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Teacher discourse in a culturally diverse classroom

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Teacher discourse in a culturally diverse classroom

Abstract

This paper describes the process of language acquisition, the interaction between home and school languages, and also offers strategies teachers should follow to acknowledge the diversity represented in the classrooms. The paper further discusses some behaviors teachers should display in order to enhance discussion among students. The purpose of this paper is to investigate cultural differences as well as language differences in the classroom and the ways teachers address these differences, by allowing diverse children to have a voice and thus to express their culture. Students come to school already having an informational background acquired at home and teachers try to help children by acknowledging their differences and using this prior knowledge upon which they can build a new discourse. This discourse represents a hybrid of the primary discourse acquired at home and the new information acquired in school. According to Bernstein (1972) "If the culture of the teachers is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher."

**TEACHER DISCOURSE IN A
CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM**

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This paper describes the process of language acquisition, the interaction between home and school languages, and also offers strategies teachers should follow to acknowledge the diversity represented in the classrooms. The paper further discusses some behaviors teachers should display in order to enhance discussion among students.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate cultural differences as well as language differences in the classroom and the ways teachers address these differences, by allowing diverse children to have a voice and thus to express their culture. Students come to school already having an informational background acquired at home and teachers try to help children by acknowledging their differences and using this prior knowledge upon which they can build a new discourse. This discourse represents a hybrid of the primary discourse acquired at home and the new information acquired in school. According to Bernstein (1972) “ If the culture of the teachers is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher.”

This paper also analyzes how teachers can cope with the use of discourses differing from Standard English, how they can encourage their students’ voices to be heard in the class, and the strategies they make use of to enhance student learning under all cultural circumstances in the classrooms. By partially acknowledging the cultural and social

differences in their classroom and acting accordingly, teachers can allow all students to express themselves and all cultures to be presented and represented. When given the chance to speak freely, diverse children can use their own dialects, and their information can prove beneficial for their classmates.

Statement of the Problem

We live in a century in which diversity exists at all levels of our society: at school, at work, at home. Diversity (whether it be ethnic, social or behavioral) is much talked about in the media. Schools have an important role in instilling tolerant attitudes and behaviors in children so they can become citizens in a world of diversity. Educators are key figures and role models for the students they teach. The language they make use of, the behavior they display, and the way they model tolerance tend to be emulated by their students, who see their teachers as respected figures of authority.

Upon their arrival in schools, children have already acquired a considerable amount of information that they will use in the classroom to represent their culture. When students come from different cultures or social strata, this information will differ both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Significance of the Problem

Cultural diversity in the classrooms is a very important topic nowadays because many classes tend to be more heterogeneous than homogenous. According to Banks

(1999), census projections show the 1990s as being the most prolific years for legal immigration in the history of the United States. Census projections also indicate that people of color will make up 47.5% of the nation's population by 2050.

When immigrant children go to American schools, they encounter an educational system different from that of their home country and face different demands from the part of the teachers and peers from the dominant culture. Similarly, the children who come from culturally diverse environments will differ from the rest of the students in the discourse they use.

Definitions

The terms used in this paper are defined in the following ways:

Critical Language Awareness (CLA)—teaching the appropriate use of Standard English has the secondary effect of utilizing the educational system to transmit shared values based on the hegemony of a particular dialect. Given that power relations work through language, language practices can be used as tools for intervention in the classroom and control of the students.

The Cultural Differences Perspective—asserts that culturally diverse students would be better served if qualitative differences among students were taken into account more rather than less. These are differences that refer to their cultural background information, such as language, customs, etc.

The Differential Treatment Perspective—this usually refers to the ways in which schools and classrooms give students who grew up in an environment that

facilitated the acquisition of Standard English more and better opportunities, thus reinforcing inequalities of knowledge and skills present when students start school.

Discourse—refers to the speech or languages people use in order to communicate ideas, feelings and opinions; discourse is a linguistic unit (as a conversation or a story) larger than a sentence.

Heteroglossia--the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin referred to the fact that when we speak or write we very often mix together different social languages. These multiple dialects, either belonging to one person or to different persons, are referred to as heteroglossia.

Language Awareness (LA)—term coined by Hawkins (1984), which refers to the importance of teaching students Standard English, while treating the diversity of languages in the classroom as a potential resource of great richness. Since Standard English and the other varieties of languages are still portrayed as differing in appropriateness, Hawkins controversially claims that this is dressing up inequality as diversity. Standard English is appropriate in the situations that carry social clout, while other varieties are only appropriate at times.

Literacy—is traditionally seen as the ability to read and write. Scholars have since attributed other meanings to this traditional approach, since different types of texts call for different types of background knowledge and require different skills to be read meaningfully. This ability to decode the written alphabet was thus enhanced by the understanding of the meaning of words.

Social languages—any time we act or speak, we must accomplish two things: we must make clear who we are and what we are doing. When talking to different people, we tend

to shift the style of our speech and these different social languages help to make visible two different social identities of the speaker, two different versions of a single person are revealed.

Scaffolding—a technique used by teachers to enter into discussion with students in order to enhance rather than evaluate them; scaffolding is a supporting framework that enables students to build thinking strategies.

Organization

Chapter One introduces the problem of the paper, namely the way teachers address culturally diverse students by allowing them to make use of the language they have acquired at home. By further describing the process of language acquisition and the interaction between home and school languages, this chapter reports the significance of the problem. This chapter also defined necessary terms further explicating the theoretical background of social language structures. The next chapter draws a parallel between the concepts of language and social languages and makes reference to the ways in which people use different discourses to successfully communicate ideas and feelings to different people. School, as a societal institution, may encourage Standard English as the only appropriate language to use in the school setting and similarly it may discourage the other languages or varieties of language. The Second Chapter confronts the relationship between language and power and the different types of discourse people use when they communicate. Chapter Three discusses language variation in the school setting by addressing the existence of diverse voices in the classrooms and analyzing the ways

teacher discourses affect differently students coming from different social, ethnic and class backgrounds. Chapter Four provides examples of teacher behaviors that are intended to promote and facilitate discussion in the culturally diverse classroom setting. In Chapter Five, recommendations are made for strategies that would be most efficient for culturally diverse classrooms.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter discusses the beliefs people hold about language and the effects of these beliefs on actions. The chapter also addresses the issue of social languages which, according to Paul Gee (1996) emerge from the fact that any time people communicate they must accomplish two objectives: they must make their identity and their intentions clear. People use different dialects to communicate, and these dialects empower them in different ways. In later chapters the concepts of language variation will provide a basis for understanding the effects the latter has on school performance and for gaining an increased awareness of how the different discourses used in school fall under the category of language and its relationship to power.

Theories and Ideologies

Many current beliefs about language are mistaken. For instance, grammatically “correct” language may be considered superior to all the other varieties of language. Correct grammar and usage does give precision and accuracy to communication. It

enables the user to gain acquaintance with the canon of literature in his/her tradition; yet it has limitations, such as ethnocentrism. James Paul Gee (1996) calls the beliefs people hold about language theories, a theory being a logically related set of propositions that have acquired scientific merit through the generation of testable hypotheses.

The source of these beliefs can be very diverse. On the one hand, they may have come from that person's thought and research into the matter, carried out in discussions with others. This is the case of primary research, in which the person is operating with a primary theory and a set of generalizations called primary generalizations. Or, as in the case of the naïve perspectives, a person may not know the generalizations that ground certain beliefs, but think that others ("the experts") know appropriate generalizations that would ground the beliefs. The speaking and writing of "intelligent" and well-educated people is what counts as "correct" language.

Applied in the school setting, these beliefs about language may disadvantage students whose language may be different than that considered "appropriate" by the teacher and the school norms. By making explicit the misconceptions people generally hold on language, teachers may stress the importance of each and every dialect and show the benefits the presence of these multiples varieties of language will have on their students' school development.

Language and Social Languages

A language is not a monolithic entity; each and every language is composed of many sub-languages, called social languages. Social languages are used by groups, ethnic, age, religious or the like to set themselves apart from other groups. Gee (1996) states that these social languages emerge from the fact that speakers may use different languages or varieties of language to address different people in different situations. For example, imagine a conversation about a movie with a friend. The languages used to tell about the same film to parents or co-workers would certainly differ, even if both of the stories would be grammatically correct. Different social languages make visible and recognizable different social identities, as well as different versions of the same person. No one speaks a single, uniform language nor is a person a single, uniform identity.

