DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 539 CS 215 450

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TITLE Indexing Instruction: The Social Construction of the Participation Framework in Kindergarten Journal Writing Activity.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (Chicago, IL, March 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Writing; Classroom Communication; Classroom Research; Cooperative Learning; Cultural Context; Ethnography; *Journal Writing; *Kindergarten; *Language Role; Literacy; Primary Education; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Writing; Conversation; *Learning Environments

ABSTRACT

Classroom language and literacy practices need to be reconceptualized to account for the valuable role talk and interaction play in the process of learning to write. Teachers should construct learning environments within which interaction between students and teachers is the primary focus. The participation framework of kindergarten journal writing activity constitutes a shared indexical ground within which the social process of learning to write may occur. The concept of indexicality is grounded in language socialization theory and can be defined as the relationship of properties of speech to cultural contexts (such as the participation framework) and how this relationship constitutes particular stances and acts in activity. The participation framework is socially constructed over time. Teacher and student in the kindergarten classroom socialize each other to discrete roles within an instructional participation framework, thereby creating a normative structure for participation in writing activity. Data were drawn from an ethnographic study of kindergarten journal writing activity that examined how a context for the social distribution and appropriation of literacy knowledge was constituted in situated participation frameworks. Five interconnected roles were identified that contributed to the socially mediated knowledge distribution process: teacher/scribe, primary author, overhearer, peripheral respondent, and pivot. The teacher uses multiple indexes to indicate the instructional goal of independent writing. The combination of gesture and shifts in register directly indexes approval or praise and simultaneously indirectly indexes the larger instructional goal of independent writing to the group as a whole. (Contains examples of interactions and 33 references.) (TB)

Indexing Instruction:

The Social Construction of the Participation Framework in Kindergarten Journal Writing Activity

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Paper presented at the annual conference of the

American Association for Applied Linguistics

Chicago, Illinois

March, 1996

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Introduction

Current dyad-based classroom language and literacy practices commonly position students not as active participants in the social construction of literacy but as passive consumers of a static body of literacy knowledge. Within these classrooms, literacy is defined as a reified set of "neutral" competencies autonomous of social context (Street, 1995). In this paper, I argue for a reconceptualization of classroom language and literacy practices from current dyadic based participation frameworks to more expanded multi-party participation frameworks that allow for flexible access to the social construction of literacy knowledge. I will argue that changing the ways in which students participate in school-based literacy practices to allow for more flexible participation frameworks will socialize students to more democratic participation in classrooms and in the larger society. This reconceptualization attempts to disrupt monolithic definitions of literacy by challenging the sanctity of dyadic (T/S) interaction in classrooms (Larson, 1996).

Specifically, I will describe how the participation framework of kindergarten journal writing activity constitutes a shared indexical ground within which the profoundly social process of learning to write may occur. Furthermore, I will examine how the participation framework contributes to the social construction of an indexical context in which students and teacher construct and interpret text in activity. The concept of indexicality used here is grounded in language socialization theory and is defined as the relationship of properties of speech to cultural contexts (such as the participation framework) and how this relationship constitutes particular stances and acts in activity (Ochs, 1992). Thus, this paper will explore how the participation framework is socially constructed over time and how, using linguistic and gestural patterns, both the teacher and students in this classroom community socialize each other to discrete roles within the instructional participation framework, thereby creating a normative structure for participation in writing activity.

Data are drawn from an ethnographic study of kindergarten journal writing activity that examined how a context for the social distribution and appropriation of literacy knowledge was constituted in situated participation frameworks. Using Goffman's (1981) notion of a participation framework as a language structure that organizes and is organized by talk, this earlier study found that activity participants assumed varied and discrete roles, or footings, within the participation framework. By shifting these roles, literacy knowledge and writing expertise was socially distributed (Larson, 1995a). As a result, student journal entries became community constructions as each participant drew on the knowledge that emerged in multi-party talk and interaction and incorporated this public knowledge into their written stories.

