner, *The Theory of Speech and Language*, (Oxford: University Press, 1951) p. 160.

¹⁶J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) p. 76.

¹⁷Hughes *op cit* p. 233.

— a process requiring years — by dint of constant exposure to bombardment by spoken English in large chunks . . .¹⁸ More recently, Trager and Smith have shown how it is possible to represent some of the intonational features of the language by the use of a system of what they call superfixes.¹⁹

Malinowski in particular insists that we must not treat words as a “text divorced from its context of action and situation”. “I think that it is very profitable in linguistics,” he says, “to widen the concept of context so that it embraces not only the spoken words but facial expression, gesture, bodily activities, the whole group of people present during an exchange of utterances and the part of the environment on which these people are engaged.”²⁰ Elsewhere he wishes that he had phonographic and cinematographic records to help him convey the “full cultural flavour and significance” of what Trobriand informants had to tell him.²¹ As anthropologists, he continues, “Our scholastic operations consists in a constant manipulation of words and context. We have to compare the word with its verbal setting; we have to interpret the occasional significant gestures, and finally we have constantly to see . . . the situation in which the utterance is being made and the situation to which it refers . . .”²² Bloomfield reinforces this point vigorously for he defines “the meaning of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer”.²³

We tend to think that a speaker uses only his vocal organs as he attempts to communicate with his listener. In fact he speaks with his whole body. His stance may be tense or relaxed; he may make sweeping gestures with his hands, and the muscles of his face are continually in motion for he frowns or smiles, raises one eyebrow or shakes his head. Some speakers are altogether more animated than others in this respect, and some language communities as a whole are said to speak more ‘with their hands’ than others do. Controlled investigation of this visual, non-verbal element of interpersonal communication is now developing as *Kinesics*. From this it appears that “visually perceptible body shifts . . . are subject to systematization, are learned . . . socially defined and controlled.”²⁴ These reinforce, tone down, emphasize elements of what a

¹⁸B. L. Whorf, “A Linguistic Consideration of Thinking in Primitive Societies”, *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁹G. L. Trager and H. L. Smith, *An Outline of English Structure: Studies in Linguistics*, Occasional Papers 3 (Washington, American Council of Learned Societies, 1959) pp. 11-52; E. T. Hall *The Silent Language*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

²⁰B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935) p. 22.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 45.

²³L. Bloomfield *Language* (London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1935) p. 139.

²⁴R. L. Birdwhistell, “Kinesics and Communication”, *Explorations in Communication* E. Carpenter and M. McLuhan, editors (Boston Beacon Press, 1960) p. 54.

speaker says and so are part of the total situation in which he attempts to communicate.²⁵

A teacher may be quite unaware of his own partly suppressed gestures, but, without being conscious of the fact, his pupils are adept at interpreting them. Much of what a teacher teaches, he teaches unwittingly. These adventitious 'concomitant outcomes' of teaching are conveyed by the teacher's gestures and the supra-segmental features of his speech. His approval and disapproval, his enthusiasm or indifference are carried in this way with the literal meanings of his words. Meanwhile, his pupils also speak and act in ways partly controlled by the facts that they are in a classroom and have an official as well as a personal relationship with their teacher. He in turn reads many of their non-deliberate fidgetings and coughings, shufflings and whisperings as 'feedback', indicating how they are responding to elements of his lesson.

A practised speaker developing a subject long familiar to him would be incapable of suppressing all his gestures even though he wished to do so. Youngsters much less capable than he of conveying their meanings by speech alone must often talk with their whole bodies to eke out their words. They must 'show' as well as 'say', — as indeed all speakers do to some extent. One reason then for encouraging them to marry action and speech as drama in the classroom is that this provides them with more 'natural' situations in which to communicate. Makeshift props, movement, gesture and speech, help to provide for them contexts of situation resembling those in which all are accustomed to communicating in the world outside the school. Teachers of foreign languages employing modern methods also recognise the value of creating surrogate contexts of situation. So far as they can they surround their pupils with cultural trappings of the countries concerned which, in themselves, 'speak' the language. If now the teachers and their pupils improvise typical incidents to play out against these settings, they are simulating communication as this commonly takes place between whole persons in 'real life' situations in another country.

* * * * *

An ambiguous statement is one which may be understood in at least two ways. For example, a reader might wonder how he is to understand the words 'children like you . . .' Is he to treat 'like' as a verb or as a prepositional adverb here? A wider context and a context of situation would have resolved his difficulty. In this respect ambiguity is to be distinguished from vagueness, for whereas an ambiguous statement has more than one *clear* meaning a vague statement lacks clarity no matter what it is thought to refer to or what context it occurs in. 'Ambiguous', defined in this way, is close in meaning to 'equivocal' or 'indeterminate',

²⁵S. Duncan, "Nonverbal Communication", *Psychological Bulletin*, 1969, Vol. 72 No. 2, pp. 118-137. This article provides a comprehensive review of the literature on paralanguage, Kinesics and proxemics. It has a substantial bibliography.

while 'vagueness' is always more nearly akin to 'inexact' or 'indefinite'. If he chose, a writer could remedy the first, but the second he could by no means remedy because no *clear* alternative meanings present themselves.²⁶