These multiple different identities have been termed “heteroglossia” by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, who argued that when speaking or writing, different social languages are integrated together. To exemplify this point, consider an example that appears in Fairclough (1990), involving an upper-middle class, Anglo-American young woman. Jane (let us use this name for her) was attending a college course on language and communication. During a class discussion, Jane claimed that she did not shift her language when talking to different sorts of people. She maintained that she was rather consistent from one context to another. In order to support her claim, Jane recorded herself talking to her parents and to her boyfriend. To be sure that the results of the experiment were accurate she decided to have the same topic of conversation, namely a story they discussed in class. In this story, a woman named Abigail wants to get across a

river to see her lover, Gregory. A riverboat captain, Roger, says he will take her only if she sleeps with him. She does so, only to see her true love, Gregory. But when she arrives and tells Gregory what happened, he disowns her and sends her away.

The following are excerpts from Jane's story told to her parents:

It seemed to me that Gregory should be the most offensive. He showed no understanding for Abigail, when she told him what she was forced to do. He was hypocritical, in the sense that he professed to love her, then acted like that. (p.66)

This is Jane's conversation with her boyfriend, in an intimate setting:

What an ass that guy was, you know, her boyfriend. He uses her and he says he loves her. (p.67)

Jane admitted that she had used two different varieties of language, one to her parents and another to her boyfriend. They are both English but constitute different social languages, which make visible two different social identities. To her parents, Jane carefully hedges her claims ('I don't know,' 'it seemed to me'); to her boyfriend, she makes her claims straight out. With her boyfriend, she uses terms such as 'ass,' 'guy,' while with her parents she uses more formal terms like 'hypocritical,' 'offensive' (p.67). She addresses her boyfriend as 'you' and therefore notes his social involvement as a listener, but does not directly address her parents in this way. To her parents, she explicitly introduces each character by name (i.e. Gregory) and then re-refers to the introduced character by a pronoun (i.e. 'he').

In summary, Jane used more 'school-like' language with her parents. This language distances her parents as listeners from social and emotional involvement with herself or what she is saying, while stressing their cognitive involvement with the

information she is transmitting and their judgment of her and her 'intelligence.' She does this to maintain an emotional distance between her parents and the sexual content of the story. Her language to her boyfriend, on the other hand, stresses social and affective involvement, co-participation in meaning-making. Her boyfriend is to see the problem as a lover and age-mate of Jane.

Consequently, the "who we are and the what we are doing" is enacted through a 3-way simultaneous interaction among: our social or cultural group membership (i.e. Jane's class, ethnic, social, cultural, educational group membership); a particular social language or a mixture of them (for example, the one Jane used to her parents) and a particular context (for example at home at dinner with parents).

The above example showed how one person used different social languages in different locations. This is also true in education, where the different discourses a teacher makes use of have a strong impact upon students: different students make use of different dialects to voice their opinions. Teacher and students will communicate to each other based on their social identities.

Even though people use the same social language, the meaning of words may differ. According to James Paul Gee: "What we mean by a word depends on which other words we have available to us and which other words our use of the word is meant to exclude or not to exclude as also possibly applying" (p.73). In this context, Gee discussed the two principles representing the cornerstone of meaning: the exclusion principle and the guessing principle.

According to the exclusion principle, speakers of the same social language can mean different things by the words used. Different social languages imply significant

differences in the sets of words available to the speaker and in the distinctions that are made by him or her. The other principle used to make meaning of the words used in a conversation is the guessing principle, which implies that judgments may be made about what others mean by a word used on a given occasion. This may be done by guessing what other words that word is meant to exclude or not to exclude. People belonging to the same/similar social groups or who speak the same/similar social languages, make better guesses about each other. In other words, shared group experience will aid in the decoding of a discourse.

Words have no meaning in and of themselves and by themselves apart from other words. They have meanings relative to choices and guesses about other words and assumptions about contexts. Slang terms can show affection or a lack of same to members of a social groups. Outsiders may miss the nuances of these terms.

The basis for these choices and guesses about meaning are cultural models. The various cultural models that a society or a particular social group uses share certain basic assumptions. These assumptions further form master myths of the social group or society and are often associated with certain characteristic metaphors in which the society or the group encapsulates its favored wisdom. For example, “freedom” may be an ambiguous term to philosophers but it elicits an emotional response as a term of social solidarity.

Discourses

Discourses are ways of being in the world, forms of life that integrate words, acts, values, beliefs. They create “social positions” from which people are “invited” to

participate. Gee defines discourse as a “socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network, or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful role” (p.131). Most people are fluent, or literate in many discourses (i.e. the discourse of the teaching profession, the discourse of one’s classroom, the discourse of one’s place of worship, the discourse of the neighborhood where one grew up).

Gee describes the two types of discourse characteristic to any society: primary and secondary discourses. As he sees it, primary discourses constitute our initial social identity; people are apprenticed early in life during their primary socialization as members of particular families within their socio-cultural settings. The secondary discourses constitute the recognition of our “public acts.” There is not a clear-cut distinction between the two types of discourses, though the boundaries between them are constantly being negotiated. People are thus acquiring primary discourses in their community, but they acquire secondary discourses through their membership in other communities. People can become as fluent in the secondary discourses as they are in the primary discourses.

Language competency in a language does not only mean how group members use spoken or written language, but also how they act, what they think, how they feel and what they value. Fluency is usually automatic and unconscious. Acquisition of fluency, however, is not automatic; it requires conscious practice, usually in a context where already fluent members grant the novice trial membership in the group. One makes allowances for and create room for the novice’s sayings-doings-thinkings-feelings-

valuings that do not meet the group's usual standards. The more fluent people become, the more they are empowered to social influence and the more they can climb the hierarchical scale.

Discourses are related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society. Control over certain discourses can lead to the acquisition of certain social goods (money, power, status) in a society. These discourses empower those groups who have the least conflicts with their other discourses when they use them. Fluency can aid in the acknowledgement of social harmony for those attempting to climb to the top of a bureaucratic ladder.

Languages and Power

Discourses create "social positions" from which people are invited to speak, listen, read and act; they are related to the distribution of social power. The use of certain discourses empowers people, enables them to either ascend the hierarchy, or if they do not use the language that is "appropriate," people are rendered more submissive. Competency and fluency in language furthers self-esteem.

Discourses have a similar effect on social institutions. A social institution is, among other things, an apparatus of verbal interaction or 'an order of discourse,' being regarded as a sort of 'speech community' with its own repertoire of speech events. Each institution has its own set of speech events, its own differentiated settings and scenes and its participants. Fairclough suggested the necessity to see the institution as simultaneously facilitating and constraining the social action of its members by providing them with a

frame of action without which they could not act, but it also constrains them to act within that frame.

Institutions impose these ideological and discursive constraints upon their members as a condition to qualify them to act as subjects. For example, to become a teacher, one must master the discursive and ideological norms that the school attaches to the subject position: “one must learn to talk like a teacher and see things (i.e. things such as learning and teaching) like a teacher” (p.39). When this happens, the teacher uses a certain type of discourse to create competence in his/her students in class. As social institutions, schools impose hegemonic relationships upon their members; these relationships concern the way control is exercised and discourses are mastered. Students may be affected by these power relations and they may either become the teachers’ conversational partners, or they become passive agents of the learning process.

Hegemonic relations are not only encountered in the school setting, they are specific to every field of the society. Fairclough defines the concept of hegemony as “leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society.” It is about “constructing alliances, and integrating rather than dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent” (p.76). Discoursal practice is a facet of negotiation that contributes in varying degrees to the reproduction or transformation of the existing order of discourse and through that of existing social and power relations.

Hegemony provides a model: in education, the dominant groups exercise power through constituting alliances, integrating the subordinate groups and winning their consent. Teachers may empower the students to feel their equals by exercising control

through indirect requests and suggestions. Teacher responses to students may have the same effect. Such discourses can be seen in terms of contradictory mixtures of equality and power:

There is a dual relationship of discourse to hegemony. On one hand, hegemonic practice and struggle took the form of discursive practice, in spoken and written interaction. Important changes are taking place in language education and training in Britain: there is a new emphasis on spoken language education, on face-to-face interaction in small groups. These new approaches contrast with the more traditional emphases on written Standard English. (p.94).

