Conversation As a Model of Instructional Interaction

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ABSTRACT

The role of social context and the nature of human interaction provide rich resources for the study of learning and human cognition. In order to understand these elements more fully, it is important to consider the language in use within these contexts. The early intervention Reading Recovery is grounded in the belief that the conversation between the teacher and the student during the reading and writing of texts is the stimulus for learning. In this study, discourse analysis in the form of conversation analysis was used to analyze transcripts of the introduction to the new book from two Reading Recovery lessons. An intertextual analysis was also conducted on one of the transcripts to evaluate the conversational genre versus the traditional classroom discourse pattern of initiate, respond, evaluate (IRE). Results showed that one transcript sample was a clear example of a conversational discourse style with the teacher and student actively co-constructing meaning, while the other was an example of the more traditional IRE style with the student maintaining a passive stance to learning. Implications and limitations of the study are discussed.

> Teaching is essentially a matter of facilitating learning, and
> where that learning depends on communication between the
> teacher and the learner, the same principles apply as in any
> successful conversation. The aim must be the collaborative
> construction of meaning, with negotiation to ensure that
> meanings are mutually understood.
>
> (Wells, 1986, p. 101)

The role of discourse in learning, particularly in educational settings, cannot be understated. Analyzing discourse helps us understand how knowledge is created within human social interactions and, as Jaworski and Coupland (1999) suggest, deconstruct how particular texts come to be structured as they do, with all their social and political implications. From this perspective, language use is viewed as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1999). Understanding discourse in this way may help educators provide the instructional conversations most beneficial to all students.

The purpose of this paper is to, through discourse analysis, consider the principles of conversation within an educational framework. Specifically, I will examine the interactions within a one-to-one tutoring setting to determine whether or not the principles of conversation are being applied and to describe how meaning is being co-constructed.

THEORETICAL FRAME

My understanding of conversation as instruction is informed by Jaworski and Coupland's (1999) research regarding conversation analysis and research that describes what is meant by conversation within educational frameworks. In the following two sections, I provide background on these perspectives.

Conversation Analysis

Jaworski and Coupland (1999) describe several key features of conversation analysis. These features include openings and closings, adjacency pairs, topic management and topic shift, conversational repairs, showing agreement and disagreement, and mechanisms of turn taking which they say is probably the most central. Within this social practice, there are well-established scripts that speakers follow with clearly defined roles. In adjacency pairs, for example, two utterances are linked, with the first actually defining how the second utterance is constructed and with the anticipation that the second will fill that slot as expected. Such pairs might include question-answer, greeting-greeting, or offer-acceptance/refusal. In these examples the first utterance leads to a specific type of utterance in response.

Conversation, then, is highly structured in that each participant builds upon the previous utterance and assumes that the other party will do the same. There is an understood responsibility that each participant will check for understanding across the conversation. This shared understanding leads the speaker to repair a misunderstanding if one occurs and the listener to request that repair if needed.

Jowarski and Coupland go on to describe conversation analysis as residing in a sociological approach to language and communication known as eth-nomethodology. They define ethnomethodology as "a means of studying the link between what social actors 'do' in interactions and what they 'know' about interaction" (1999, p. 19). The goal of conversation analysis is to discover and describe the organization of social interaction and to understand better how this organization reinforces the structures of social organization and institu-tions. Thus, they consider conversation as "talk in interaction" (1999, p. 19). Talk, as described by these authors, is a matter of sharing meaning-making pro-cedures that they view as the starting point for conversation analysis.

Schegloff and Sacks (1999) describe the organization of speaker turns, not-ing that an organizational problem of every conversation is figuring out how the exchange will end. The solution that speakers use, they noted, was to use closings, which refers to saying something that both participants mutually understand to mark the end of the exchange.

Another feature of conversation that Schegloff and Sacks explore is the con-cept of what they term topic shading, or shifting the topic of conversation. This shift is managed without specifically ending the topic but by fitting in differ-ently focused, but related, talk to some last utterance. It is important to observe how shifts in topic are achieved and, in terms of social contexts, to consider who appears to control this topic management.

The work of Bakhtin (1999) emphasizes the active role of the listener and the co-construction of meaning by the speaker and listener. He clarifies the role of the listener as a person who understands the utterance and takes an active and responsive stance to it. It is through this response that the listener becomes the speaker. From this perspective, dialogue can be messy, depending on the social context and the previously held meaning by the listener or speaker (Peyton-Young, 2000).

According to Bakhtin, speakers choose a particular speech genre when speaking, and within the genre, there are stable and typical forms of construct-ing the message. Genres are diverse and the speaker may be unaware of them, yet genres organize speech in a manner similar to grammatical forms.

Finally, in terms of conversation theory, Schiffrin (1999) discusses the use of conversational markers as a form of information management. For example, "oh" in a conversation can convey a variety of meanings within a conversational exchange. It can be used to signify a cognitive realignment, to represent the

speaker's shift to the role of listener, to signal consensus or understanding, or it can signal a disjunction and surprise at encountering a different point of view or knowledge state.

Conversational Interactions Within Educational Frameworks

Over the past two decades there has been an increased focus upon the sociocultural aspect of learning and cognition. As Rogoff (1990) relates: "A broader view of cognition and context requires that task characteristics and cognitive performance be considered in the light of the goal of the activity and its interpersonal and sociocultural context" (p. 6). The child is no longer viewed as a learner in isolation but as an active participant in the construction of knowledge within social contexts. As a result of this focus, the importance of language and social interaction for cognitive development has been recognized.