'Children like you . . .' might serve as an example of *syntactical ambiguity*, for the reader does not know what part the word 'like' is to play in that construction. For the same reason, he would not know in a limited context how to read the sentence 'Visiting inspectors can be unpleasant'. Syntactical confusion apart, ambiguity may also result from *homonymy* or from *polysemy* — 'polysemia' as Bréal prefers to call it.²⁷ The first — homonymy — refers to cases where the same phonic forms stand for quite different meanings — as for example 'bare' and 'bear', 'hair' and 'hare', 'pale' and 'pail'. In written English, many possible cases of homonymous ambiguity will be resolved by a different spelling for each meaning of the same phonic form. As all teachers know, errors in spelling homonyms may lead to amusing, even if occasionally exasperating results, but in general, ambiguities arising from homonymy are trivial. Polysemy, however, is pervasive, and ambiguities arising from this source are much more resistant to semantic analyses. Polysemy is the process through which one word acquires several senses usually as a result of shifts in application. For example, the word 'intelligence' might be qualified as 'human', 'animal' or 'military'. An authoritative dictionary would show a separate entry for each of the distinct senses in which a reader might normally expect to encounter such a word, and the possible meanings of a word described by *n* entries would be potentially ambiguous in *n* ways.

Polysemy is the source of the ambiguity in a sentence like 'There is no school now!' It is in a sense *lexical*: what might a lexicographer make of the word 'school'? It might mean 'the building which scholars attend' as in 'The school is that new building over there'. Equally, it might mean 'sessions of a teaching institution' as in 'Tomorrow is a *school* day, not a holiday.' The presence of an ambiguous word is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the uttering of a semantically ambiguous statement. 'School' in the head-line 'School blazes — teen-age fire-bug?' is no longer ambiguous. Other components of the construction force the reader to select only one of the possible senses of the word. In this way, a contextual constraint imposes on an ambiguous word what we might call a *selection restriction*.²⁸

Unfortunately, for philosophers and others attempting to think at comparable levels, ambiguities are not all as patent as those quoted so

²⁶H. C. Martin and R. M. Ohmann, *The Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 59.

²⁷M. Bréal, *Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning* (London: Heinemann, 1900), p. 140.

²⁸J. J. Katz, *The Philosophy of Language*, (New York; Harper and Row, 1966) p. 155.

far. Serious blunders in reflective thinking occur, because the meaning that one has in some context is replaced without the fact being noticed by an allied but different meaning in another. As an example, consider Wittgenstein's statement which dominated philosophical discussion for a generation or more — 'Don't ask for the meaning; ask for the use.' Commenting on this Findlay recognizes "a use of 'use' which is humdrum and ordinary . . ." ²⁹ There is however, he continues, another "use of 'use' characteristic of the later writings of Wittgenstein which is utterly remote from the humdrum and ordinary . . ." The reason why it is absurd to tell us *not* to attend to the meaning of expressions but to concentrate on their use, is perfectly simple: it is that the notion of use, as it ordinarily exists and is used, presupposes the notion of meaning (in its central and paradigmatic sense), and it cannot therefore be used to elucidate the latter, and much less to replace or do duty for it. ³⁰

At a more mundane level, consider the word 'practical' as it might be used in works on education. ³¹ It could serve almost as a synonym for 'useful'. In this sense, learning motor-car maintenance is more practical for most students than learning about Greek drama. In a wider reference, teachers may think some subjects more *practical* than others because they are more directed towards preparing for a vocation. *Practical* could also mean 'trained by doing the job' as an apprentice plumber might learn to fix a bath or a seminarist might learn to preach a sermon. In this sense a pupil might learn a subject by doing it. Again, as opposed to *theoretical*, *practical* might bear the interpretation 'having to do with things rather than with ideas'. Pupils studying physics or chemistry might do *practical* work either to illustrate what they have already studied in theory or to provide a basis for theorising. The sense in which the reader takes '*practical*' will therefore depend not only upon its immediate or wider contextual environment, but also upon his idiosyncratic interpretation of that.

According to Richards, "Most words as they pass from context to context change their meanings; and in many different ways." It is, he continues, "their duty and service to us to do so (for) ordinary discourse would suffer ankylosis if they did not." ³² Pursuing the same line of thought in his *Practical Criticism*, he asserts that "Every interesting abstract word (apart from those nailed down to phenomena by the experimental sciences) is inevitably ambiguous — yet we use them daily with the pathetic confidence of children" as though they each had one and only one proper meaning. ³³

²⁹J. N. Findlay, "Use, Usage and Meaning", *Clarity is Not Enough*, H. D. Lewis, editor (London: Muirhead library of Philosophy, 1963) p. 431.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 431.

³¹R. D. Bramwell, *Elementary School Work 1900-1925*, (Durham, University of Durham, 1961) p. 18.

³²I. A. Richards *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: University Press, 1936) p. 11.

³³I. A. Richards *Practical Criticism: A study of Literary Judgment*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929) p. 340.

* * * * *

In Words and their Use Ullman discusses 'the context theory' — and here we would choose to read 'context' in its widest sense to include 'context of situation'. The context theory, Ullman asserts, "if judiciously applied, is the very corner-stone of semantics".³⁴ But applied to what? — to questions of morals, political theory, logic, economics, methaphysics, literary criticism, psychology and education? To all these, certainly, and to many more. Indeed we are obliged to agree that 'Dread of the bewilderment that might ensue if we recognised and investigated the inevitable ambiguity of almost all verbal formulae is probably a strong reason for our general reluctance to admit it. For this, says Richards finally, "is one of the most unpopular truths that can be uttered."³⁵

³⁴S. Ullman, *Words and their Use* (London: Muller, 1951) p. 29.

³⁵I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment*, *op. cit.*, p. 341.