

“Peace to Learn”— A Discourse Analysis of Pupils’ Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Peace to learn refers to a peaceful state that makes meaningful and productive learning possible—in other words, the conditions that allow or hinder pupils to work peacefully in the classroom. How pupils perceive their own position in the classroom is related to their perception of peace to learn. In this research, the purpose was to draw a picture of pupils’ conceptions of their positions and peace to learn through discourse analysis. Two groups of sixth-graders and one group of fifth-graders participated in this research. The pupils were asked to write a description of a peaceful or restless lesson by continuing short frame stories. Altogether, 59 essays were received. The data were analyzed by discourse analysis method: attention was paid to the smallest units of language and the position of language in the construction of reality. Two discourses could be found in essays: the staid pupil’s and peace breaker’s discourses. Both discourses included four interpretative repertoires that illustrate pupils’ perceptions of their subject positions in the classroom: all of them see peace to learn differently. In conclusion, the connection between peace to learn and a learning event is discussed. Peace to learn means different things to different pupils; it is a real challenge to teaching.

Key words: discourse analysis; subject position; peaceful classroom; pupilhood

INTRODUCTION

The smoothness of teachers’ daily work is greatly dependent on how successful their communication with pupils is (see Manke, 1997). A successful interaction relationship brings about a nice atmosphere which makes pleasant working possible. But do pupils perceive peace to learn in the same way as the teacher and how do they see their position in the classroom (see also Raviv, Raviv, & Reisel, 1990)? This question was the starting point of this research. If the teacher interprets peace to learn differently than students, is it possible that the teacher’s actions could cause pupils’ frustration or discomfort—and how to create a peaceful classroom and promote peace to learn?

Many studies have shown that much of classroom work time is devoted to things other than studying: mostly to discipline problems (e.g. Gotzens et al, 2010; Seidman, 2005). Problems in maintaining discipline in the classroom have been studied from teachers’ point of view to a great extent (e.g. Butchard, 1995; Ritter & Hancock, 2007; Özben, 2010) and teachers historically have ranked classroom management as one of their major concerns (see Rosas & West, 2009; Thornberg, 2009). However in this research, pupils’ perspective is to be highlighted. Peace to learn and problems in discipline are defined through the discourses in the pupils’ essays.

First, the main concepts should be introduced. As we talk about ‘peace to learn’, we refer to a peaceful state that

makes meaningful and productive learning possible—in other words, we mean the conditions that allow or hinder pupils to work peacefully in the classroom. Every pupil perceives peace to learn in their own way and these variations are dissected in this research. Pupils’ perceptions are also connected to their positions. The term ‘pupilhood’ refers to the state of being a pupil (see also Burges & Carter, 1996). Every pupil is considered one-of-a-kind and therefore, pupils have various perceptions of themselves as pupils—in other words, of their pupilhood. In this research, pupils described their positions in their essays and thus contemplated their pupilhood. Furthermore, the purpose was to analyze how pupils’ positions affected peace to learn in the classroom.

The methodological framework in this research is discourse analysis. According to this approach, language cannot be distinguished from other reality because language is not just a means of describing the reality but also a part of the reality itself. When we use language, we construct the world and reality. (See Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). In this research, the purpose was to piece together the reality that is lived in the classroom. As pupils write about pupilhood in a certain way, they simultaneously mold the world, their understanding about it as well as about themselves, their classmates, and the teacher. Thus, the essays reveal the pupils’ position in the classroom community as well as possible institutionalized beliefs.

In the theoretical introduction, we will introduce some relevant studies and theories on how pupils experience school. Our purpose is to illustrate the connection between pupils’ subject positions in the classroom and the perceived peace to learn in the classroom. Then, we will move on to introducing the methodological choices after which the results and conclusions are presented.

THE SCHOOL IN PUPILS’ EXPERIENCES

Due to compulsory education, every member of our society has some sort of idea of school and its working methods. Kaarlo Laine pointed out in his doctoral dissertation that the control that is traditionally directed in pupils by the school still forms the foundation on how pupils’ activities are structured; however, youngsters’ informal culture placed the institutional structures and practices in a new position (Laine, 2003). Do action and pupils’ positions mold the institution or vice versa?

The school system has always had a tensed task: on the one hand, it is to preserve cultural heritage while on the other hand it has to function as a change-promoting institution. The school’s task is to socialize young

citizens into the norms of the society but simultaneously to enhance their autonomy and critical thinking. Teachers have to balance between these two tasks. (Tomperi & Piattoeva, 2005.)