Rogoff (1990) considers children as apprentices in thinking, active in their efforts to learn from observing and participating with peers and more skilled members of society. They use cultural tools to develop problem-solving strategies within the context of sociocultural activity. Through guided participation, children and others work collaboratively to build bridges between the novice's present understandings and new ones. The "more knowledgeable other" arranges the child's participation in activities, shifting responsibility toward the child as capability increases. The dialogue and nonverbal actions within the interaction are critical to this concept of guided participation. The conversations during such interactions are viewed as leading to continued cognitive development (Nelson, 1996; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

Moll (1994) discusses the importance of an interactive, meaning-based approach for the teaching of literacy. He describes participatory approaches that highlight children as active learners using and applying literacy as a tool for thinking and communication. These approaches emphasize the role of the teacher in facilitating the child's taking over the learning activity. Again, from this perspective, the discourse practice related to the instructional interaction becomes critical for success. As such, conversation becomes a tool for mutually constructed meaning.

Clay (1998) identified several features that conversation and teaching interactions have in common. Both require cooperation between the speaker and listener, a speaker who has a goal of making ideas clear, and listeners who, as contributors to the interactions, bring their own information to bear on the conversation. In both conversation and instructional interactions, speakers and listeners check for understanding and reformulate the message as needed. Just like partners in a successful conversation, both teacher and student need to be active participants in the cooperative construction of meaning. As Clay says,

When we speak we do not assume that our listeners cannot think; we

expect them to bring knowledge to bear on what we are talking about. Yet probably the most common error made by adults about the learning of young children is that we can bypass what the child is thinking and just push new knowledge into the child.…However, any learning situation is like a conversation, for it requires the learner to bring what he or she already knows to bear on the new problem being explored.… If we become observers of our own conversations—noting when they go well, when they get into difficulties, how we negotiate over our difficulties, and when and why communication fails—this may help us understand a little better how children learn. (p. 15)

Clay views the teacher as bearing the responsibility for creating opportunities for rich conversations within instructional interactions and suggests that by using models of conversation and communication as a guide, teachers can improve on their ability to use the understandings that children already have. It is through building upon these understandings that children are able to make meaningful connections to incorporate new knowledge.

In their paper on teachers' instructional actions, Roehler and Duffy (1991) discuss the shift in emphasis in instruction from the teaching of rote memorization of facts and skills to a higher level of understanding through actively constructing knowledge. They quote Resnick (1981) as saying:

Today's assumptions about the nature of learning and thinking are interactionist. We assume that learning occurs as a result of mental constructions of the learner. These constructions respond to information and stimuli in the environment, but they do not copy or mirror them. This means that instruction must be designed not to put knowledge into learner's heads, but to put learners in positions that allow them to construct well-structured knowledge. (Resnick, 1981 cited in Roehler & Duffy, 1991, p. 862)

The conversation within the interaction allows for this construction of knowledge. The teacher's scaffolding of information within this conversation assists the student to use prior knowledge and integrate new learning. As Roehler and Duffy (1991) state, "scaffolding normally occurs in dialogues of structured interactional sequences in the midst of instruction" (p. 872).

Wilkinson and Silliman (2000) describe the range of teacher-student dialogues as a continuum of interrogation sequences to instructional conversations, and they note that it is through the supportive scaffolding of instructional conversations that students become flexible and reflective self-regulated learners. They quote Tharp (1994) saying,

"The critical form of assisting learners is through dialogue, through the questioning and sharing of ideas and knowledge that happens in

instructional conversations....To truly teach, one must converse, to converse is to teach." (cited in Wilkinson and Silliman, 2000, p. 343)

Finally, Cazden (1988) describes classroom discourse as "a kind of applied linguistics—-the study of situated language use in one social setting" (p. 3). Her research revealed a traditional style of teacher and student interaction, consisting of a three-part sequence. First, the teacher initiates by calling upon a specific student; second, that child provides a narrative response; and third, the teacher comments on the response providing a form of evaluation. This initiate, respond, evaluate (IRE) sequence is the most dominant form of speech interaction at all grade levels, and it is one in which the teacher controls who speaks and when and does the majority of the talking with little interaction between students.

As an alternative to this pattern of discourse, Cazden suggests another way to think about educational talk that, with small shifts away from the traditional IRE discourse pattern, can have a significant cognitive and social impact. One important shift that she emphasizes is a change from the typical recitation format to a model of discourse closer to real discussion, where the instructional talk becomes more like informal conversation.

In order for this change to occur, she presents three discourse features that must be altered. The first is what she calls *speakers' rights.* This requires a shift to more self-selection by students in terms of the management of turn taking. The second feature is the *teacher's role,* in which the teacher moves away from constant questioning to other forms of input such as declarative statements, reflections, and invitations for students to elaborate. The final feature is *speech style,* in which the teacher learns to use a more exploratory form of talk that is less planned and more responsive to student input.

This review of research suggests that teachers can develop instructional interactions that meet the diverse needs of all students by becoming more thoughtful about instructional discourse features and adjusting talk to take into account what students understand. In the next section, I review research that deals specifically with conversation within Reading Recovery, the context for this study.