Five interconnected roles were identified in the participation framework of journal writing activity that contributed to the socially mediated knowledge distribution process: teacher/scribe, primary author, overhearer, peripheral respondent, and pivot (Larson, 1995b). In the role of teacher/scribe, the teacher is available for each student author as they finish drawing their story and express to her that they are ready for her to write with them. As scribe, she writes their dictated story for them to copy into their journal. The primary author is the student whose dictation the teacher is currently taking. The pairing of the teacher/scribe and the primary author constitutes the primary dyad. As the primary dyad is established, the role of the peripheral participants, such as overhearer, becomes a requisite position in the participation framework. Overhearers are those students who are seated at the journal writing table and who listen in on the talk and interaction as each primary author publicly writes her story (c.f. Heritage, 1985). The roles of peripheral respondent and pivot (Goffman, 1981) emerge as the interaction evolves and is transformed from primarily dyadic to more multi-party participation frameworks. The peripheral respondent role can be filled by one or more students who answer questions posed to the primary author by the teacher from a position outside of the predominantly dyadic interactional space between the teacher/scribe and the primary author. The pivot may emerge from both the peripheral

respondent role and from the role of overhearer as knowledge that is placed on the conversational floor is brought into further interactions or into written journal entries. These roles are mutually constituted and emerge over time in daily interaction, thereby forming the normative participation framework, or shared indexical ground, of this writing activity.

In this paper, I will argue that the participation framework that evolves in this particular classroom represents what Hanks (1990) has termed a symmetrical indexical ground and, as a result, highly inferential instructional indexes can be used by the teacher. The relative symmetry of the indexical context, or shared body of knowledge and experience that is constituted in the participation framework, is a function of the relation between participants. Hanks' (1990) Principle of Relative Symmetry states that "the more symmetric the indexical ground (the more interactants already share at the time of utterance), the more deictic oppositions are available for making reference (the greater the range of choice among distinct deictics)" (p. 48). In other words, when there is high relative symmetry, the participation framework as indexical context represents a choice of footings (Goffman, 1981) available for students to participate in the activity or to interpret meaning. The participation framework becomes a "field of reference maximally accessible to all participants" (Hanks, 1990:49). Bourdieu (1983) describes a field as a space of positions and position taking that presents itself to each participant as a range of possibilities, or a "space of possibles" (p. 344). In this classroom, text is socially constructed and mediated by language as students shift roles within this sociocultural field. Thus, the range of participant roles available to the students determined the nature of the participation framework that evolved. In this way, participation frameworks emerge as situated language structures that mediate the writing process in face-to-face interaction over time.

The participation framework in this writing activity, therefore, represents the range of roles available for students to assume while writing. This sociocultural field regulates

students' access to the dictation frame (Goffman, 1974) by determining the principles of legitimization in which given forms of engagements are acceptable (Garfinkel, 1972). The teacher has established explicit and implicit entry rules for this activity, for example, that regulate access to direct participation. Children are required to rest their hands on her shoulder if they want to talk to her or show her their work. On several occasions there were as many as eight students standing with their hands on her shoulder waiting their turn. However, the utterances of peripheral respondents are tolerated and sometimes ratified. Thus, children are socialized to legitimize a larger, more public interactional space (Heras, 1993) within which peripheral participation is accepted.

This highly symmetrical indexical ground has been constructed over time in this classroom through joint participation in writing activity. Furthermore, due to the socially constructed and consenual nature of the participation framework, the teacher can use this mutually understood interactional field as an intersubjective space within which indirect indexicals may be used to accomplish her instructional goal. Thus, the participation framework of this journal writing activity serves as a layered construct in which multiple participation frameworks may be interconnected in the sociocultural field of the classroom. Indexes, then, are socially constructed in relation to a sociocultural system or field from which the participation framework emerges (Hanks, 1990). In other words, in order to determine the reference of a given utterance, it must be grounded to an indexical field (Hanks, 1990). I argue that the participation framework of this particular writing activity is the indexical field that constitutes a profoundly social context for the teaching and learning of writing.