Tuula Gordon and Elina Lahelma (2003) have studied school at the formal, informal, and physical level. Formal school is described in curricula or other documents and regulations. In addition, school rules and the formal hierarchy between the teacher and students are parts of formal school. Informal school refers to the informal interaction between the teacher and students during lessons and outside the classroom. Physical school covers the school as a physical space and the control over movement, voice, time, and bodiliness.

Moreover, school operates on the institutional, organizational, and individual level. As a societal institution, school has certain tasks, such as educating children and youngsters and distributing information. As an organization, school tries to find means to realize its institutional tasks but also to maintain its inner order. As a community, school involves people who work there as personalities, their feelings, and mutual interactions. (See Elmore, 2000.)

The relationship between children and school is defined through encounters that take place at the above-mentioned various levels. Children’s school achievements make an important part of it: how they are able to fulfill the demands that come up from school’s institutional tasks. An equally significant factor is children’s behavior at school, their interaction with the norms that regulate the school order. The third one is the definition of school as a community. Relationships both with classmates and adults at school are crucial in the formation of the relationship between children and school. At the individual level, a pupil’s relationship with teachers seems to be closely connected to whether the pupil is in a troublemaker’s position or not.

Negative attitudes toward teachers are related to the conflicts with school norms, the organizational form of school, and the control mechanisms of behavior. When discipline problems are studied only from the point of view of the school organization, the reasons can be seen as individual pupils’ adjustment problems. But when the perspective is turned in the individual, the reasons can be seen in the organizational structures that do not take individuals into consideration. However, the question is about trouble in the relationship between the individual pupil and school organization. Institutional administration culture changes in different ways and phases than juvenile cultures. Formal school has its own way of action: its manifestation is fairly different from most juvenile

cultures. Therefore, it is not very surprising that everyday life at school constantly involves misunderstandings and disciplinary actions. (Tolonen, 2002.)

Everyday life at school is organized as habits, practices, and routines. Individual pupils become socialized into institutionalized relationships that are reproduced, internalized, externalized, and materialized in being, action, and consciousness. (Laine, 2000.) When time, space, and teaching and expertise are organized at school, formal school produces an arrangement where teachers and other adults control children, the use of space, and the fulfillment of learning. Discipline and demur occur in the everyday life at school all the time. Pupils make interpretations about school based on the hints they get. They reckon what is appreciated, allowed, public, unspoken, usual, or different in their school environment. Children and youngsters constantly observe their environment and deduce what is a good citizen, girl or boy, or pupil. Indeed, “good pupilhood” is a strategy according to which children function in the institutional order and social relationships. Therefore, it seems that the way pupils perceive the concept of an ideal pupil tells more about the school’s pedagogical and disciplinary practices and student cultures than about an ideal pupil’s characteristics or personality. (Tolonen, 2002; see also Weinstein, 1991.)

Pupils who perform and behave well are rewarded with stipends at the end of the study year. On the other hand, pupils’ own informal culture is also grounded on various behaviors, affiliations, exclusions, and competition. Sometimes “a good student” holds a recognized position in some subculture, too, whereas a low-grade pupil may be successful among peers through the subject position of “a good fighter”. (Tolonen, 2003.) Moving from the given position to another may be difficult even if a pupil really wanted to get rid of his or her previous role.

The term ‘pupil’ already refers to formal school. However, a part of pupils’ professionalism is the ability to balance between the formal and informal school. If one focuses totally on achieving the goals of formal school, one may be exposed to bullying in the informal school while focusing just on the informal side may result in low grades. (Lahelma & Gordon, 2003.)

Pupils take and get certain positions in the classroom through which their action is determined (Cezero & Ato, 2010). According to Koskenniemi (1972), a socially typical position greatly results from the facts of what a pupil is like and what his or her goals are. Yet, the position is not just dependent on personal factors.

The concept of peace to learn is quite subjective and relative by nature. Some pupils may find some situation peaceful while others may regard it as disturbing. For

pupils, peace to learn means the opportunity to study and work in peace; and that time also includes the time spent at school, school commutes, and doing homework. From the teacher’s point of view, the question is about being able to teach in peace which is hindered if the teacher has to pay attention to irrelevant things during teaching. (Bru, 2009; Rosas & West, 2009.)