Conversational Interactions Within Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an early literacy intervention designed for children experiencing extreme difficulty learning to read. Interactions during reading and writing receive a particular focus during Reading Recovery teachers' professional development sessions in which they study effective teaching. In fact, the heart of the instruction is said to be "conversations between the teacher and child while involved in reading or writing" (Klein, Kelly, & Pinnell, 1997, p.166).

Effective Reading Recovery teachers provide opportunities to negotiate

meaning through talk (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993). They include the following quotation from Clay (1985):

> "Sensitive and systematic observation of young children's reading and writing behaviors provides teachers with feedback which can shape their next teaching moves. Teaching can then be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully before you reply (p.6)." (p. 58)

Through sensitive observation and skillful conversational interactions, the theory goes, even the most confused children can become successful.

In summary, our understanding of the role of conversation in educational frameworks is informed by research in anthropology, sociology, and linguistics—disciplines that include the study of human interaction. Within the context of social interaction, discourse allows for the co-construction of meaning. The use of discourse analysis, then, can be a powerful tool in understanding the construction of knowledge in educational settings.

Next I describe the research methodology of this study and how the data were analyzed. The preceding review of conversation analysis as one form of critical discourse analysis and conversational interaction within educational frameworks will serve as a basis for the analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The study was situated within two elementary schools, both of which used Reading Recovery. One school is located in a small town of approximately 17,000 and the other in a small rural community. Both schools are in the northeastern region of the United States and serve a majority population of Caucasian students. Approximately 46% of the children in one school and 34% in the other school qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch.

Data were collected within the context of Reading Recovery lessons. The lessons take place daily for a period of 30 minutes. The focus of the study was on the concluding 10 minutes of instruction when the teacher introduces the new book to the student.

Participants

Two teachers were selected for the study along with two of their students. Both teachers spend approximately half of their day teaching Reading Recovery students and the other half of their day working with small groups of Title I remedial reading students. Both teachers are veteran educators and have at least 3 years of experience as Reading Recovery teachers. Each teacher was selected because of her history of positive outcomes with students and her ability to be reflective about her practice.

The two students in the study were selected randomly from each teacher's caseload of Reading Recovery students. They were selected for Reading Recovery in the fall of their first-grade year because of their status as being among the population of students experiencing the most difficulty with learning to read and write.

Data Sources

Participant observation, field notes, audiotaping, and transcription served as the research tools. The researcher observed and audiotaped the teacher's book introduction and the conversation between the teacher and the child during the introduction. Field notes were used mainly as a tool for comparison since the audiotapes and transcripts provided much more detailed information. As an observer, the researcher sat behind the teacher and child in an attempt to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Data Analysis

Data that were gathered through participant observation, field notes, audiotapes, and transcripts were analyzed in two phases using discourse analysis. The first phase included the conversation analysis of transcripts of the book introduction and the teacher-child verbal interaction during the introduction. The second phase involved an analysis of intertextuality for one of the transcripts.

During the first phase, the transcript for each teacher and her student was analyzed for characteristics typical of genuine conversation. Features such as mechanisms for turn taking, openings and closings, adjacency pairs, topic management and topic shift, conversational repairs, and showing agreement and disagreement were noted for each of the two transcripts. I explored additional evidence of conversation by searching for instances of these three things: participants checking for understanding, showing signs of cooperation, and building upon previous utterances.

The second phase of the analysis considered the nature of intertexuality of one of the transcripts. The goal of the analysis was to understand how two different discourse genres appeared within one lesson excerpt and to consider how that might have affected the instructional conversation. The transcript was assessed for evidence of the traditional initiate, respond and evaluate (IRE) instructional genre (Cazden, 1988) and a less typical conversational instructional model. Specific consideration was given to speakers' rights, the teacher's role, and the teacher's speech style—elements suggested by Cazden as having the potential for significant positive cognitive and social impact on students.

FINDINGS

Characteristics of Conversation in New Book Orientations

The goal of the teacher's book introduction is to make the book accessible to the child. The new book is carefully selected based upon the child's current capabilities so that there are just a few new things to learn, and it is carefully introduced to provide a framework of meaning to scaffold the successful reading. As stated by Clay and Cazden (1990), "What may seem like casual conversational exchanges between teacher and pupil are based on deliberate teaching decisions for a particular child" (p. 210).

Therefore, the conversation during the book introduction is critical for the joint construction of meaning that will allow the child to read the book successfully. Teacher modeling of how to actively construct meaning from text during the introduction will allow the child to take over this task while becoming a constructive rather than passive learner.

Appendix A explains the transcription conventions, and Appendixes B and C contain the transcripts that were analyzed. In the first set of findings, the analysis refers to specific lines in each of the two transcripts for evidence or lack of evidence of the characteristics of conversation to be discussed. The second set of findings demonstrates the elements of intertextuality in terms of the traditional instructional discourse of IRE versus the less institutionalized discourse of everyday conversation.

Conversation Analysis of Transcript 1

As mentioned earlier, conversation analysis centers upon certain characteristic features of conversation. Specific features are demonstrated from transcript excerpts below. Bracketed conversation indicates the teacher and child are speaking at the same time, while = indicates contiguous utterances and ( ) indicates talk that is unheard or is in doubt. The transcript is arranged to show when the overlapping occurred. The numbers correspond to the lines in the transcript included in Appendix B.