In this classroom, then, the participation framework has evolved over time and constitutes a common referential ground, or normative participation framework, within which students and teacher assume varied and discrete roles in the context of writing activity. The teacher uses the public interactional space to embed (Goffman, 1981) highly inferential indexicals that reference instruction and, in this way, instructs all students at the

writing table both in terms of content and when addressing behavioral issues.[1] She understood that the students were listening in on dyadic or triadic interaction and often deliberately used this social space as an opportunity for learning (c.f. Heritage, 1985). The students were also aware that the teacher was listening to their interactions as was evidenced by shifts in her attention as she responded to various interruptions from students and other adults present. In this way, the teacher functions as an omnipresent speaker/hearer/overhearer as she participates in journal writing activity.

Theoretical Context

This paper draws on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework grounded in theories of language socialization, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, and sociocultural theories of learning (Duranti, in press; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Fairclough, 1992; Goodwin, M. 1990; Gutierrez, 1992, 1994; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) in the analysis of face-to-face classroom interaction. Language socialization (Ochs, 1988) is a process by which children gain understanding of the sociocultural organization of their everyday lives (values, beliefs, social structure) through participation in language activities. Language socialization, then, describes ways in which children are socialized *through* language and socialized *to* use language and is mediated by activity (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

This language socialization process can best be described through analysis of discourse in order to determine the characteristics of particular activities in particular sociocultural settings. Ochs (1988) defines discourse as a "set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating linguistic structures to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and interpreting language in context" (p. 8). Discourse is used here to describe what Bakhtin (1981, 1986) terms a social language that has a particular speech genre. Bakhtin's unit of analysis focused on the utterance as an active representative of the voice or voices that are reflected in and produced from an organized sociocultural context, such as schools and classrooms. It is through the identification and characterization of this

social language that it is possible, then, to determine *how* discourse both reflects and creates sociocultural contexts (Wertsch, 1991).

Bakhtin (1986) viewed language, the utterance in particular, as a social phenomenon. The utterance is always oriented towards others, that is, an utterance is always dialogic as it implies an addressee. It is, as a result, mutually constructed and collaboratively composed in this interactional space. Bakhtin (1981) argues that there are three participants in a discourse activity: the speaker, the listener, and the language. Language, in turn, represents the multiple voices of others as it brings to the activity the ontological plurality and dynamic diversity that he characterizes as heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin (1981), "One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible" (p. 345). Language, therefore, is a socially shared semiotic medium for both the individual and the culture and is shaped by context and by larger cultural and historical factors (Himley, 1991). It is through language, then, that social interaction is mediated and becomes the means for literacy learning as children and adults participate together in activity.

In classrooms, students gain discourse knowledge through interpreting how language indexes aspects of the sociocultural context such as the teacher's instructional goals for writing activity (Ochs, 1988). It is the combination of indexes, or collocational indexing (Ferguson, 1977), that narrows the indexical scope within which students interpret the teacher's instructional goals. In other words, how indexes interact to signal contextual information constitutes the context for learning (Ochs, 1988).

There are multiple ways in which the teacher in the classroom in this study indexes instruction. She has an indexical range that includes pitch variation, opening utterances that frame interactional sequences (interrogatives), repetition, shifts in register, simplification, body position, eye gaze, directives, and indirection (Goodwin, 1981). This paper will

focus specifically on the ways in which the teacher indirectly indexes her instructional goal of independent writing.

Dictated Journal Writing: The Focal Event

This paper presents data drawn from a larger ethnographic study of novice writers in kindergarten. The classroom context for this study is located in a K-5 elementary school in a small community near West Los Angeles. The school serves approximately 600 students from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. The classroom itself is one of three kindergarten classes at the school. The morning language arts period was observed once a week throughout the academic year. Journal writing activity was videotaped weekly beginning in January. Participant observer field notes were taken during these observations, informal and formal interviews of both the teacher and the students were conducted throughout the study, and children's written products were collected after each observation. (see Larson, 1995a, for a more detailed discussion of the context and methodology used for the larger project).