Peace to learn is closely connected to such concepts as the peaceful classroom (Wheeler & Stomfay-Stitz, 2001), safe and warm classroom environment (King & Chantler, 2002), effective teaching and learning (Cooper & MacIntyre, 1993; Smith & Blake, 2005) as well as discipline, order, and classroom management (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicarb, 2005; De Sa Maini, 2011). Yet, as a concept, ‘peace to learn’ is the closest to pupils and their position in the classroom as the others have a connotation of the teacher or other school authorities having the control over the atmosphere and peace in the classroom. Therefore, this concept was selected as one of the core concepts of this research.

Puurula (1984; see also Gotzens, 2006) considered peace to learn as a result of education, not as a means. It results from rearing that successfully achieves the goal; and this way, the concept is understood in this research as well. The question is about goal-oriented action in which every member of the classroom community—including the teacher—has to engage. Peace in the classroom is sustained by both verbalized and unwritten agreements on appropriate behavior and rules of behavior. To create as genuine a peace as possible, the teacher and pupils should have relatively similar ideas of the manifestation of a peaceful classroom and peace to learn. It is a space that makes it possible to concentrate on meaningful learning and to get real experiences during lessons. Peace to learn does not have to occur similarly in every lesson but adjusts according to situations and school subjects. It enables goal-oriented action and, in this article, it is considered both as the means and as the result of education. Furthermore, it should not be restricting but liberating.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this research, pupils at school are considered as actively constructing meanings and reality through social interaction among the members of the school community. The purpose is to focus on pupils’ perceptions of their positions in the classroom and peace to learn. These themes are studied by analyzing pupils’ language usage. Pupils’ descriptions of their subject positions in the classroom are at the core. Due to the nature of social practices, some interpretations about social reality become more dominant

than others—mostly, interpretations are based on the actors’ various positions (Juhila & Suoninen, 1999). Positions are always created in social practices so they are not predetermined and distinct “places” but may become settled in various everyday situations (Jokinen, Juhila, & Suoninen, 2000).

The main research question is the following: What kinds of pupil discourses related to peace in the classroom and interpretation repertoires can be found in pupils’ essays? The analysis will focus on two sub-questions:

- 1) What kinds of positions do pupils have in the discourses?
- 2) What are the main characteristics of these discourses?

METHODS

The data of this research were collected in three classrooms with the method of empathy-based stories: among one group of fifth-graders and two groups of sixth-graders (altogether 59 pupils). The pupils had 45 minutes (that is one lesson) to write the essays. The time was quite short, but on the other hand, young pupils cannot concentrate on producing text much longer at one time. Furthermore, a brief, spontaneous writing session was considered representing sincere thoughts about the theme.

The frame stories were “A lesson in the peaceful classroom” and “A lesson in the restless classroom”. The pupils had to write according to the frame story with the help of auxiliary questions. In every case, half of the class wrote according to the peaceful frame story and half according to the restless one. Most pupils produced nearly one sheet of hand-written essay. Altogether, 59 pupils participated in the research (33 girls and 26 boys).

The following frame story was given to those who were supposed to write about a lesson in a peaceful classroom:

Cameron leaves the classroom feeling good. What a peaceful lesson! It had been easy to concentrate on teaching... Please, write a story about Cameron’s lesson. If you like, you can use the questions below as help.

- What was the lesson like?
- What was the reason for the nice and peaceful classroom working?
- How did the pupils work? What did they do during the lesson?
- How did the teacher work?

This frame story produced descriptions of a peaceful lesson except for a couple of exceptions. The word ‘nice’ was chosen deliberately to describe the peaceful lesson as the presupposition was that various subjects have various ideas of nice and peaceful lesson. Thus, the purpose was to get into pupils’ subjective views about peace to learn and factors that affect it.

The below-mentioned frame story was created to produce descriptions of restless lessons. The difference between the stories was made with little variations:

Cameron leaves the classroom with a sigh. What a restless lesson! It had been quite difficult to concentrate on anything... Please, write a story about Cameron’s lesson. If you like, you can use the questions below as help.

- What was the lesson like?
- What was the reason for the restlessness?
- How did the pupils work? What did they do during the lesson?
- How did the teacher work?

In qualitative research, the purpose is to understand the phenomenon and therefore, the researcher has to recognize people’s motives and beliefs that influence the action (Naukkarinen, 1999). Also in this research, various motives and beliefs that affect how the members of the school community act concerned the phenomenon of peace in the classroom. The pupils’ essays functioned as a means to highlight these beliefs.