In Transcript 1, Lines 1–3, the teacher (T) has a clear opening which makes a connection with an earlier book read by the child (C) :

1 T: Now, you remember we've been reading an ABC book, child's
    name, about the zoo?=
2 C: = Yeah.
3 T: And all the animals in the zoo?

This sample also shows an adjacency pair that could be considered

summons-answer, followed by a number of such pairs in Lines 5–8, which begin to get the child involved in the book:

> 5 T: Well, this is another book called *We Went to the Zoo.* What are
>   some of the animals you think you would see at the zoo?
> 6 C: Elephants!
> 7 T: The elephant. You find elephants at the zoo, don't you?
> 8 C: Yeah.

There are other examples of adjacency pairs. For example, in Lines 81 and 82, the pair provides an example of compliment-compliment, and Lines 27–28 and 46–47 show what might be classified as offer-acceptance pairs:

> 81 C: [I'm the man.]
> 82 T: [You're the man!]
> 27 T: …Should we look and see what kind of animals?
> 28 C: Sure.
> 46 T: …Let's see what else
> 47 C: [( )= (The child overlapped but couldn't be understood
>   and was contiguous with the next line.)

There are clear examples of turn taking. Early in the sample the teacher seemed to control most of the talk, but as the child became more engaged, the talk became more like everyday conversation, with the child beginning to initiate more talk and even overlapping the teacher talk in places such as in Lines 20, 22, and 41:

> 19 T: [They have stripes too. Well that's going to make it
> 20 C: [They have um in their back.
> 21 T: Oh, well you know a lot about – cheetahs.
> 22 C: [Animals.]
> 40 T: Ahh. W-
> 41 C: [It doesn't bite.

The overlaps and contributions suggest the child's engagement with the topic and desire to make personal connections. There appears to be a sharing of topic management between teacher and child. The teacher was receptive to the child's contributions and responded positively showing that these contributions were valued. This is a strong example of cooperation to create meaning because it is characteristic of everyday conversation.

Conversation also involves cooperation for the co-construction of meaning. Evidence of this cooperation is seen in how the participants build upon each other's utterances. For example, in Line 9 the teacher makes a statement, and in Line 10 the child builds upon the teacher's utterance by linking back with the pronoun *it.* The teacher then (Line 11) builds upon the child's comment and

uses the same pronoun *it* to again link to the child's utterance:

    9 T: Yeah. I see something on the front of the cover.=
   10 C: =I think it's like a cheetah.
   11 T: It is like a cheetah. Cheetahs are big cats.
         This one happens to be called a tiger.

Another form of cooperation, as in Lines 9 and 10, exemplifies what Cameron (1999) calls *latching,* when there is no pause between speaker and listener responses. Latching consists of turns taken without pauses or overlaps in conversation. This is an exquisite example of cooperation because in order to latch a turn this precisely, participants have to be listening closely to one another. I found evidence of this cooperation, or latching, in several places throughout the first transcript.

   46 T: Oh that's good because they like to live – free, don't they? Let's
         see what else
   47 C: [( )=
   48 T: =Oh. Let's see what else we could see.
   49 C: ( ) What are those skunks?=
   49 T: =What are they? – They look like skunks, don't they?

Cameron also discusses the repetition or recycling of items or phrases across turns as further evidence of cooperation or joint production. An example of this can be found in Lines 52–59.

   52 T: They're – they're monkeys.
   53 C: They're monkeys?
   54 T: They're monkeys. Th-
   55 C: [They don't look like monkeys.
   56 T: You know why I know they're monkeys and not skunks?
   57 C: [Why?   [Why?
   58 T: Because skunks can't go up into trees – and monkeys can.
   59 C: Those don't look like monkeys.

The child is clearly an active listener here, taking a responsive stance to the teacher's utterances and attempting to clarify meaning when there is an obvious conflict between what the picture attempts to represent in the book and what it actually looks like to the child. The child makes this conflict clear to the teacher, and she responds with an attempt to model her thinking for the child. There is real negotiation of meaning between the two in this segment of conversation.

The last aspect of conversation to be considered in this sample is the use of markers such as "oh," for information management. In this sample the teacher uses "oh" in several instances. For example, in Lines 15–18 when the child

insists that cheetahs have stripes as well as spots, the teacher uses "oh" in what could be considered a disjunction and surprise at not sharing a point of view or knowledge state:

    15 T: They do?
    16 C: Yeah.=
    17 T: =Oh golly – I thought they had spots.
    18 C: They have stripes too.

Another use of "oh" signals that the teacher is now in the role of the listener:

    37 C: I picked up a tiger once.
    38 T: Oh.
    39 C: A baby.
    40 T: Ahh. W-
    41 C: [It doesn't bite.

There are many examples throughout Transcript 1 that lead one to conclude that this interaction had many elements of everyday conversation. Aside from the examples given above, there were examples of the teacher picking up on earlier threads in the talk (Lines 77–79) and building upon shared experiences (Lines 74–78), much like one would do in daily conversation.

    74 T: =They're otters.
    75 C: I've seen otters before.
    76 T: Have you seen otters? Yeah, you might have seen otters. I've seen
          one around Vermont when I've been hiking – and
    77 C: [I hike every day.
    77 T: Do you hike every day? There's the animal that you thought we
          would see.
    78 C: Yup – and I was right.
    79 T: Right El:a:phants.