The writing activity chosen for focused analysis is a dictated journal writing activity that typically occurs immediately following the morning reading time. The teacher, Janet, hands out journals to each student and directs them to one of two large tables available for journal writing. Janet has designed her role in this activity to serve as scribe for students' daily journal entries and, as students gain in writing competence over the course of the school year, she gradually decreases this role, handing over responsibility for writing to the students. She scaffolds this move to independence by writing the student's story on a sentence strip from which the students will then copy into their journal. The teacher reports in interviews that around January things "start getting real exciting" because the students have gained competence in their writing and some have begun to try to write on their own, both in the dictated journal writing activity and other more loosely structured writing activities that are available throughout the day. As mentioned, there are implicit and explicit norms that regulate interaction in this writing activity that, over time, become a normative

structure through which the children are socialized to accepted practices of participation. The resulting participation framework constituted the linguistic context for learning in this particular writing activity.

The teacher's articulated goal of this activity was for the students to become independent writers as defined by the adult model, that is, the students were socialized through writing to write as adults would write. The teacher describes her goals for this activity as being motivated by her desire to provide a supportive environment for the students to develop their language skills. She expressed these goals as follows:

> ...I want this to be a classroom where they feel really accepted and know that no matter how they come up with the word 'tugboat' (shown as example of child's writing) it's gonna be fine with me. So those are my- my basic goal is to get them writing on their own. That's my goal.

Her goal, then, is to move the students toward independent writing. She defined independent writing as writing "how an adult would write." She saw her role as providing the adult model upon which the children would base their own writing, balanced with a respect for the students own knowledge about writing.

> ...my role is to show the adult model if I need to but my role is to nurture what they already have inside of them. And I think the adult model is very valid. It's a real combination. It's a real balancing act between the adult model of how we write and what's already in them and validating that.

This writing process socializes the students to what the teacher views as the adult writing model and occurs through talk and interaction in the community construction of text in particular ways. Janet's instructional goal was embedded in her belief that children come to school with emergent literacy skills, i.e., knowledge about the purposes of print, knowledge about letters and their associated sounds, having had lap reading experience at home, and having begun to experiment with writing. As we talked over the course of the year, Janet revealed her belief that children learn through social interaction. As a result, she has created an inviting social space for the children to talk, write, and draw in which the

teacher, parent volunteers, and the students create a community of learners where all members actively participate in the learning process. One day, as we were talking about how much the children seemed to enjoy writing together, Janet described her belief that:

> ...usually with young children there is a social aspect to it, you know once they start learning that they're friends and they want to exchange phone numbers, they want to write. . . there's usually a social push to it, you know some way that they can relate to one another.

This orientation to the social processes involved in writing allowed a focused view of the dynamic social process of learning to write in a classroom where the teacher as expert is "contingently responsive" (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992) to the needs of the novice writers. In other words, the teacher has designed her role as a responsive participant to the students varying social and cognitive needs. In the following section, I will describe more specifically how the teacher uses indirection to index her instructional goal.

Indirection as Instructional Index

Janet uses multiple indexes to indicate her instructional goal of independent writing. As the following example will illustrate, the combination of gesture (high five) and shifts in register directly indexes approval or praise and simultaneously indirectly indexes the larger instructional goal of independent writing to the group as a whole. This layered indexical context socializes children to the particular epistemological value of independent writing defined by the teacher. Moreover, children are socialized to the norms and values of the academic discourse community of this classroom and of school, in general.