The data were categorized according to the research questions into various discourses. Already the initial variations in the writing task provided a rough basis for categorization. Further-categorization requires that the researcher uses clear theoretical concepts and viewpoints to move on to the final categorization. Such interpretations that go beyond the descriptions to the level of phenomena and themes are made.

The data analysis is based on Jokinen, Juhila, and Suoninen’s (2000) idea of theoretical assumptions concerning language: 1) The assumption on the nature of language as socially constructive; 2) the assumption of the existence of several parallel and competitive systems of meanings; 3) the assumption of the context-bound nature of meaningful action; 4) the assumption of actors’ connection with the systems of meanings; and 5) the assumption of the consequential nature of language usage. Attention was paid to the similarities or the parts of the same systems of meanings in pupils’ essays. The purpose is to move on from parts toward entities, from meanings

toward the systems of meanings. Several constantly renewing and constructing systems of meanings exist simultaneously. They are often called repertoires of interpretation or discourses. The repertoire of interpretation is a useful method for examining colloquial language in detail and thus refers to the construction of the person who uses the language.

In discursive action and the functions of discourses, people are given certain positions and various subjectivities are created of them. In these born discourses, the identities formed to individual people produce various rights, duties, and features that the subject or others assume or expect him or her to have. Identities are seen as functional categories and they are called subject positions. (Alajoutsijärvi, 2009.) A subject position is a position that determines an individual people’s viewpoint. Associations and concepts for acting in the position are given by discourse. In discourses, an individual person is linked with different subject positions that limit his or her action and bring change to his or her position. Thus, discourses evince positions, locations, and places where the subject may put himself or herself. (Foucault, 1969.) The concept of subject position is useful in situations where the limitations of action are analyzed. Positions may become settled in various everyday situations, such as in schools where teachers and pupils take their positions as given. It is interesting to study how this stability is produced as positions are not predetermined or given “places” but they are always created in social practices. (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 2000.)

Through analyzing language, it is possible to interpret those cultural resources that the subjects lean on, how they construct institutions and role positions, and the rhetoric that is used for justifying the definitions of policy and solutions. These matters will be brought out from the pupils’ essays. The aim is to contemplate whether school as an institution has provided pupils and teachers with certain positions of action and the exercise of power. In this kind of discourse analysis, special attention is paid on phrasing and categorizations, the use of rhetoric means, and how the language usage is adjusted to possible counter-arguments. (Juhila & Suoninen, 1999.)

The word “discourse” is based on Latin word “discursus” and means “to run around”. On the other hand, the French word “discourse” means “speech, lecture, chat, or rambling”. In addition to its etymologic perspective, discourse also means a process and its result, simultaneously. This means that the meanings of languages are not ready or absolutely true and are produced in discourses formulated in social, historical, and institutional contexts

(Lehtonen, 2000). Discourse analysis does not focus on what may be outside the language usage or what might be significant outside the action (see also Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Therefore, the results section also includes plenty of quotations and excerpts from pupils’ essays in order to support the interpretations.

RESULTS

Two fundamental discourses could be found in the essays already because of the writing assignment: the staid pupil’s and the peace breaker’s discourses. These two discourses included eight various interpretation repertoires about the pupils’ subject positions. Both discourses involved pupils with different positions. All these pupils had their own kind of action or behavior that molded the peace in the classroom in some direction.

The Staid Pupil’s Discourse

This discourse was categorized into four interpretation repertoires that were quiet workers, active obeyers, diligent nerds, and those who were coaxable with carrots or sticks. The discourse was constructed mostly through colorful verbs that referred either to passive or to active pupils who maintain the action and their ways of action. The teacher’s role as the definer of pupils’ action was highlighted. The pupils’ behavior was merely reproducing the school system than changing it.

Quiet Workers. The discourse of a pupil who was firmly positioned next to the desk was strongly evident in pupils’ empathizing essays. Although not all these discourses included the notion of working by the desk, it can be interpreted that the writers had perceived that working took place by the desk and action that happened somewhere else was mentioned separately. The following example illustrates well how the writer perceives the peaceful lesson: “It was a nice and peaceful lesson because it was quiet in the classroom...” (A boy, 5th grade, No. 8.)

The data covered 59 essays and in 15 of them, the narrator was “I” whose point of view the events were described. Of these essays, 10 were essays about the peaceful lesson and the narrator was a so-called ideal pupil. In the remaining five discourses, the narrator held a victim’s position, mistreated without his or her own fault or stamped as a troublemaker. It partly reveals how pupils often thought that the reason for a restless lesson is something other than their own action. When the narrator was externalized as an omniscient “he” or “she,” the main

character had sides according to which he or she could be categorized as holding a troublemaker’s or a fusser’s subject position.