Transcript 1 clearly provided an example within which conversation could be analyzed within the educational setting of the Reading Recovery lesson. In this sample, both teacher and child viewed themselves as active co-constructors of meaning. They worked toward mutual understanding and built upon each other's contributions to clarify and extend that construction of meaning. I will now turn to Transcript 2 (Appendix C) for analysis.

Analysis of Transcript 2

Transcript 2 was selected as a contrast to Transcript 1. This sample book introduction, though provided by an experienced Reading Recovery teacher who has

had successful experiences with students, is very different from the first sample. This analysis explores those differences regarding the evidence of conversation as a model of interaction and the nature of cooperation between the teacher and the student in co-construction of meaning.

One striking difference between the two samples is the amount of talk by the child (C). In Transcript 1 there were a few one-word responses, but most of the child's utterances were complete sentences as seen in excerpts above. In Transcript 2, however, the student typically responded with one word without further elaboration:

20 C: Steak.
21 T: It looks like it could be steak. What are those strips though?
        They're called (0.3) Remember they're called bacon.
22 C: Yeah, bacon.
23 T: Bacon. And. Uh. Look, here's something new.
24 C: Milk.
25 T: Could be milk.
26 C: Water?

The child in Transcript 1 initiated some talk so that topic control and turn taking were mutually controlled by student and teacher. In Transcript 2, unlike everyday conversation, one participant, the teacher (T), seemed to control topic choice and turn allocation. There was no evidence of latching or joint production with the recycling of items or phrases across turns. There were no instances of the child overlapping the teacher's talk except for two instances where the child started to read from the text and the teacher asked the child to wait:

3 T: Yes because Owen is asleep here.
4 C: [Owen is asleep. (Child reads this from
                                  book)
5 T: Asleep. But here is where he – where Owen wakes up.
6   [(Child starts to read)
7 T: [Oh wait a minute…

Although the teacher's goal was to engage the child in some form of conversation, it was clear that this child, as a result of the way the teacher had structured the interaction, had a very different view of his role in the interaction when compared to the child in Transcript 1. The child in Transcript 2 did not take an active role or responsive stance to the teacher's utterances. Rather the child seemed to be attempting to give the right answer—the answer that the teacher was looking for. There did not seem to be the co-construction of meaning and level of cooperation in Transcript 2 that there was in Transcript 1. The teacher in the second sample seemed to operate more in the traditional IRE discourse pattern, with the child offering one-word responses and then anticipat-

ing some form of evaluation from the teacher:

> 26 C: Water?
> 27 T: We'll see it could be either milk or water. We'll see when we read
>   the story. Is it – Look it. Is it – is everything empty? Do you
>   think Owen is hungry or not hungry now?
> 28 C: Hungry.
> 29 T: You think he's still hungry?
> 30 C: Not hungry.
> 31 T: Not hungry anymore, is he – is he?

There was additional evidence that this child was tentative in his responses when the teacher attempted to engage him with the meaning of the story through the use of questioning. The child again seemed to be searching for the correct answer to the teacher's questions, and the interaction seemed more like a testing situation than a conversation. For example:

> 11 T: Looks like he's got jam and some (0.6)
> 12 C: Sandwich?
> 13 T: Looks like a sandwich. See how it's kind of toasted there. It looks
>   like that might be toast. But we'll see when we read the story
>   won't we? Whether it's a sandwich or toast. Oh here's some –
>   What do you think that could be in that bowl?
> 14 C: Milk.
> 15 T: Milk he would have put in. And what do you think he's putting
>   the milk in with?
> 16 C: Umm. Soup?
> 17 T: It doesn't look like soup, does it? What could it be for br-
> 18 C: [Cereal?

Because the child offered so little verbally, there were few opportunities for the teacher to link back to previous utterances or build upon personal experiences. The child did not appear to see himself as an active learner but remained passive in his role as receiver of information. He did not make verbal connections to his previous experiences and prior knowledge or use these experiences or knowledge to work actively to co-construct meaning with the teacher.

As a result of an in-depth discourse analysis of the transcripts, a clearer understanding of the role of instructional conversations emerged. The social nature of the co-construction of meaning became more obvious as both the teacher and the child contributed or failed to contribute to the conversation. It became clear that the discourse genre used by the teacher affected the type and amount of oral response offered by the child.

Discourse Style in Reading Recovery Lessons Examined

As stated earlier in this paper, Jaworski and Coupland (1999) describe the goal of discourse analysis as being the deconstruction of how particular texts have come to be formed as they are and with what social and political implications. They go on to consider the analysis of text in terms of how we recognize the infusion of one genre into another. Fairclough (1999) argues that intertextual analysis is an important aspect of discourse analysis because it bridges the gap between text and the social context. Therefore, it is helpful to study the types of discourse use in particular contexts.

The goal of this section is to conduct an intertextual analysis of Transcript 1. The analysis will focus upon the blending of the genre of traditional institutional classroom lesson discourse and the discourse of the everyday informal conversational genre. Each of these genres has a typical specified position for subjects. The formal institutional setting traditionally positions the teacher as the controller of the talk, while the informal style of everyday conversation is more cooperative and mutually controlled. Since the focus of this paper has been the discussion of Reading Recovery as implementing a conversational model of instruction, I examined whether there was an intertextual quality to the instruction, departing from the more traditional genre toward a more socio-constructivist instructional model of informal conversation.