As the following interaction begins, the students have been working in their journals for a few minutes when the teacher approaches and establishes the dictation frame by asking, "Anybody ready for some he↑lp." This teacher typically indirectly indexes writing instruction by establishing the dictation frame through routinized opening utterances (e.g. "Is anybody ready?"), eye gaze, and gesture (e.g. bending over one student who is currently writing. See figure 1.). While only one student at a time, the primary author,

receives direct instruction from the teacher, peripheral participants respond to the teacher's indexicals of instruction by taking up complimentary roles such as overhearer, peripheral respondent and pivot.

Example 1a[2]
Indirection as Instructional Index

Figure 1

Figure 2

Teacher: Anybody ready for some he↑lp
((*leans over student and looks around the table*))
(1.4)
Anybody want to do all your own writing today?
(0.8)
and [we'll all help each other out]=
Helen: [I do]
((*looking up at teacher*))
Teacher: =.hhhuh↑
((*turns to look at Helen, begins to walk toward her*))
.hho:ohho:o
((*slaps a hi-five with Helen*))
<.hhh Helen Thomas is gonna do all her own writing>
((*Students around the table stop writing and look at teacher*))
I gotta get my camera set up
(2.4)

The teacher's second utterance ("Anybody want to do all your own writing today?") directly indexes her articulated instructional goal of independent writing. One student, Helen, immediately responds to the teacher's request ("I do") and is emphatically recognized as the teacher shifts to a playful key[3] (Goffman, 1981) with an affective utterance (".hhh:ohho:o") and gesture (slaps high five with Helen. See figure 2.). This

shift in key and register combines to both directly index approval of Helen's desire to write on her own and indirectly index the larger instructional goal of independent writing. As figure 2 illustrates, most of the students at the table have stopped writing to watch the interaction between the teacher and Helen. The next utterance, ".hhh Helen Thomas is gonna do all her own writing," directly indicates to Helen that this is a desired activity and further, yet indirectly, indicates the value of independent writing to the whole group in the public instructional space established as normative in this classroom. Thus, multiple indexes (key, register, utterance) both directly and indirectly communicate the larger epistemological value of independence as the marker of "real" writing.

In the next sequence of utterances, two students, Joseph and Kathy, use repetition to index their understanding of the teacher's goal. It becomes quite clear that these students have understood the value of achieving the teacher's articulated goal of independent writing.

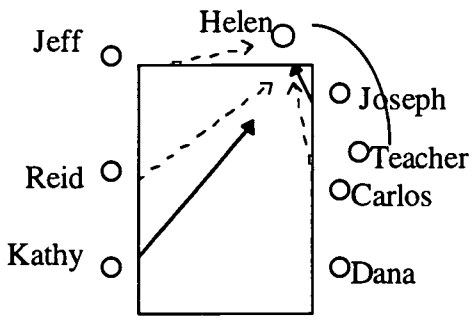

Figure 3

Example 1b
Interpreting Indirect Indexicals

Joseph:	I'm gonna tr↑y and do it,
	((*looks up at teacher*))
Kathy:	I'm↑ doing my own writing,
	((*turns to look at teacher, places elbow onto table*))
Joseph	I'm doing-
	((*looking up at teacher*))
Teacher:	Cause I take magical moments
	((*standing*))
Kathy:	I'm gonna do all my own writing.
	((*sitting up and looking at the teacher*))

Joseph: I'm gonna try and do-
((*looking up at teacher, waving pencil in his right hand*))
(0.4)
[do my own writing]
((*looks down at paper*))
Kathy: [I'm gonna do all my own] writing now Mrs-
((*looking up at the teacher*))

Both Joseph and Kathy openly display their understanding through a combination of eye gaze, cessation of writing, shift in body position and direct utterance. They repeatedly state that they will do their own writing. The teacher does not ratify these utterances, however, and moves on to work with another student on her journal. There are many other occasions when these bids for her attention are ratified and, as a result, this particular absence of ratification does not disrupt students' understanding of the instructional goal nor does it stop them from trying to write on their own. Several other students at the table (Jeff, Reid, and Carlos) do not display their attention so openly, however, they have stopped working and are watching the interaction intently (see figure 3). One other student, Dana, has not stopped working on her journal entry nor has she shifted her gaze. She is nonetheless an overhearer to this exchange and, as such, has access to the public instructional space within which the teachers' instructional goal is articulated.