“The lesson was amazingly peaceful. Not any babbling or yelling... I wonder why our class was so quiet. Maybe because we had a substitute teacher... We had a math lesson... Work with pages 36-37! Oh how easy tasks! yelled Cameron...” (A girl, 5th-grade, No. 4)

The teacher had his or her own role in maintaining peace and providing a nice experience of the lesson. Indeed, the teacher sets up the frames when defining what is done in each lesson. Especially in the discourses of a quiet worker, the teacher often appeared as more active and important in relation to the pupil who did not act until the teacher had defined the situation. The teacher was the activator who either succeeded or failed in his or her task.

Active Obeyers. Some pupils differed from the quiet workers so that they were more independent and more active instead of just sitting at the desk. As predicates, the pupils who held this kind of subject position used such verbs that include an opportunity for autonomous action (e.g. to choose, to decide).

The following phenomena separated active obeyers’ subject positions from quiet workers subject positions. The underlined sections represent parts of text that illustrate the opportunity for a more free actorship.

“...I’ll let you know soon, the teacher answered. –We will be acting, and you can write down themes... We were divided in groups... I had to work with Mary, Vince, John, and Kia. We chose Kia’s theme... -Ok. Let’s do like this. Mary is the ticket seller... We saw several good pieces... Then it was our turn and everything went great.” (A girl, 6th grade, No. 17)

“...everyone decided to draw except the nerd of our class who always wants just to read... The substitute teacher decided that we shall go to the warehouse to look for costumes for the play... When we had selected our costumes, we had to go and practice the plays...” (A girls, 6th grade, No. 13)

Lahelma and Gordon’s (2003) research showed that sometimes teachers tried to hide the asymmetric power distribution by their phrasing. When talking about “we”, the teacher parallels himself or herself with pupils: As if action was determined together instead of the teacher’s

autocratic decision-making, yet pupils’ emancipation goes through the teacher. The teacher is the one who creates the lesson situations. In the essays in this category, the teacher however gives pupils a chance to make their own decisions. In the situations of these essays, the teacher’s utterances function as emancipating the pupils.

Pupils seem to consider the teacher’s role important when it comes to enabling pupils’ active learning. The teacher supports and encourages continuously. In addition, the teacher supports pupils’ self-esteem and strengthens their belief in their possibilities. The teacher’s role in motivating pupils is important. Even pupils notice each other’s doings benignly:

“Cameron learned and counted the fastest of the whole class. The mates praised Cameron...”

Diligent Nerds. “Diligent nerds” represent those who sit in their own place, read, draw, and do the tasks although other pupils would just run around and scream. Diligent nerds distinguish themselves from other pupils as they do not run wild and study harder than others—even harder than “quiet workers” do. Diligence and obedience as well as being different from other pupils may be the reason why they may be called nerds or geeks. Diligent nerds enjoy being alone, totally resigned from the other group, or among their ilk.

“...every pupil would be talking during the whole lesson but Cameron didn’t, nor did Cameron run around like other pupils... Cameron had completed a lot of tasks although had not been able to concentrate.” (A boy, 5th grade, No. 4)

This category represents a model student who is openly excited about studies; in other words, other pupils clearly know about this pupil’s school success. In this research, these kinds of pupils were called “nerds” as that exact word occurred in essays all the time. Furthermore, the word includes the negative associations that other pupils may have toward this subject position. The essays did not contain any mention about talent but authors’ thoughts about the nerd’s capability of doing school work can be read between the lines.

“...Everyone decided to draw except the nerd of our class who always wants just to read...so we had “the best drawing” competition. And of course, Matthew [the nerd] was the judge because he had just been reading...” (A girl, 6th grade, No. 13)

Coaxable with Carrots or Sticks. The essays covered both the discourses of benefits and harms. In some essays, the author is clearly future-oriented. The future is contemplated through grades, in an outcome-oriented manner:

“...Everyone concentrated on the exam in order to get good grades...” (A girl, 5th grade, No. 6)

Sometimes, thoughts went further. In addition to the immediate future, the essay might discuss advanced education and work.