This analysis focused upon the three areas of change in instructional discourse features that Cazden (1988) advocates. The first feature is speaking rights. Instead of the traditional model of the student waiting to be called on, the student has some control over when to initiate speaking. The student helps in the management of turn taking.

The second feature is that of the teacher's role. This calls for a different conception of knowledge and teaching that allows the teacher to move away from a pattern of constant questioning to other forms of speaking such as the use of declarative statements, reflective restatements, invitations to elaborate, and instances of silence. There is also a greater use of wait time so that students have opportunities to contribute and react more and teachers become more adept at using student responses. The construction of meaning becomes more cooperative with students and teachers as partners in the construction.

The third feature is speech style. The teacher's language will be "more exploratory and less final draft" (Cazden, 1988, p. 61). It will be more "unplanned than planned" (p. 61). This will be a necessity if the instruction is truly to become more like conversation since in conversation each utterance builds upon the previous utterance. The teacher must build upon the child's contributions if the child is to see himself as an active participant.

The first area to be considered is speaking rights in terms of turn taking. Early in the transcript (Lines 1–8) there seems to be a more traditional model of discourse similar to the IRE pattern. The teacher asks a question, the child

responds, and the teacher evaluates or follows with another question. The turn taking appears to be controlled by the teacher. As the transcript goes on, however, there are more instances of the child initiating comments, as seen in Lines 54–65 and Lines 72–87 showing the child's overlapping utterances and in Lines 79 (Yup-I was right.) and 81 (I'm the man!) evaluating his own responses. The child appears to be taking on more of a shared responsibility for the initiation of turns in these instances that is more characteristic of conversational discourse.

The second discourse feature to signal change is the teacher role. As mentioned above, at first the sample seems to follow the traditional role with the teacher initiating through questioning and then evaluating the child's response as in Lines 1–8. There is soon a shift though, which shows the teacher's role changing. Here, instead of questioning, the teacher begins to use other types of utterances such as declarative statements in Lines 9 (Yeah. I see something on the front cover.) and 11 (It *is* like a cheetah. Cheetahs are big cats. This happens to be called a tiger). Line 13 is more of a reflection (I have trouble keeping them apart. I can remember that a tiger has stripes. That's how I try to remember the tiger – because he has stripes). There are also examples of invitations to elaborate such as in Line 46 (…Let's see what else) and Line 48 (Oh. Let's see what else we could see). The teacher uses several conversational markers as in Line 38 (Oh), Line 40 (Ahh), and Line 44 (Hum) to manage the conversation and to invite additional talk from the child. As the sample goes on, the child also begins to comfortably initiate questions for the teacher as seen in Lines 57, 67, and 73. Further analysis shows that the teacher seems to switch back to the more traditional IRE pattern in places where she feels the need to check on the child's understanding of a concept (Lines 70–72) but weaves this more traditional format in only on occasions when deemed necessary.

The third feature of change noted by Cazden is speech style that is more unplanned or open-ended. Again, as the sample evolves, there appears to be evidence of this type of speech style. In Line 17 (Oh golly – I thought they had spots.) the teacher is able to let the child's insistence that tigers have spots go without evaluation and move on in the conversation. In Line 46 (Oh, that's good because they like to live – free, don't they? Let's see what else) she is able to respond to the child's discussion about freeing the animal and then focus his attention back to the book in a manner that allowed the conversation to flow smoothly. As the sample develops, the teacher appears to form her questions as extensions of the child's utterances (e.g., Lines 76, 78, 86, and 90) rather than from some preconceived agenda. In Line 24 the child starts to construct a personal narrative, and the teacher, as she sees the need, takes more control with an overlapping utterance to bring the child back to the book discussion.

In conclusion, there appears to be clear evidence of intertextuality in the sample with a blending of the more traditional school institutional genre and

the less formal genre of everyday conversation. Using Cazden's model of change in discourse features as a signal of a shift from the traditional IRE discourse to the more informal discourse of everyday conversation provides support for the intertextuality of the sample. There is strong evidence that this sample has shifted away from the traditional IRE format to a greater emphasis on conversation as a model of instructional interaction.

DISCUSSION

Using the research from conversation analysis and the sociocultural perspective in educational settings, there is evidence from the study that in Transcript 1 a conversational form of interaction was taking place and that the teacher and student were cooperating to construct meaning. The sample shows that the teacher and student viewed themselves as active participants working together to build and extend their understanding of the text. The intertextual analysis of this sample also showed that though there were a few instances of the more traditional IRE model, there was also evidence of a shift to a conversational model of instructional interaction where teacher and student worked collaboratively, actively contributing and building upon each others utterances.

In Transcript 2 there was less evidence of a conversational model and the interaction resembled a traditional IRE format. In this sample, the child did not appear to view his role in learning as active but rather as passive, receiving knowledge from the teacher and searching for the correct answer that the teacher was expecting to hear. The construction of meaning appeared to be one-sided, with the teacher controlling the turn allocations as well as the information and topic management.