The following examples of hegemony shows how people belonging to a different social context are empowered by the position they occupy in society. A doctor-patient conversation may empower either the doctor or the patient, depending on the ways the interview is conducted. The doctor may exercise minimal control, asking a few questions but showing empathy with the patient; on the other hand, he may use a more traditional form of medical interview structured around a question-answer sequence, with the doctor asking nearly all questions and the patient being constrained by criteria of medical relevance in answering questions. In this case, the control of the interview is entirely in the doctor's hands.

The following extract from a consultation between a doctor and his female patient comes in opposition with what was stated above, being an example of how the doctor manipulates the whole conversation, limiting the patient only to answer his questions. (a dot indicates a short pause, a dash a longer pause and overlaps are shown with square brackets).

Doctor 1: [hm are you you back are you back on it have you started drinking
[again

Patient 1: [no

Doctor 2: oh you haven't (unclear

Patient 2: [no. One thing they say in AA is that you shouldn't change anything
[. for a year

Doctor 3: [hm

Doctor 4: hm yes I think I think that's a wise . I think that's wise (5 seconds pause)

well look I'd like to keep ,you know, seeing you keep. You know

hearing how things are going from time to time if that's possible"

(pp.98-99).

Fairclough argues the doctor is creatively articulating two different discourse conventions: that associated with traditional medical consultations and that associated with counseling. On one hand, as in traditional consultations, the doctor pursues an agenda that controls and determines the structure of the interaction and this is obvious in the occurrence of the doctor's questions. The doctor asks questions, urges the patient to come and see him again, the patient's interaction being only to answer these questions. On the other hand, just like the counselor, the doctor appears to give away much of the control and leadership of the interaction to the patient, allowing her to freely talk about her family and drinking problems. In the same way, in the classroom setting the teacher may enable an/or refrain the students to participate at the interaction.

Critical Language Awareness

Hegemonic relationships can be found among different dialects. Social institutions, as apparatuses of social interactions, empower certain languages or varieties of languages over other varieties, and by doing this they allot a certain power to the users of those discourses considered to be closer to Standard English. For example, a street gang shows their limited hegemony in local cultural scenes, but their members lose their power in bureaucracies.

Critical language study and critical language awareness constitute a resource for investigating issues of language and power. According to Fairclough, “there is an intimate relationship between the development of people’s critical awareness of language and the development of their own language capabilities and practices.” A rationale for critical language awareness work emerges from the general contemporary problematic of language and power; given that power relations work through language and given that language practices are targets for intervention and control, a critical awareness of language is a prerequisite for effective citizenship. Bureaucratic structures promote only those who are seen as “in the know.”

When applied to the school setting, these power relationships manifest themselves at the level of language standardization. In this respect, Fairclough discusses the relative merits of Standard English versus the students’ primary discourses. On one hand, schools urge teachers to teach students standard English, while on the other hand treating the diversity of language in the classroom as a potential resource of great richness and recognizing that all languages and varieties of language “have their rightful and proper

place in children's repertoires and each serves good purpose" (p.95). Standard English and other varieties of languages are presented as differing in conditions of appropriateness. The following is an example of how appropriateness figures in the Cox Report, which tries to reconcile the paradox of appropriateness of Standard English:

Pupils working toward level 7 should consider the notion of appropriateness to situation, topic, purpose and language mode and the fact that inappropriate language use can be a source of humor (either intentional or unintentional) or may give the impression that the speaker or writer is pompous or inept or impertinent or rude. Pupils should learn that Standard English is the language of wide social communication and is particularly likely to be required in public, formal setting. Teaching should cover discussion of the situations in which and purposes for which people might choose to use non-standard varieties rather than Standard English. E.g. in speech with friends, in a local team or group, in television advertising, folk songs, poetry, dialogue in novels or plays. (p.234).

Appropriateness is the cornerstone of the Report's policy on the teaching of Standard English, arguing that children have an "entitlement" to Standard English and that many important opportunities are closed to them if they do not have access to Standard English. Thus, the recommendation of the report is that schools should aim at developing students' ability to understand and produce both written and spoken Standard English. This should be understood in the context of the Report's view of the objectives of the English curriculum and the priority it gives to widening students' repertoires of varieties of English. The aim of this curriculum is to 'enable all students to develop to the

full their ability to use and understand English in order to maximize the contribution of English to the personal development of the individual child and preparation for the adult world.’ (p.235). Cox Report concludes that:

Pupils need to be able to discuss the contexts in which Standard English is *obligatory* and those where its use is *preferable* for social reasons. By and large, the pressures in favor of Standard English will be greater when the language is written, formal and public. Non-standard forms may be much more widely *tolerated*--and, in some cases, *preferred*--when the language is spoken, informal and private. (p.237)

Fariclough’s suggestion is that appropriateness provides an apparent resolution in the paradox that use of Standard English is to be taught, while use of other varieties is to be respected. The conclusion to all the above is that while Standard English is appropriate to certain contexts, varieties of language and dialects are appropriate in other contexts. The use of Standard English should, by no means, exclude other varieties and dialects. The object of an education is not to supplant native or ethnic dialects but to aid the student in learning and shifting from one language style to another when it is important to do so.

Summary

This chapter attempted to explain the existence of different social languages that make visible different social identities of people. It is important to understand that while using different discourses in different social contexts, people are either empowered or

rendered submissive, if the language used is not considered appropriate. Schools (and thus implicitly teachers) are striving to “correct” this false assumption that one language prevails over the others by not using one in the detriment of the others. The standard (whether we are speaking about Standard English or Standard American English) should not exclude the other languages and varieties of languages.

CHAPTER III:
THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE AND POWER IN
CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter discusses the different identities that exist in a culturally diverse classroom and the way this cultural background affects the school performance of the students. When students come to school, they bring with them the cultural influences of their home environments. In the school setting, culturally diverse students come in contact with other cultures present in the classroom in an environment that facilitates the interaction between these different cultures. Examples of culturally diverse students, the different cultural models they bring to school, and the influence of these models on their school performance will be presented below.

Home and School Discourse

All humans become members of a community in which they acquire a primary discourse. There are different primary discourses among speakers of English. For example, many African-American children from lower socio-economic groups use

English within their primary discourse to make sense of their experience differently than the middle-class children. This is not due merely to the fact that they have a different dialect of English, it also suggests they were exposed to a different social reality.

When first-graders come to school, they have already a cultural background specific to the environment they have been brought up in. Nature and culture both highly contribute in the human development. Culture is as important as nature, because it is from their environment that the children gather information and acquire knowledge. Accordingly, Richard Howard (1974) stated: "What we have assumed-with the complicity of our teachers-was nature is in fact culture, that what was given is no more than a way of taking" (p.ix). His statement advocates the idea that children learn "ways of taking" from the surrounding cultural environment. Howard's quote suggests teachers should recognize this informational background first-graders possess upon their entrance in school, and should not simply dismiss it as "nature"--which means that it is genetically transmitted to the child-but to regard it as "culture"--the child's way of taking from the surrounding environment.

Consequently, when students come to school from culturally diverse backgrounds, they may use a different discourse than the Standard English used primarily in schools. Student discourses vary from one community to another: while in some communities the ways of speaking in schools and other institutions are similar to the ways learned at home, in other communities school and home ways are in contrast (Gallas 1990).

For example, Gee (1981) documents the show-and-tell speech of a 7 year-old African-American girl, who tells a creative, imaginative entertaining story about her

grandmother's birthday. While this story may have been considered highly imaginative in the girl's primary discourse, it violated the expectations of classroom discourse, which require a show-and-tell story to be short, factual, and to the point. Some children come to school already able to do such reporting because it is part of their home discourse and thus the school privileges their primary discourse, while others are not able to relate as well to the school discourse because of the different social language they speak.

