

Code in Context

In the 1970s, Basil Bernstein's work on children's sociolinguistic codes and his formulation of the contexts in which they are transmitted were the most influential in the field. However, as Diana Adlam points out, neither code nor context as Bernstein saw them can be properly grasped until they are understood in interaction. Originally published in 1977, this collection of papers contains both theoretical and empirical investigations of Bernstein's ideas, and seeks to make that necessary connection. The study as a whole is concerned primarily with Basil Bernstein's ideas on the relationship of different familial transmission systems to the way in which children learn to use language. The theoretical chapter stresses Bernstein's present emphasis on the semantic orientations which different children may be acquiring, and discusses these ideas in relation to work being done elsewhere at the time by other sociolinguistics, particularly in the United States. The empirical chapters provide analyses of how children of different social backgrounds differ in their approach to language use and also show the structural relationship of talk across a variety of specific contexts. Today it can be read against its historical backdrop.

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