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LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION -
THE RECONTEXTUALISATION OF
PARTICIPANTS, ACTIVITIES AND REACTIONS

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes a model for the description of social practice which analyses social practices into the following elements: (1) the participants of the practice; (2) the activities which constitute the practice; (3) the performance indicators which stipulate how the activities are to be performed; (4) the dress and body grooming required for the participants; (5) the times when, and (6) the locations where the activities take place; (7) the objects, tools and materials, required for performing the activities; and (8) the eligibility conditions for the participants and their dress, the objects, and the locations, that is, the characteristics these elements must have to be eligible to participate in, or be used in, the social practice.

The thesis then proposes that field of discourse be defined as social cognition, that is, as the knowledge about a social practice or set of interrelated social practices that underlies representation in the texts which, in the context of a given discursive practice, represent this practice, or these interrelated practices. This knowledge is characterised as the outcome of a set of recontextualisation transformations which (a) substitute elements of the social practice(s) with other elements (e.g. substitute concrete elements with abstract ones, or abstract ones with concrete ones), (b) delete elements of the social practice(s); (c) rearrange elements of the
social practice(s); and (d) add elements to the representation of social practices, in particular (9) the participants' reactions to (elements of) the social practice; (10) the goals for, (11) evaluations of, and (12) ideological legitimations of (elements of) the social practice.

The thesis then presents system networks which specify all the recontextualisation options for 3 out of the 12 elements, namely participants, activities and reactions. The options are discussed in terms of their sociological relevance as categories of representation, as well as in terms of their linguistic realisation in texts.

The same networks are then used in the analysis of a set of texts dealing with a major initiation rite in contemporary Western society, the first day of schooling. They include children's stories and books, brochures and booklets for parents, teacher training texts, news reports and columns in various media, advertisements for school uniforms and other school necessities, and radical critiques of compulsory schooling. Part 2 includes a study of children's stories which describes class-based differences in the representation of the first day of schooling, and, within the context of stories for middle class children, differences between discourses supportive of, and discourses subversive of compulsory schooling. Part 3 concentrates on the way
recontextualisation is informed by audience: the texts discussed all support schooling, but are addressed, respectively, to children, parents and teachers. These text studies serve to demonstrate the usefulness of my theory for the purposes of critical discourse analysis, as well as to describe the role of representation in the production of complicity with the system of compulsory schooling.

Throughout the thesis, the theory is related to the linguistic theory which, to a large extent, inspired it, systemic-functional linguistics in general, and the work of M.A.K. Halliday and J.R. Martin in particular. It should be stressed, however, that the thesis is not, or not only, a linguistics thesis, but an interdisciplinary work, a crossover between the sociology of knowledge, critical discourse analysis, and systemic-functional linguistics.

The thesis as a whole, then, presents the outline of a theory of language and representation, and the detail of 3 of the 12 parts of that theory, as well as two studies in critical discourse analysis that apply the theory.
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And everybody else.
DECLARATION

This thesis is and reports original work which has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma.

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