Learning and Acquisition

Primary discourses may privilege some students over others with regard to the quality and quantity of the information acquired at home. Acquisition and learning are seen as inter-dependable processes, equally affecting the school performance of the students. While learning is the process that involves conscious knowledge, gained through teaching and through certain life experiences, acquisition is the process of acquiring information by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. Some cultures highly value acquisition and tend to simply expose children to adults modelling some activity and eventually the child learns it.

The acquisition principle states that any discourse is mastered through ways of taking information from cultural models in natural, meaningful settings. On the other hand, the learning principle states that people consciously acquire information from the new setting. Thus literacy almost always involves learning and not just acquisition.

Gee's (1996) findings relate to the idea that schools should ideally balance acquisition with learning:

“Classrooms that do not properly balance acquisition and learning, and realize which is which, and which students have acquired what, simply privilege those students who have begun the acquisition process at home, engaging these students in a teaching/learning process, while others simply fail” (p.147).

A person's primary discourse serves as a framework for the acquisition and learning of other discourses later in life, the secondary discourses for example. Discourses acquired later in life can influence a person's primary discourse, having various effects on it. For example, the discourse the children acquire at home may be used in school and at the same time it can be improved by the new information students came across in this different setting. The secondary discourse will not eliminate the primary discourse of the students; on the contrary they will be complementary.

Classrooms that do not balance acquisition and learning simply privilege those students who have already begun the acquisition process outside school. The critical awareness of language may thus enable teachers to balance acquisition with learning and provide more equal opportunities to all students.

Cultural Influences on School Performances

One of the best examples of how acquisition and learning are balanced in the school setting is presented by Shirley Brice Heath's (1982) study on three English communities in the Southern United States. One community, Maintown, represents

a school-oriented culture; Roadville is a white mill community of the Appalachian origin; the third, Trackton, is a black mill community of recent rural origin. The three communities differ in their patterns of language use and the differences in preschoolers' language are reflected in their pattern of adjustment to school.

A Maintown Bookreading at Home

Children growing up in this community are expected to develop habits and values attesting to their membership in a literate society. In a series of "reading circles," mother and child alternate turns in dialogue: mother directs the child's attention to the book and asks what-questions and/or labels items on the page. In a "scaffolding dialogue," the mother points and asks, "What is X?" and the child vocalizes and/or gives a nonverbal signal of attention. The mother then provides a verbal feedback and a label. As Heath's research shows, the construction of knowledge in the earliest pre-school years partially depends solely on labeling procedures and what-explanations. As this instruction continues during the school years, there will be responses to new items and comparisons between these old and new items. This pattern of linking old and new is reinforced in narrative tales that fictionalize the teller's events. For these children the bedtime story is an incipient phase of taking meaning from the environment. The child picks up an invaluable competency which will reflect later in school work.

The example provided by Heath is two-year old Rachel, who was "literate before she learned to read"(p.55). She knew, before the age of two, how to focus on

a book and not on herself. Even when she told a story about herself she moved herself out of the text and saw herself as the author. She learned to pay close attention to the parts of objects, to name them, to manipulate items, activities and language.

Roadville Bookreading at Home

Roadville and Trackton exemplify ways of taking from an environment different than the Maintown environment and the impact these primary discourses have upon student achievement in school. Roadville, a white working-class community of families provides to their children labels, what-explanations, and prescribes listening and performing behavior for preschoolers. Children learn to look for a specific moral in the stories and to expect that story to fit real life explicitly. When they recount an event, they do the same, constructing the story of a real event according to coaching by adults who want to construct the story as they see it.

The example Heath chooses from the Roadville community is two year-old Wendy, whose favorite books are those with which she can participate; i.e., those to which she can answer, provide labels for, point to items and give animal sounds. She memorizes the passages and often knows when to turn the pages to show that she “is reading.” As Wendy grows older, she wants to “talk” during the long stories, Bible stories. By the time she reaches three years and a half, Wendy is restrained from such participation and if she interrupts, she is told: “Wendy, stop

that, you be quiet when someone is reading to you. You listen; now sit still and be quiet.”

Roadville adults believe that instilling in children the proper use of words and understanding of the meaning of the written word are important for both their education and religious success.

Trackton Community at Home

Trackton is a working-class black community in which there are no bedtime stories; in fact there are few occasions for reading to or with children in this community. Trackton adults value and respond favorably when children show they have learned how to use language to show correspondence in style, function and positioning between two different things or situations. Children rarely have names or labels for the events pointed out to them, as Heath's (1982) research shows. Individuals create their personal responses and recreate corresponding situations with often only a minimal adherence to a germ of truth in a story.

The example for this community is little Lem, one and a half years old. At this age, he is in the repetition stage: he imitates the intonation contours and shaping of utterances the adults repeat, while the adults pay no attention to Lem's talk. The “=” stands for a break in the conversation:

Mother: [talking to neighbor on porch while Lem plays with a truck on the porch nearby] But they won't call back, won't happen=

Lem: =call back

Neighbor: Sam's going over there Saturday, he'll pick up a form=

Lem: =pick up on, pick up on [Lem here appears to have heard *form* as *on*]

(p.65)

Lem creates a monologue, incorporating the conversation around him into his own talk and play. Adults pay no attention to his chatter unless it gets too noisy. In a third stage, participation, children begin to enter the ongoing conversations about them. Community members accept their communicative efforts and adults respond to the child directly. Children continue to practice for conversational participation by playing, when alone, both parts of the dialogue, imitating the gestures and intonation of adults.

Preschoolers in Trackton almost never hear "Once upon a time" stories and do not close their stories with formulaic endings. Lem, for example balances his opening and endings with "Way, Far, Now" and ending "Far, Now." Through the presentation of action and result of action in their stories, Trackton children invite the audience to respond. Lem asks: "You hear it?" As storytelling is highly competitive, Trackton children must be aggressive in inserting their stories into an ongoing stream of discourse.

At School

In the early reading stages, the children from these three communities responded differently as they learned different methods and degrees of taking from books. By the time Rachel and other Maintown school-oriented children enter school, they have had continuous experience as information-givers, and they have

learned to listen. They will learn additional signals and behaviors necessary for getting a turn in a group. Patterns of behavior learned in one setting reappear again and again as these children learn how to use oral and written language in literacy events and bring their knowledge to learn in school-acceptable groups.

In comparison with Maintown students, the habits Roadville children learned in bookreading and toy-related episodes have not continued for them through other activities. These children have to be reintroduced to a participant frame of reference to a book. Though initially they were participants in bookreading, they have been trained into passive roles since the age of three, so now they have to learn once more to be active information-givers, taking from books and linking that knowledge to other aspects of the environment.

Trackton students must learn to adopt the creativity in language. They already use narrative skills highly rewarded in the upper primary grades. They know that telling a story can be related to play. They “must learn as individuals to recount factual events in a straightforward way and recognize appropriate occasions for reason-explanations and affective-expressions.” (p.73) They must have the school habits presented in familiar activities with explanations related to their own habits of taking meaning from the environment.

As previously shown, discourses are acquired differently from one community to another. Teachers are the ones who, with their verbal or nonverbal behavior encourage the different discourses to be represented and all the voices to be heard, in an attempt to accrue the cultural knowledge and competence schools can share. Heteroglossia may be beneficial to all; for example, Maintown students can benefit from the early exposure to

Trackton's creative and analogical styles of telling stories and giving explanations and they can add the Roadville true story with strict chronicity and explicit moral to their repertoire of narrative styles. As the ultimate goal for all three groups is education, heteroglossia will contribute to this goal.

Studies Illustrating Native and Classroom Talk

Other studies have been conducted in order to help teachers become aware of the cultural differences in their classrooms and to allow heteroglossia to be part of their classroom. Researchers have investigated children from different cultures at school and at home and found out the reasons some of those children were considered "culturally deficient" and scored lower on tests (White, 1990). The examples below show how students from different cultural backgrounds react to classroom discourse and the impact classroom discourse has upon their primary discourses.

Labov's Work with the Black Inner City Youth

In the 1960s, minority children (African-American, Hispanic, Native American and Hawaiian) were judged to be "culturally deficient" when they did not perform well on tests in which they were asked to narrate stories suggested by a picture or to provide labels for pictured items or to name characters and sequences of events. When these students responded to interview questions with gestures and single word answers it was assumed that they "could not speak complete sentences" and "did not know the names of

common objects.” This verbal deficiency was attributed to impoverished environments in their early years in which they heard very little formal language in their homes. In reality, this “verbal deficiency” was related to the children’s acquisition of a primary discourse, with the way the students have acquired information from their homes and were accustomed to share this information.