In some essays, the teacher appeared as a briber. The teacher tried to control the class by offering pupils some carrot, a price that would be achieved by behaving well. On the other hand, the teacher threatened that the promised price would be lost if someone disturbed the peace in the classroom:

“...This year, we’ll have a field trip to a science park, the teacher excitedly explained. –But only if you don’t disturb the lesson, do your homework, study hard, and sell lots of cookies....This way, you’ll never get to the science park, told the teacher.” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 12)

In addition to carrots, teachers used “the stick” as well. Pupils who behaved restlessly were threatened with punishments; a detention occurred many times in the essays:

“...then the teacher said that the next one who babbles will get detention. Then everyone shut their mouths and returned at their desks...” (A boy, 5th grade, No. 9)

In the peace breaker’s discourse, the interpretation repertoires differ from this category so that threatening with detention did not necessarily have an effect on “peace breakers”.

The Peace Breaker’s Discourse

The peace breaker’s discourse could be divided into four interpretation repertoires that were the restless because of malaise, fussers, fighters and bullies, and rebels. What is common to these essays is that they are filled with verbs and adjectives with negative connotations.

“It was a restless lesson. Everyone was acting wild.” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 15) “Every pupil would make a noise and would not respect or listen to the teacher.” (A girl, 6th grade, No. 13)

The classroom community always involves informal expectations that direct pupils’ behavior. They can support the formal goals, be irrelevant to the goal, or make it more difficult to achieve the formal goals. Pupils are not motivated just to learn but also to satisfy their social-emotional needs such as becoming appreciated. Role behavior, that can be called disturbing behavior, wells from frustration—which can result from various reasons. One of the reasons may be the pupil’s frustration with his or her position and problems that arise from it. Unclear teaching situations, the teacher treating pupils unjustly, or deviating from the rules of the community may cause disturbing behavior (See Reyna & Weiner, 2001.)

Even threatening with sanctions did not help the teacher to secure peace in the classroom. The peace breakers did not even flinch either at hearing about precedents or detentions but the same restlessness would just carry on:

“...Then the teacher said that if you don’t obey now, I’ll give detention to everyone; and still no one obeyed...” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 11)

The Restless Because of Malaise. In some essays, lack of concentration and restlessness were explained by illness, sleep deprivation, or hunger. Therefore, the blame was not put on the subject, the teacher, or other pupils as it was in other interpretation repertoires.

“...I was restless because I had not eaten the breakfast and slept well. But other pupils did the exam briskly but Cameron would just carry on fooling around...” (A boy, 5th grade, No. 6)

Nutrition, exercise, and rest form the classic foundation for health. Nowadays, their regularity is not obvious and malfunction related in them is called “lifestyle problems”. It may be that the child sleeps and exercises too little and eats irregularly. The lack of regular rhythm of life causes fatigue, annoyance, and general reluctance that are connected with learning, behavior, and overall well-being in many ways. (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 2007.)

“Cameron found the lesson really restless. The pupils yelled at each other and such. Cameron thought this restlessness could arise from lack of sleep...” (A boy, 5th grade, No. 8)

Fussers. Fussers did unnecessary and inappropriate things during the lesson, such as swaying on the chair, unnecessary talking, leaving one’s desk without permission, yelling, laughing, and disturbing the lesson for example

with various objects. “Talking” usually referred to the kind of talking the teacher did not approve and that the teacher may have denied again and again. Therefore, gratuitous talking during a lesson is punishable:

“...Everyone fusses when the teacher enters the classroom being irritated... Larry is swaying... Cameron’s sly mate talks all the time but the teacher notices and blames Cameron on it and I was angry at the neighbor because Cameron will probably get a 30-minute detention...” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 11)

Through voice control, the pupils can clearly challenge the basic situation in the classroom. Voice control is personal: one has to think if one is to talk and therefore making noises is usually conscious. An irrelevant or too loud a voice breaks the social hierarchy where the teacher defines how to use voice.

“...As soon as the teacher left the classroom, a terrible racket started... The teacher returns in the classroom and the racket settles down a little bit...” (A girl, 6th grade, No. 25)

Fussers also disturb the peace by throwing various objects and swaying on chairs:

“Everyone is talking at the same time. Some were complaining about the lesson and others talked about something else... Some were throwing rubbers, others argued with the teacher, and some other things were done as well. Some were flying paper planes. And some talked about games, pets, and so on...” (A girl, 5th grade, No. 2)

The school order was questioned with many concrete actions. The teacher finds the disturbance always disturbing the lesson while the pupil who disturbs may find it just amusement, some excitement to the boring lesson.