Further evidence of the students' internalization of the teacher's instructional goal is seen later in the interaction. Joseph, one of the students who openly displayed his attention to the teacher's comments, begins to assert that he does not need the sentence strip to help him write. He proceeds to turn over the strip and act as though he is not using it. He does, however, need this scaffold and tries to hide his use of it from the teacher. He glances several times at the camera, knowing that his actions are being recorded and even jokes with Janet about how he is trying to keep his actions a secret. After several peeks at the paper, he slides it onto his lap and sneaks several looks at it as he continues to work on his journal entry (see figure 4).

Example 2
Sneaking a Look

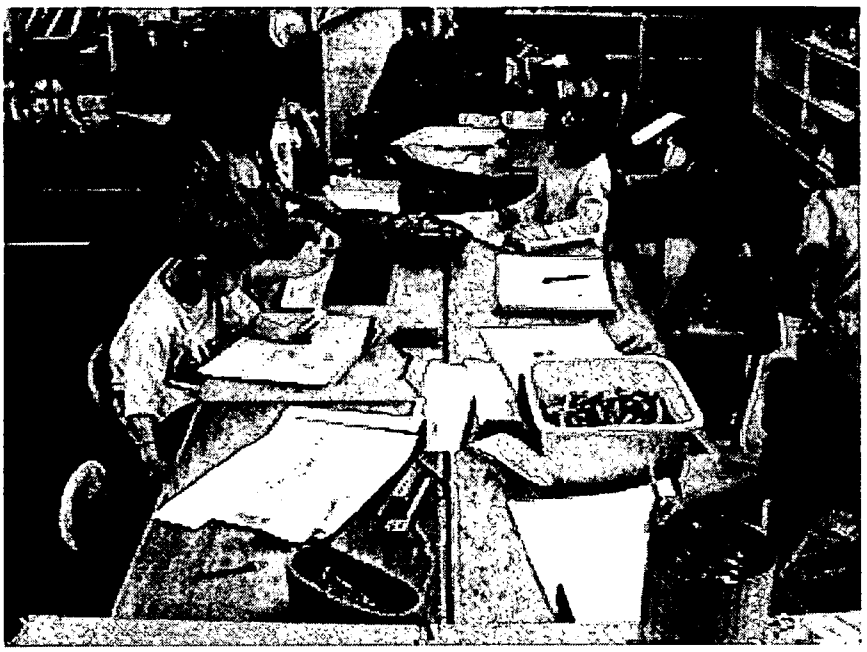

Figure 4

After finishing his writing, Joseph spent several minutes showing his journal to the teacher and the parent volunteer and stating that he did not need the sentence strip for assistance. They both knew he had been using it under the table, but offered praise for his efforts all the same. In fact, Joseph often did not finish his entry each day and this was one of very few times he had done so. The teacher focused her praise on the fact that he had indeed finished his entry this particular day, however it might have been accomplished.

Discussion

I have argued in this paper for a reconceptualization of classroom language and literacy practices to account for the valuable role talk and interaction play in the process of learning to write. In order for the intermental processes of learning to be effective, teachers need to construct learning environments within which interaction between students and teachers is the primary focus. In this paper, I have claimed that one of the ways this profoundly social process can be accomplished is through the construction of a shared indexical context, such as the flexible participation framework seen in the classroom

described here, within which the meaning of texts can be socially negotiated. The data cited provide a representative example of the level of indirection that may be used when a symmetrical indexical context is constructed. This intersubjective instructional space creates a common understanding of the meanings, limitation, and potential of literacy knowledge and suggests a reconstruction of writing curricula to account for the ways in which talk and interaction in general, and indexicality, in particular, construct the context for learning to write. In this model, the role of the teacher is transformed from a Foucauldian panoptical observer (Foucault, 1977) seen in most classrooms to that of joint participant in the social construction of literacy knowledge.