While researching data of young black inner city youth, Labov found examples of “monosyllabic behavior,” one-word answers signifying the discomfort of the subject with the interviewer rather than to the subject’s verbal deficiency. Labov’s best example is Leon, an eight year-old inner city child who was interviewed by a large, friendly white male, who invited him to talk about some toys. As Leon responded with long hesitations followed by one-word answers, Labov decided to change the interviewer and have the child interviewed by someone who could connect better with Leon. Clarence, a black male from Harlem, highly skilled at interviewing, asked Leon questions about everyday experiences such as fighting and TV. Leon still responded with one-word answers, but soon after changing the social context from a formal interview situation to an informal gathering Leon’s speech gained in verbosity, volume and style. The data gathered during this interview helped Labov demonstrate that rather than being deprived, black inner city youth possessed a rich elaborated vocabulary. If the context of the dialogue is comfortable, this elaborated vocabulary may be used for the benefit of both the African-American student and his peers, as it may lead to a cultural exchange of information.

Philip's Research on the Silent Indian Child

Being aware that students from different cultural backgrounds possess a primary discourse prior to their arrival to school, and that under appropriate circumstances they will share information specific to this background with their peers, Susan Philips (1990) was among the first people who asked the questions: "Why are the Indian children silent in class?" While doing her research in the Indian community of Warm Springs, Oregon, she found out that the social conditions appropriate for communication in this community differed from the conditions in which speech is appropriate in the classroom. Warm Springs children learn little about the verbal instruction; instead, they are patient observers. According to Philips (1990): "Indian speakers use less body movement, do not gaze as much, do not talk as loud and talk at a slower pace than Anglo speakers; Indian hearers tend to have a greater awareness of more subtle bids of attention than would Anglo hearers"(Hornberger, 1988, p.53). Coming from this type of background, some Native American children have great difficulty adapting to the norms of communication in a classroom. Philips' research shows that they did not raise their hands and waited to be called on before speaking. They were more interested in getting attention from other students than from the teacher. She found them reluctant to participate in recitation either in front of a large group or within a small group, as recitation would violate several community conditions for speaking; the students would have to accept the teacher's authority to direct and then evaluate how an individual answers a specific question. Also,

while answering the teacher's questions, the students could be criticized for "getting above themselves" by publicly showing off that they knew the answer (while their peers did not.)

However, Philips found that teacher-student interaction was more likely to occur if the teacher made himself/herself available for the students or initiated conversation while the students were independently working on their assignments, because individual students were more likely to initiate encounters than they would while working as a whole group. Philips also found out that when Warm Springs students control and direct the interaction in small group projects, they "become the most involved in what they are doing, concentrating completely on their work until it is completed, talking a great deal to one another within the group, and competing with the other groups." (p.379) According to Philips' hypothesis, the best conditions for discussion would involve a slower pace and a nonrecitation format in which the teacher does not publicly ask questions of individuals or evaluate their responses.

Clay's Study on Maori Children in New Zealand

Clay's study provides other examples of how the acquisition process changes from one community to another and distinguishes between students whose primary discourses are advantaged/disadvantaged by the school settings. Clay relates the experiences of the five year olds with the school curriculum during their first term in school. She and her assistant spent six mornings in each of six multiethnic classrooms taught by "European" teachers. The activities observed were morning news (sharing

time) and other whole-class talk, beginning reading and some combination of individualized drawing/dictating/writing. In each classroom, they focused on six children: two Maori, two Pacific Island and two European. They recorded whether the children were “on- task” and wrote down as closely as possible the students’ interactions with the teacher.

All three ethnic groups of these young students were on-task 90% of the time, teachers often initiating five to six individualized interactions with each of the children each morning. But the answer to one of Clay’s questions: “How did teachers provide for cultural differences in the classrooms?” was much less positive. The teachers’ interactions with the Maori children were shorter and less elaborate:

Teachers started as many contacts with Maori children as with Europeans or Pacific Island students but they asked less often for verbal elaboration. These results were consistent across the two samples [of children beginning school in Term 1 and those beginning in Term 2]. (p.154)

Clay’s data clearly shows that Maori children missed four teaching opportunities each per morning, six per day, thirty per week and 300 per term.

How Can Teachers Successfully Involve Culturally Different Students in Discussion?

As Hawaiian students were also considered “culturally deficient” in school, they became the focus of researchers who were interested in the problem of their academic underachievement. In 1965 researchers undertook a large-scale study of the modern Hawaiian community and in 1972 researchers from philosophy and anthropology and teachers in Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) began to collaborate

with the goal to change educational practices to improve the mean score for Hawaiian children from 27% to 50%.

Changes were made in class organization, instructional practices and classroom management strategies to provide more culturally compatible contexts. Accustomed to working together, Hawaiian children sought out their friends for assistance; therefore, the classroom organization was changed to allow small groups of students to work together in centers while the teacher met with each group for 20-25 minutes for reading. Since Hawaiian students were often seen by school personnel as “unmotivated” and “hard to manage,” the first attempt was to persuade them to work on task. Thus lessons were introduced by the teacher with references to the experiences of the children which related to the topic of the story. For example, in “Freddy Finds a Frog,” the teacher began by asking the children what they would do with the frog. The teacher then assigned the students a page or two of the story, which they were to read silently in order to answer questions. Following this period of silent reading, the teacher asked questions which assessed the children’s understanding of the information in the text. Finally the teacher attempted to draw relationships between the material in the text and the children’s own experiences” (Au, 1980, p.94).

Researchers found that if the teacher behaves more as a listener, addressing questions to the group rather than to individual students, both students and the teacher would achieve their ends. Since Hawaiian adults in the home do not often expect children to obey verbal requests immediately, KEEP teachers found they must work hard to establish themselves as authority figures. D’Amato’s findings that “to gain a place in the peer group, a Hawaiian child must show warmth and also prove toughness” provided a

useful guide for KEEP teachers to follow. The most effective strategies for classroom management involve indirect praise and praise given to the group rather than individual. Within two years of implementation, this program resulted in reading scores at or above the 50th percentile on the standardized tests.

Jordan argues that translating culture from ethnographic information to educational program is “mostly a process of selection and combination rather than invention” (p.118). This means that rather than reproducing the Hawaiian culture within the classroom, a process of “least change” was followed. However, the same strategy used with the Navajo children was not effective. Vogt and Jordan’s studies (1987) show that praise needed to be subtle, misbehavior had to be controlled by lowering one’s eyes and lecturing to the whole group of students.

Some instructional practices developed with the Hawaiian students were effective with Navajo students as well; directing questions to the group rather than spotlighting individual students and relating the personal experiences of the Navajo students to the text. Yet the participant structures were different. Rather than overlapping speech and quick responses, the Navajo students spoke longer and volunteered questions and comments. The authors noted that procedures that worked perfectly in the Navajo classrooms would bring disaster with the Hawaiian children.

Each teaching situation is unique. Some of the program elements that are effective for native Hawaiian children are effective with some other populations while some are not. Cazden (1988) states that ‘some of the KEEP practices can be universally recommended, especially the teacher’s role as mediator between the children and the text’ (p.72). One of the lessons of the Kamehameha project is that merely adopting a

successful management program without meaningful academic interactions is not sufficient. Classroom organization and instructional strategies must be taken into consideration as culturally specific instructional strategies are developed.

Macias' Study of the Papago

Macias provides another example of how students' primary discourses and behavior conflict with the language and behavior considered appropriate by school norms. Macias (1987) described how Papago teachers in Papago Indian Early Childhood Headstart Program (PECHS) reduced the severity of the discontinuity between home and school. Macias found that "vocal self-assertion and school dominance" needed by students to perform successfully in school situations are at odds with the Papago traditions of social deference, since they conflict with the students' primary discourses and ways of acquiring from their environment. Modeling and gesturing as well as economical speech are the strong keys of the Papagos, who do not believe that children should "be forced to bow to an older person's demands" (p.370). Therefore, the teachers in PECHS facilitate verbal expression by combining the traditional physical activity with a verbal activity. They avoid violating rules of individual autonomy. Papago teachers are primarily concerned with teaching the children the new limits of their freedom by modeling and inviting participation in new forms of interaction rather than coercing.