Fighters and Bullies. Bullying is oppressing. The bully and bullied are not equal but for some reason the one bullied finds it difficult to fight back. However, impoliteness and maliciousness are not bullying but bad behavior. Usually, bullying occurs as naming or mocking. (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 2007.) Bullying may be both physical and mental as well as exclusion expressed by one’s own classroom community (See also Bosacki, Marini, & Dane, 2006).

“...The classroom started to chatter, ‘Oh no, the teacher mocks me again.’ ... I managed to keep my presentation

and only three hysterical episodes took place during it... Still, it all started from one person, Jerry King. I didn’t quite understand why everyone laughed during MY entire presentation but, of course, no one would laugh at Jerry anyway...” (A girl, 6th grade, No. 21)

Rebels. The starting point of going to school being obligatory to all arouses revolt or rebellious mood. These kinds of pupils are not interested in school and they find it compulsive and as an order from above. In some essays, pupils rebelled against the teacher and very clearly showed that they do not care about the teacher’s talk. The teacher’s authoritative position was questioned and basically the teacher did not find any means to calm down the pupils:

“No one minded about the teacher’s prohibitions... No one even practiced but everyone babbled with each other...” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 14)

The teacher was to find out that he or she was not respected:

“Cameron didn’t bother to stand up and say hello to the teacher... but Cameron would just throw a rubber in the teacher’s eye... The teacher asked Cameron to read a short section but Cameron answered rudely: ‘You read it!’ ...” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 11)

Diligence and being inspired by school are powerfully connected with how well pupils get along with the teacher. It set demands on the teacher’s own behavior as well if the aim is to motivate children to study. If the teacher is not respected, studying will not be motivating either.

According to the research, pupils also rebelled against the teachers’ prohibitions and it was expressed during the lessons:

“Everyone revolted against the teacher because the teacher had prohibited them to fuss, murmur, and play snow-ball fight and cock-of-the-walk. I and other pupils swayed on our chairs and fussed and some yelled nasty things to the teacher...” (A boy, 6th grade, No. 17)

Voice is an efficient form of resistance and sensitive medium of social control. Peace and silence are considered politeness and the manifestation of respecting others even in the school regulation (Tolonen, 2002). When the teacher is not respected, the traditional need for controlling one’s voice disappears.

TABLE 1

The Categorization of Pupils’ Discourses, Typical Descriptions, Perceptions of Peace to Learn, and the Hegemony of Discourses.

	Typical descriptions of the lessons	Perceptions of peace to learn	The hegemony of discourses
Quiet workers	Quiet; no babbling, we were working; I was able to concentrate; they wrote; to read; to draw	Peace to learn as wonderful, pleasant, silence	10/59
Active obeyers	Versatile verbs to describe pupils’ action; collaboration; we played; we looked for costumes; we choose	Peace to learn as the enabler or pupils’ active working.	10/59
Diligent nerds	The traditional pupil’s role; staying still although others would run around; I was counting; they would always read	Peace to learn as means to learn.	5/59
Coaxable with carrot and stick	Working motivated by rewards or punishments; they would get good scores; to have an occupation	Peace to learn as a means to achieve a reward or avoid a punishment.	7/59
The restless because of malaise	Concentration problems because of lack of sleep or nutrition; had slept too little; had not eaten the breakfast	Peace to learn as rupturing.	4/59
Fussers	movement, motion with various means; breaking down the traditional position; looking for change; they ran	Peace to learn as the regulator of space and voice control.	11/59
Fighters and bullies	bully talk; solving arguments; he yelled and fought; would be beaten up; we laugh at your hair style; “haa haa”	Peace to learn as rupturing.	6/59
Rebels	questioning the teacher’s authority; complaining about the tasks; quarrelsome; You read it!; everyone revolted against the teacher	Peace to learn as something to be ruptured.	6/59

Previously, it was mentioned that the teacher creates and determines the classroom situations. The teacher is a personality but sometimes too difficult tasks may also be the reason for disturbing the peace in the classroom:

“Other pupils just ran and yelled! ...The class started to complain that the tasks were too difficult. –Teacher! They are too difficult. Can we go out already? William asked with a begging voice...” (A girl, 5th grade, No. 3)

DISCUSSION

Table 1 sums up the results. Pupils are categorized quite harshly into certain categories. Therefore, it is reasoned to mention that no real pupil will stay in the same position the whole school time. Positions change according to lessons and situations. The interpretations are closely connected to the data but they also involve the

researcher’s own thinking, reading between the lines. In addition, the mental atmosphere that was transmitted from the essays, that is the shared way of thinking, affected the interpretation.