Within each sample the active or passive stance of the student appears critical to the development of the discourse, and the manner in which the teacher structures the interaction appears to affect the stance taken by the student. Some insights regarding this phenomenon may be gained from Johnston's (1999) discussion of "constructed versus received knowing" (p. 31). He states: "Received knowers feel that knowledge is 'out there' and that someone in authority will be able to give them the knowledge they need to receive" (p. 31). In Transcript 2 the student seems to be operating under this notion, waiting for the teacher to give him the needed information and contributing only when asked a specific question. His response then is given in terms of what he perceives to be the right answer as expected by the teacher. The traditional model of instruction where classroom discourse follows an IRE format reinforces this type of responding.

Conversely, Johnston, in describing constructed knowers, says: "Constructed knowers value conversations as a means of learning, particularly conversations in which people share not-quite-fully formed ideas in the process of

collaboratively constructing meaning" (p. 31). The child in Transcript 1 clearly appears to take this more active stance to learning. He seems to see conversation as a means of sharing and clarifying ideas and views himself as a contributor to the conversation. In this model of learning, the teacher has to have a more informed theory of how human cognition develops within social contexts.

This study creates the need for further research regarding the effects of a conversational model of instruction on student learning. Within the specific context of this study, additional research is needed to explore the affect of conversation on the co-construction of meaning needed for the successful reading of a new book. This will be done in a follow-up study to be completed in the near future.

This study also raises new questions. What can be considered *genuine conversation?* Is the type of conversation in instructional settings genuine conversation or is it some form of simulated conversation? Since the conversation that occurs within instructional settings has an instructional purpose or goal in terms of what is to be learned by the student, does that make it less genuine and more simulated? Perhaps this type of conversation could be considered *guided conversation,* where there are elements of informal everyday conversation, but there is also an element of guidance by the teacher who is attempting to lead the student to new understandings. This view would contribute to the highly complex nature of the interaction and the discourse use within this context.

There are obvious limitations to this study due to the small number of teachers and students involved and the limited number of transcript samples. It may provide a starting point, though, for future studies with more teachers and students. Since this study focused on a small part of the Reading Recovery lesson, future studies could look at other aspects of the lesson in terms of conversational interaction. Classroom studies of conversational interaction would also contribute to further understandings regarding impact on student learning and the need for quality professional development for teachers.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of instructional conversation that allows for constructive knowers creates a demand for expertly trained teachers. These types of conversations are absolutely necessary for the development of thoughtful literacy, especially for students at risk. Yet these conversations do not develop easily with students who have taken a passive stance to learning. Clay (1991) considers such children when she states

> The reading process will be learned haltingly, until he (the unresponsive child) is confident enough to respond in the troublesome area. Coaxing that is not carping, support that is not demanding, confidence

in him that does not deny the reality of his sense of inadequacy, these are the fine distinctions that must determine the teacher's behaviour and attitude towards the unresponsive child. (p. 59)

Only highly trained and skilled teachers who are thoughtful about instructional discourse can begin to provide these complex models of instructional interaction.

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APPENDIX A

Transcription Conventions

Overlapping utterances	[
Contiguous utterances	=
Short pause	–
Extension of sound of speech delivery	:
Loud talk	Capital Letters
Talk unheard or in doubt	( )

APPENDIX B

CONVERSATION TRANSCRIPT 1

(teacher and child book introduction)

T - teacher
C - student

 1 T: Now, you remember we've been reading an ABC book. Trey, about
         the zoo?=

 2 C: = Yeah.

 3 T: And all the animals in the zoo? =

 4 C: = Yuh.

 5 T: Well, this is another book called *We Went to the Zoo.* What are some
         of the animals you think you would see at the zoo?

 6 C: Elephants!

 7 T: The elephants. You find elephants at the zoo, don't you?

 8 C: Yeah.

 9 T: Yeah. I see something on the front of the cover.=

10 C: = I think it's like a cheetah.

11 T: It *is* like a cheetah. Cheetahs are big cats. This one happens to be
         called a tiger.

12 C: I know.

13 T: I have trouble keeping them apart.   I can remember that a tiger has
         stripes. That's how I try to remember the tiger – because he has
         stripes.

14 C: So does cheetahs.

15 T: They do?

16 C: Yeah. =

17 T: = Oh golly – I thought they had spots.

18 C: They have stripes too.

19 T: [They have stripes too. Well that's going to make it

20 C: [(They have
    um in their back.)

21 T: Oh, well you know a lot about – cheetahs.

22 C: [(animals)

23 T: And animals, you know a lot about animals, don't you (W-)

24 C: Yeah, remember the time when I told you like I pick – I make con-
    tact with   with animals and

25 T: [I know it. What other animals do you think we might see
    in this book?

26 C: I think (0.3) I think an *elephant.*

27 T: An elephant is a good choice because elephants are at a zoo. =
    = Should we look and see what kind of animals?

28 C: Sure. =

29 T: = *All right.* Oh, there's those tigers.

30 C: Oooh.

31 T: Aren't they pretty?

32 C: Yeah.

33 T: Even the babies.

34 C: [( )

35 C: Yeah.

36 T: Yeah.

37 C: I picked up a tiger once.

38 T: Oh.

39 C: A baby.

40 T: Ahh. W-

41C: [It doesn't bite.