Moll and Diaz Use Responsive Teaching in a Latino Community

Moll and Diaz's (1987) study present another example of the impact learning has upon the students' primary discourses by describing a case study in reading with 3rd and 4th grade students labeled as limited-English speakers. They created an instructional context in which the students can display their reading abilities regardless of language. In a typical reading lesson for these students, the teachers frequently interrupted the students in order to ask for definitions of single words or correct pronunciation.

Using Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, the researchers produced bilingual communicative support to help students comprehend English texts. They read the story to the students in English to remove decoding constraints and then they asked the students to concentrate on understanding the story. They asked comprehension questions, allowing the students to switch into Spanish if clarification was needed. By the 3rd lesson the students did not need to have the lesson read to them and could answer bilingual English comprehension questions.

In a study of writing, Moll and Diaz realized that limited English students were not doing any extended writing. Since little extended writing was actually done in the homes they studied, Moll and Diaz needed a strategy to motivate the students to write. To teach the process of writing, they first looked for a motive for writing: it had to be an activity to communicate with someone else about something that mattered. Working with twelve teachers from three junior high schools every two weeks for three or four hours, the teachers assigned themes on a community related issues such as bilingualism. Although

the writing was somewhat grammatically flawed, the students were engaged in it as they were writing to communicate with others.

Sharing Time in the Classroom

Teachers may build a bridge between the student's primary discourse and the learning in the school setting by allowing their students to share information specific to their home background. In this way, teachers may become acquainted with their students' cultural backgrounds and become facilitators of a cultural information exchange between all the students in the class.

Karen Gallas' research (1990) and observation during her "sharing time" sessions with the 1st graders in 1990 represents a very important step in allowing different cultures and social strata to present and represent themselves by allowing different students to speak in the classroom. It is important that the teachers acknowledge each child's culture, since according to Bernstein (1972): "If the culture of the teachers is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher." (p.149)

Gallas (1990) started from the assumption that she had been taught to think that show-and-tell (or sharing) was an important time in the day when children could take center stage and share part of their lives in school. Although in the beginning she had her doubts about the success of such an activity, considering it "deadly boring and repetitive" (p.17), she decided to make part of her classroom research on the "why" of the sharing time. The class of 1st graders that Gallas was teaching at the time of this research was

composed of twenty-two students representing four different language groups and a range of socioeconomic backgrounds: one third of the class were not native English speakers. The class was racially mixed including 3 African-American children, 11 Caucasians, 6 Japanese, a South-African black and an Ethiopian.

Sharing time allows each child to directly represent his/her culture. The teacher is the one who, with verbal or nonverbal support or denial of a discourse, transmits a clear message about the types of communication that are appropriate in school. A critical language awareness from part of the teacher is needed in order to prevent literate characteristics that fit school conceptions of what literacy and talk should be to be manifested in school work.

During sharing time, Gallas allowed her students to take the chair of the teacher while the teacher sat in the back of the audience. Two to five children would volunteer to share and when finishing with the narrative, they would ask for questions or comments. From October until May 1990 Gallas' notes contain observations on how this experience enabled bilingual children to be included in the community and how the children found ways to listen and develop one another's narratives. In one chapter of her book, Gallas focuses mainly on a six year-old African-American girl, Jiana, whose stories had an impact on her classmates. This is how Gallas describes Jiana in the beginning of the school year: "She recognized only a few letters and numbers, could barely write her name and had extreme trouble naming common objects, animals and pictures. She appeared to have little, if any, experience with books" (p.20).

Jiana's sharing-time experience is a very good example of what happens when the teachers allow heteroglossia to be present in the classroom setting. Jiana was not

comfortable sharing in the beginning, she started by feeling uncomfortable in her chair: “she would perch on the edge of the chair with her long legs tucked neatly together.”

(p.21) Her language was very basic; as she shared her objects with her classmates, she would get help from them to fill in the gaps of her narratives. As Jiana started to “tell” instead of show, a new genre of “fake stories” appeared in the classroom. She would start making up a story and all the students would join in her story, ask questions, and prompt follow-ups. The following is an example of one of Jiana’s stories told in April. In it, she describes how she and her teacher climbed a tree and then further developed the story to include every child and adult in the class. Each time she told the story, she would add a new child to the tree, reciting the names, in order, of every child who had gone before, while simultaneously including many transformations.

Then Karen turned into a monkey, and she said “Quack, quack.” Then Karen K. [student teacher] turned into a monkey, and she said, “Quack, quack.” Then Franny came along and ate them, and ate all the kids, and Franny threw up, and all little spiders came out, and Kenshi came and ate all the spiders. (p.27)

In telling this story, Jiana used a number of dramatic techniques she had not used before. She had a much broader range of movement and different inflections for different voices. Jiana’s stories were always accompanied by laughter and great audience involvement. At first some Caucasian boys refused to participate in her narratives, but eventually they encouraged Jiana to tell fake stories and then use their names in the stories. Other children began to imitate Jiana’s initiatives, using immediate context to tell their stories. Because of Jiana, they have learned a new way of talking. Gallas provided

examples of several students who could not fabricate stories, but who were very good at narrating real events from their lives.

Story-telling offers significant insights into the ways children use language to convey ideas, information and feelings. The way children tell stories in the school setting is illustrative of the way they have heard the adults in their community making use of the language. Jiana's story best illustrates the story-telling in the traditional rural African-American community, which "stresses the literary modes used by black children in story making narratives: retelling, borrowing, re-creation, blending and transformation" (Mikkleson, 1990). These were not devices that most of the children were comfortable using in their narratives, but eventually all of them made an attempt to incorporate them in their talk, and continued to work on them long after Jiana left the class. The body of stories that grew from her initiatives expanded the children's collective folklore. As Paley (1990) says, "the classroom that does not create its own legends has not traveled beneath the surface to where the living takes place."

Jiana enabled her classmates and teacher to move into new levels of expression and communal life, but also with the help of her friends, she gained a certain fluency in school narratives. Gallas facilitated this development by continuously reevaluating her perception of what sharing time was and allowing the different voices of her students to be heard in the classroom.

Bakhtin's description (1986) of the ways in which speaker and listener interact helps to clarify how Jiana's language and that of her classmates became more congruent. Because Bakhtin views language as interactive, the social aspect of producing language moves to the forefront as a powerful source in forming and ultimately in transforming a

particular discourse. Jiana brought a discourse to school that did not fit the mainstream. But in the interaction of the two worlds of communication, new forms of speech and response were created. Children, as social beings, wanted to respond to Jiana as she was a full member of the group.

In the same way, Jiana's desire to master the sharing discourse was related to her desire to become part of the school community. In trying to understand her speech plan, the other children pulled her into the discourse, making it easier for her to appropriate their language forms to her purpose. Because she was a respected member of the community, the other children tried to respond to all her attempts at communication, both successful and unsuccessful.

Teacher-Student Exchanges

The above studies show examples of strategies teachers can use in order to create an environment open for discussion in the classroom setting, in which both students and teacher express themselves freely to communicate their ideas and beliefs. Heteroglossia is beneficial not only for the students, as they hear their classmates tell about experiences related to their cultural background, but also for the teacher, who becomes familiar with the different cultural backgrounds of the students. Although the educational system tends towards empowering students to speak in class, John Godlad (1984) in his study of over 1000 classrooms found that little time, 4 to 8% was spent in discussion and less than 1% of teacher talk was intended to elicit a student response. The teacher-student relationships involve a narrating subject (the teacher) and most of the times a patient, listening object

(the student). This comes in direct contradiction with Jiana's free talk, where the role is reversed, the teacher becoming a listener and the student becoming an active agent of his/her learning.

While studying the teacher-student interaction in the classroom, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identified nine types of exchanges, out of which five are called free exchanges and the rest four are referred to as bound exchanges. Their research suggests that teacher exchanges outnumber the student exchanges in the classrooms. Teachers inform, direct and elicit, whereas children rarely ask questions and only occasionally offer information.