The implications of joint participation for assessment are significant. When the teacher serves as an active co-participant in the construction of literacy knowledge, she is afforded unique opportunities to assess the evolution of each student's writing and to adjust the activity according to the needs of both the individual as well as the group. By actively co-participating in writing activity, then, the teacher is able to provide on-line assessment of student learning in the course of interaction. Assessment of development in this context can be based, not only on standardized or decontextualized tests of skills, but also on the student's progress through her zone of proximal development as participation increases and changes over time (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Co-participation in purposeful talk and interaction in language activities, therefore, provides teachers with valuable evidence of learning as students change the nature of their participation in writing activity, moving to more central participation. Thus, assessment moves beyond simply examining formative or summative processes to provide the teacher with intimate knowledge of student learning that is determined in the course of interaction. Furthermore, because the participation framework is dynamic and the teacher actively participates in writing activity, curriculum development becomes a dynamic socially constructed process that has the potential to be responsive to all the participants in activity.

Disrupting the current hegemonic discourse patterns of traditional literacy instruction requires an examination of how social definitions of appropriate participation internalized in kindergarten provide the constitutive rules for classroom interaction throughout schooling (Apple, 1990). By changing these interaction patterns educators can change the nature of knowledge construction in classrooms from transmission models still dominant today, though masked in the guise of process pedagogies, to socially mediated knowledge construction. Process-oriented pedagogies, often instantiated as collaborative learning, remain subject to transmission model indexical rules if teachers restrict participation to dyadic interaction. These patterns of participation control meaning, i.e., how meaning is constructed in schools, by whom, and for what. If the process of socialization into language and interactional practices of the larger society begins, not only in the family, but in the first years of schooling as children are socialized into the academic discourse community, then reconceptualizing patterns of interaction from tightly controlled dyadic interaction to flexible multi-party structures can alter the regularities of interaction in schools and facilitate access to the social construction of literacy knowledge. I have argued for a reformulation of the social dynamics involved in the literacy learning process to account for a definition of literacy as the social practice of reading and writing that constitutes and is constituted by the social and linguistic practices of the larger society (Larson, 1996). Transforming patterns of interaction in classrooms will socialize students to a particular world view in which the teacher no longer serves as arbiter of knowledge, power, and authority but serves to facilitate the co-construction of literacy knowledge in democratic participation frameworks.

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[1]Analysis of the larger data set reveals that all participants in this writing activity were keyed into interaction in the primary dyad. See Larson (1995b) more a more elaborated discussion.

[2] The following transcription conventions, adapted from Atkinson and Heritage (1984) are used in the examples given:

Colons denote sound stretch (".hho:oh "); Brackets indicate overlapping speech; Equal signs indicate closely latched speech, or ideas, for example:

Teacher: and [we'll all help each other out]=
Helen: [I do]
Teacher: =.hhhuh↑

Intervals of silence are timed in tenths of seconds and inserted within parentheses; short, untimed silences are marked by a dash when sound is quickly cut off ("Mrs-") or with a period within parentheses (.). Rising intonation within an utterance is marked with an arrow ("he↑lp"); Falling intonation at the end of an utterance is indicated with a period ("okay."); Descriptions of speech or gesture are italicized within double parentheses ("((*looking up at teacher*))") Single parentheses surround items of doubtful transcription; and **boldface** indicates items of analytic focus.

[3] Key signals are social clues at the micro-level of language use that index the current mode of talk (Goffman, 1974). Goffman (1974) suggests five basic keys that indicate to participants "what it is we think is really going on" (p. 45) as make-believe (of which playfulness is a part), contests, ceremonials, technical redoings, and regroundings.

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