Factors That Lie Behind the Action That Preserves or Disturbs Peace to Learn

The staid pupil’s discourse expressed the aspiration to promote peace to learn. Thus, it was considered in a positive light and peace and its position were not questioned. Every subject position’s views about peace did, however, differ from each other regarding how it was defined in relation to oneself and one’s appreciations. Therefore, peaceful lesson acted as a utility value to every subject position.

Quiet Workers: Silence and the feeling of regularity as the absolute value

Active Obeyers: Enabling pupils’ active and

autonomous action as the absolute value

Diligent nerds: Learning and sustaining the pupil’s traditional position as the absolute value

Coaxable with Carrot and Stick: Achieving some (outer) reward or avoiding punishment as the absolute value

The peace breaker’s discourse involved interpretation repertoires where the peaceful lesson was either deliberately disturbed or it lost out to other action. Peace to learn was not appreciated as a utility value as it was in the staid pupil’s discourse; instead, it was secondary compared with the rest of the situation.

Fussers: Peace and order are not desired: it regulates the space and voice control in a negative manner and does not work for the pupil but as compulsory.

Fighters and bullies: Fighting and arguing and the feeling that dominates the situation rise above peace in the classroom. Peace is lost when the situation is solved.

Rebels: Peace is regarded as defined by the teacher and school. One does not want to adopt the school tasks. By disturbance, one revolts against the prevailing circumstances.

Table 1 includes also the hegemonic relations between the discourses. By the number of cases, the interpretation repertoires have the following order starting from the largest group: Fussers, quiet workers, active obeyers, coaxable with carrot and stick, fighters and bullies, rebels, diligent nerds, and the restless because of malaise. The qualitative hegemony follows the same trend. The essays contained various characters and eventually they were categorized according to the one that was highlighted the most in each essay.

The purpose of the research was to dissect pupils’ position in the classroom and how peace to learn was defined from the points of view of various pupil positions. The summary of the analysis covered eight types with slightly different viewpoints.

CONCLUSION

Pupils are likely to sustain peace to learn if the learning event is meaningful and successful and if the teacher and pupils are committed to it. On the other hand, a meaningful learning event can be achieved if the class works in peace. Based on the results, it is difficult to say which one affects the most as the factors are strongly intertwined.

Nevertheless, the fact that pupils find the state of a peaceful classroom as worth achieving would certainly promote peace in the classroom. Indeed, for example, a Norwegian study showed that pupils in classes with markedly disruptive pupils reported significantly less opportunity to learn in peace and thus found it unwanted although much variance in perceived peace to learn did not occur among pupils (see Bru, 2009).

Pupils are different: others are quiet and enjoy being alone and already their being or habitus seem to be more tied to intellectuality than sportiveness or physical appearance. Others on the other hand long for active doing, bodily communication, and learning through motion. Some pupils communicate by writing, others with their voice or motion. Learning habits and perceptions about a peaceful classroom are divergent which have to be noticed in teaching by employing various methods.

According to Mooij, Terwel, and Huber (2002), with young pupils, teachers initially act as external monitors, but gradually help pupils to become self-regulators. In addition, teachers should organize positive self-evaluation and reflection. A change toward new learning will also influence the social characteristics inherent in learning and teaching.

Compared to traditional learning, not only qualities of the social behavior of pupils and teachers, but also social conditions within the teaching and learning situation, will be seen differently in process-oriented instruction that is offered as a new approach that pays attention to the social perspective of learning. Yet, the question is not that simple. To make pupils more autonomous and simultaneously maintain order in the classroom is not easy (see Funnel, 2009). Indeed, taking into account various pupils and perceptions on good and effective learning is a real challenge to today’s teachers.

By analyzing students’ perceptions and thoughts, it is possible to explore in a unique way how differently they experience school work. It gives a hint about how the teacher can enhance the creation of peace to learn by paying attention to various students’ positions. Moreover, the findings of this research can help teachers to reflect and evaluate their own attitude toward pupils’ behavior. Teachers need more self-evaluation based information about the features of activity that disturbs or enhances peace to learn. Pupils learn in a variety of ways, their behaviors differ from each other even in the same learning environment. Thus, teachers need a certain kind of sensitivity as well as ability to re-consider their prejudices or presuppositions on pupils’ perceptions on learning.

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