Free Exchanges

This type of exchange refers to teacher-student interaction in the classroom setting, the focus of these exchanges being more on the teacher's discourse. While informing, the teacher is passing on facts, opinions, ideas and new information to the children. Children may, but usually do not, make a verbal response to the teacher's initiation and there is no feedback.

Ex. "Now, luckily, the French could read Greek."

Teachers may also direct student participation, getting the students to do but say nothing. The response is a compulsory element of the structure and feedback is not an essential element, although it may frequently occur.

Ex. "I want you to take your pen and I want you to rub it as hard as you can on something woolen."

When eliciting verbal contributions from pupils, very frequently a teacher will use a series of elicit exchanges to move the class step to a conclusion. The elicit exchanges

that occur in a classroom have a different function from most occurring outside the classroom. Feedback is a very important element in an exchange inside the classroom, because the children want to know whether their reply was right or not.

As shown above, teachers still have a major contribution to the classroom interaction. Nevertheless, students are involved in this interaction, but they have not become yet the teacher's conversational partner. In many classrooms, children rarely ask questions and when they do they are mainly of the order "Do we put the date?" or "Can I go to the lavatory?" Usually the child has to catch the teacher's attention and get permission to speak and this permission may sometimes not be granted. The initial bid may be countered by "Not now" or "just a minute." Occasionally students offer information, which they think is relevant, or interesting- they usually receive an evaluation of its worth and often a comment as well.

Bound Exchanges

This type of exchanges limit student interaction to merely performing what the teachers tell them to do or ask them to answer. Teachers may re-initiate student participation; when they get no response to an elicitation, the same question or a rephrased question may be used to start eliciting again. When a teacher gets the wrong answer, there are two ways to react to it: either stay with the same child and try to work him/her around to the right answer or keep the question and move on to another child. This type of re-initiation differs from the previous one in that feedback does occur here. It is usually realized by "Yes," "No," or a repetition of what the student has just said, with an intonation indicating incompleteness or reservation. Occasionally teachers withhold evaluation until they get two or three answers, making sure that more than one person

knows the answer; they reinforce what they have previously said or repeat the demand if one or more students did not understand or heard what the teacher said.

Implications

According to the above examples, teachers are still doing most of the talking in the class, children being limited mostly to answering the questions of the teachers. Classrooms and schools are preeminent spaces of cultural contact, calling attention to what students bring with them in their minds, their “prior knowledge.” Allowing culturally diverse students to talk more may have resulted in a better understanding of the students’ primary discourses and this may facilitate the learning and acquisition process that continue in the school setting.

A challenge for the teacher and the students is to develop trust that each will act sensibly and in the other’s best interest. Given that school failure is an interactional accomplishment of both teacher and students, teachers should learn to create contexts in which culturally different students are enabled to exchange ideas in classroom discussions. In order to achieve their academic objectives in classroom discussions, teachers need to be willing to adopt their classroom organization and management to incorporate aspects of the cultural models found in the home community.

Summary

Here is a distilled summary of the paper findings so far. Because children come from different cultural backgrounds, their primary discourse and cultural models will vary. Teachers should become familiar first of all with their students' cultural backgrounds, and then to develop strategies they will need to use in order to enhance their students' in-class interaction with their classmates. The studies show that if the teacher addresses the differences existent in their classrooms by paying attention to the way students acquired information at home, they may further prevent the academic failure of some students. This failure may occur as a consequence of the inadaptability of these students to a classroom climate that was very different from their home climate and which labeled the students as not being representatives of the "appropriate" type of discourse.

CHAPTER IV:
TEACHER BEHAVIORS THAT ENHANCE LEARNING FOR
CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to present strategies that enable students from different cultures to be successful in heterogeneous classrooms. Giving the students a chance to be expressive and creating a comfortable environment (Labov 1990) in which students can freely exchange ideas are of an utmost importance, as shown in Gallas (1990)' experiment. A comfortable environment implies that the student becomes the teacher's conversational partner while dialoguing, comfort being related to focus and stressful impediments to learning. The way teachers answer their students or accept student responses may increase or decrease the degree of comfort of the students. Utilizing the students' prior knowledge and structuring the class in such a way as to facilitate student learning are two steps teachers should take in order to include all students in classroom activities and give each the chance to participate in the educational process. While structuring the environment for discussion, teachers must take into consideration their students' predispositions towards teamwork and should form culturally, classed and gendered diverse groups.

Introduction

Different children come to classes with different learning styles and levels, thus teachers should consider and respect all these differences and start to build upon the actual level of knowledge of the students. Consequently, one of the most important tasks of the teacher is to get to know each child's strengths; among these strengths is the child's primary discourse. Special emphasis should be placed on understanding each child's language as a source for literacy learning, no matter how "nonstandard" in vocabulary or syntax that language may seem to the teacher.

Teachers should be aware of the cultural differences in their classrooms in order to enable culturally diverse children to interact and exchange information and develop teaching strategies that would facilitate the learning process of all the students in the classroom. "Differential treatment" and "cultural differences" are two terms coined by Courtney Cazden (2001) that refer to different perspectives on the single problem of achieving greater equity in opportunities to learn. The terms refer to perspectives that contrast with each other. The *differential treatment* perspective usually refers to overdifferentiation, to the ways in which schools and classrooms give some students more and better opportunities, thus reinforcing inequalities of knowledge and skills present when students start school. The *cultural differences* perspective, on the other hand, refers to underdifferentiation and asserts that some students would be better served if qualitative differences among students were taken into account more rather than less.

The best example in this respect is the one discussed in the previous chapter about the three groups studied: Roadville, Trackton and the Maintown community in the

Southern United States. Since each of the groups brings along a specific cultural background, it is too much to expect that children who initially vary in levels of knowledge and skills, or in “self-identities of competent students,” as Cazden calls it, will, initially participate equitably. There is a potential, however, for all students to learn one from the other as long as the teacher is willing to allow a free exchange of ideas. For example, Maintown children could benefit from the early exposure to Trackton’s creative, highly analogical styles of telling stories and giving explanations, and they can add the Roadville true story with strict chronicity and explicit moral to their repertoire of narrative types.

The teacher needs to help Maintown children to learn how to use oral and written language in literacy events and bring their knowledge to learn in school-acceptable groups. The teacher needs to help Roadville students to learn once more to be active information-givers, taking from books and linking that knowledge to the surrounding environment. Teacher also needs to help Trackton students, who were allowed on the contrary to be very creative and use language to create, learn how to adopt the creativity in language.

The five teaching strategies presented below are meant to help culturally diverse learners to better adapt to school demands. Encouraging the students to talk freely in the classrooms and structuring this environment in accordance with their students’ learning styles and cultural background will create a comfortable environment for discussion. By modeling an appropriate class behavior, teachers will encourage the students to adopt the same type of behavior in the relationships with their peers. All these will enhance class participation and facilitate discussions for the culturally diverse students.

Encouraging Expressive Talk

One of the most important strategies teachers should use in order to become familiar with the cultural background of their students and help them adjust to the new school setting is to encourage students to freely express themselves, by being tolerant regarding the different languages and varieties of languages their students use. The previous chapter exemplified how heteroglossia is beneficial to all the students in a classroom and how allowing diverse students to use their primary discourse enabled not only their peers to acquire important information from those discourses but also helping the teacher to understand what were the differences between their students and what strategies would work better to address these differences.

If teachers do not encourage student interaction and do not enable students to become the teacher's conversational partner, education becomes an act of depositing, as Paulo Freire (1970) calls it in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire describes school settings as a milieu where the teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. He expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students and his task is to "fill" the students with his narration. Narration, with the teacher as a narrator, will lead then the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content, turning them into receptacles. Freire is still a controversial and fruitful theorist in educational policy.

This approach to education becomes an act of depositing; instead of communicating, the teacher makes deposits that the students passively receive.