42 T: How did it feel?

43 C: It felt comfortable.

44 T: Hum.

45 C: And then I took it home with me and then my mom – we gotta let it free.

46 T: Oh that's good because they like to live – free, don't they? Let's see what else

47 C: [( )=

48 T: = Oh. Let's see what else we could see.

49 C: ( ) What are those skunks? =

50 T: = What are they – they look like skunks, don't they?

51 C: Yeah.

52 T: They're – they're monkeys.

53 C: They're monkeys?

54 T: They're monkeys. Th-

55 C: [They don't look like monkeys.

56 T: You know why I know they're monkeys and not skunks?

57 C: [Why?]   [Why?

58 T: Because skunks can't go up into trees – and monkeys can.

59 C: Those don't look like monkeys.

60 T: Yeah. And I also know that monkey starts with the letter m:m:m – m – right there.

61 C: [m.]

62 T: And skunks would start with s:s:s – s. Right.

63 C: [s]   Yeah.

64 T: Oh, here this is called the king of the jungle. These animals.

65 C: [King of this jungle? =

66 T: = The lions, yup.

67 C: Why?

68 T: Uhhm – I think because they're the fiercest – they're the – they're the strongest – they're the bravest, and sometimes almost the biggest. This is the male lion.   He has all the hair.   Let's see what else. Oh!

69 C: Oooo!

70 T: [Do you know, what those are called?

71 C: I think they're seals.

72 T: They look like seals. Don't they?

73 C: [But they're – they're brown,
        right? =

74 T: = They're otters.

75 C: I've seen otters before.

76 T: Have you see otters? Yeah, you might have seen otters. I've seen one
        around Vermont when I've been hiking – and

77 C: [I hike every day.

78 T: Do you hike every day? There's the animal that you thought we
        would see.

79 C: Yup – and *I was right.*

80 T: Right. El:a:phants.

81 C: [I'm the man!]

82 T: [You're the man!

83 C: [man.

84 T: Look what else is at the zoo.

85 C: WOW! – SNAKES!

86 T: I know it, isn't that the neatest snake?

87 C: [Wait a minute.

88 T: You know there's more than one. There's two snakes. I see two
        heads.

89 C: Yup – You know I picked up one. =

90 T: = You picked – You pick up a lot of animals, don't you?

91 C: I kn:ow! I'm not SCARED.

92 T: You're goood. Oh – Look how cute =

93 C: = I petted one of them.

94 T: Have you? – A bear?   There's the mother bear and that's probably the
        baby bear.

95 C: You know I just (snapped) the collar on it and starting walking with it.

96 T: So all of these animals – look at the many different animals that you can see at the zoo.
The monkeys – the lions – the elephants.

97 C: [Cool!]   I feel like breaking ( )

98 T: There's some – There's some nice pictures in here aren't there?

99 C: I know.

100 T: Okay, I'm gonna read this to you next, Trey, okay?   It says: We went to the zoo.

101 C: I wanna read it first.

102 T: Well let me – let's take turns!

103 C: OKAY!

104 T: Okay? I'll read the first page.

APPENDIX C

CONVERSATION TRANSCRIPT 2

T - teacher
C - student

1 T: The new story that we have today is about a boy named Owen.
        Now Owen is HUNGRY when he wakes up. He's still asleep here
        isn't he?
        Can you say asleep?

2 C: Asleep.

3 T: Yes because Owen is asleep here.

4 C: [Owen is asleep. (Child reads this from
        book)

5 T: Asleep. But here is where he – where Owen wakes up

6 C: [Child starts to read from book
7 T   [Oh wait a minute. We'll
                                          read it in a minute. He
                                          wakes up. This is where
                                          Owen wakes up and we
                                          know Owen is hungry.

        (   ) what we have for Owen. Because he is hungry. Ooh look what
        he has. What does he have here?

8 C: Jello.

9 T: He's got some jam and what else?

10 C: ( )

11 T: Looks like he's got jam and some (0.6)

12 C: Sandwich?

13 T: Looks like a sandwich. See how it's kind of toasted there. It looks
        like that might be toast. But we'll see when we read the story won't
        we? Whether it's a sandwich or toast. Oh here's some – What do you
        think that could be in that bowl?

14 C: Milk.

15 T: Milk he would have put in. And what do you think he's putting the milk in with?

16 C: Umm. Soup?

17 T: It doesn't look like soup, does it? What could it be for br-

18 C: [Cereal?

19 T: Could be cereal. He's having breakfast isn't he? Woah! Look at this nice breakfast. What did he – What did he have here?

20 C: Steak.

21 T: It looks like it could be steak. What are those strips though? They're called (0.3) Remember they're called bacon.

22 C: Yeah, bacon.

23 T: Bacon. And. Uh. Look, here's something new.

24 C: Milk.

25 T: Could be milk.

26 C: Water?

27 T: We'll see it could be either milk or water. We'll see when we read the story. Is it – Look it. Is it – Is everything empty? Do you think Owen is   hungry or not hungry now?

28 C: Hungry.

29 T: You think he's still hungry?

30 C: Not hungry.

31 T: Not hungry anymore, is he – is he? In this story sometimes we see some food. We see some – some jam, we see some bacon. What would you expect to see at the beginning of some? S -ome.

32: C: S

33 T: Find the word some on that page. Point to it and show it to me please. What word is it?

34 C: Some.

35 T: Mmm. Show me – some – on – this page.

36 C: Some.

37 T: There's some. Very good. All right and let's read the story about Owen.