Freire defines this as the “banking” concept of education. Apart from inquiry, praxis, individuals cannot be truly human, knowledge emerging only through invention and re-invention. In the banking concept of education, as Freire states, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. The teacher presents himself/herself to the students as their necessary opposite and by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his/her own existence. Addressing themselves to diverse students in a discourse most of them cannot fully understand, without considering the differences in terms of culture, teachers prevent an open exchange of ideas among their students. Both teacher and students could benefit from this exchange, in that they will increase their knowledge regarding the different cultures present in the classrooms and be introduced to different types of discourses specific to these cultures. Their primary discourses acquired at home may thus be doubled by a secondary discourse, acquired in school.

Freire’s paradigm conveys that through dialogue, the teacher of the students and the students of the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but one who is himself/herself taught in dialogues with the students, who in turn, also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. No one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. A very good example of ideal education, in which teacher and students learn together and students express their ideas freely is Gallas’ (1990) show-and-tell strategy. Following Gallas’ example (1990), teachers should allow students to show and tell, as this would give every child an

opportunity to represent himself/herself and his/her culture directly. There is a lot to gain by allowing all the voices to be heard in the classrooms. Heteroglossia enables both students and teacher gain by accumulating knowledge about other cultures and languages; they grow to tolerant towards diversity and to extend their knowledge if the acquisition process started at home is doubled by learning in school. As discussed in the previous chapter, Maintown ways of acquiring communicative competence do not offer a universally applicable model of development. Maintown students have a lot to learn from the narrative techniques of the students coming from other cultures, just like the latter can gain by experiencing the Maintown ways of learning.

Creating a Comfortable Environment

In order to have a dialogue in the class, both sides must be heard: teacher and students. A conversation in general implies that both the participants have an equal status. This further requires that they both bring in the same amount of contribution to the conversation, thus the number of exchanges coming from both sides is equal. Ideally this occurs when the sides (here students and teacher) feel comfortable with each other. Labov (as cited by White, 1990) provides an example regarding the degree of comfort of an eight year-old inner city African-American child interviewed by a friendly white male, who invited him to talk about some toys. Leon responded with long hesitations followed by one-word answers. While changing the social context and having an African-American interviewer, who

talked with Leon about his everyday life experiences, the boy was more open to discussion.

A dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. Faith in human kind is an a priori requirement for dialogue. On the other hand, true dialogue cannot exist if the dialoguers are not engaged in critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education.

Responding: Creating a Climate for Discussion

The manner in which teachers respond to students influences their behavior. Teacher responses may increase or decrease the students' degree of comfort as well as they may impact students' further contributions to the lesson. Students are constantly anticipating how their teachers will respond to their actions. It is important to remember that children with a different cultural background may interpret teacher responses in a different way, thus while responding the teacher may be well aware of the impact his/her answer may have on culturally different children. Costa (1990) categorized response behaviors according to their effects on students: those that tend to terminate/close down participation and those that maintain/open up action.

Terminal or closed responses can either criticize or praise. Criticism is a negative value judgment, and when the teacher responds to the students' ideas with the use of negative words as "poor," "incorrect," "wrong," this response signals

disapproval and terminates the student's thinking about the task. Negative responses can sometimes be subtle: "You are almost right," "You are getting close" or they can take the form of ridicule: "What a dumb idea" or sarcastic "Where on earth did you get this idea?"

The use of criticism is not an appropriate way for a teacher to respond to culturally diverse students because it leaves the students with a feeling of failure and poor self-concept. It is not helpful in promoting learning; it does not encourage or enhance participation in discussions; and it produces lower pupil achievement. Note that culturally different students may give a cultural interpretation to the teacher's criticism (as directed towards their cultural lacks).

On the other hand, praise employs the use of positive value judgments such as "good," "excellent," "great."

Ex. "That was a very good answer, Linda."

"Your painting is excellent."

"You are such a fine boy today, Leo."

Yet praise builds conformity as it makes students depend on others for their ideas rather upon themselves. While praise might be appropriate under certain conditions in which the teacher wants the students to conform to rules or procedures, it would be desirable for them to use praise judiciously--only in those circumstances for which it is suitable. While most teachers enjoy praising their students, Brophy (1981) found out that the person in the classroom praise has the most beneficial effect is the teacher.

Open or extended responses are better examples of how teachers may use their responses to increase the climate of comfort in their classrooms. Instead of criticizing or praising the students directly, teachers may make use of indirect strategies that would not hurt the students' feelings.

Ex. "I can see why you are confused. Those directions are unclear to me, too."

As shown above, the ways teachers respond to their students will impact student participation. Teachers' responses may help or prevent culturally diverse students to interact with their peers and express ideas.

Accepting Responses

Sometimes teachers remain nonjudgmental of students' ideas. This provides a psychologically safe climate where students can take risks. Students are encouraged to examine, discuss and compare their own data and values, to exchange information belonging to a culturally diverse background and to learn from each other's contributions to the lesson. There are several types of acceptance: passive acceptance, occurring when the teacher only receives and acknowledges, without value judgments, what the student says. It communicates that the student's ideas have been heard.

Ex. "Um-hmm," "Could be," "I understand."

Active acceptance occurs when the teacher rephrases, paraphrases, translates or summarizes what the student says or does. The teacher demonstrates not only that the student's response has been received, but also that it has been understood.

Ex. "I understand your idea, Maria--each of us should write our legislator rather than send them one letter from the group."

Structuring the Environment for Classroom Interaction

The ways teachers control classroom environmental resources as time, space, and materials have a direct influence on student achievement in a culturally diverse classroom. A well-structured classroom produces higher student achievement when students know the purpose of the lesson and what the time constraints and resources are. (Costa, 1990)

Structuring the classroom for discussion should involve two important aspects according to Costa: the clarity of verbal and written instructions and the structuring of time and energy. Teachers should organize their classrooms in a variety of ways so that students become actively involved in discussion. When preparing for discussions, teachers may either assign the students to groups or allow the students to choose their peers. This strategy presents both advantages and disadvantages.

When students select their own groups, they will choose peers with whom they feel comfortable. These are people they know and trust and with whom they can speak openly. These represent real advantages. In self-selected groups, students do not need to know one another and can begin conversing about the topic immediately. Conversely, when students choose to form their own groups, they choose to be with people who hold similar opinions.

When teachers take the opposite approach and assign students to groups, they can bring together people with different experiences. They can ensure that groups are mixed by gender, race and class and that both talkative and quiet students are represented. They can also include students with different learning styles in each group. Bruffee (1993) cites research showing that heterogeneous groups sometimes foster discussion that is more challenging and critical.

Large Groups

Some teachers prefer to conduct discussions in a whole-class setting, with all the students gathered in a circle or U-shape. Group discussions can be stimulating and productive; they allow the teacher to monitor the understanding and participation of all learners simultaneously. However, the large scale of group discussion can inhibit the participation of some individuals, allowing the most socially confident or aggressive to dominate. Since students come to school with different learning styles and different cultural backgrounds, the students whose discourses most closely resemble Standard English will dominate. Whole-class discussions are more likely to perpetuate the inequalities of class, race and gender and they can be difficult to manage and occasionally chaotic. To enable as many students to talk and as many cultures to be represented as possible, the teacher can carefully monitor student discussion and allow the same amount of time for each student to voice his/her opinion.

Small Groups

Small groups may work best for the culturally diverse students who feel too shy to express themselves in front of all their peers. Not all students are like Jiana; some may feel lost if asked to perform in a large group and refuse to participate in the discussion. Working in threes or fours, they will feel different; they will have the courage to express their ideas without the fear that they will embarrass themselves in front of the whole class and of the teacher.

The educational psychologist Elizabeth Cohen conducted long-term research program on how to achieve equity in small group instruction. Here are the tenets of her theory, which have been tested in many classrooms both in US and internationally, as cited by Cazden (2001):

Students learn in small groups from their active participation as well as from each other. The rate of their participation is positively correlated with the extent of their learning. Small group participation rates are influenced by the expectations that students in each group have for each other.

Small collaborative groups provide opportunities for more equitable participation, and therefore for more learning, with careful teacher-action of three kinds: establishing group norms about collaborative responsibilities in small group work, such as the responsibilities to both ask for help and give it when asked; using curriculum materials and tasks that require multiple skills and explaining those skills to the class; and publicly recognizing competence in the previously low-status students.

Relaxed Buzz Groups

Buzz groups are small groups of four or five students, in which they discuss issues from a reading assignment. The requirement is that group members keep their talk focused on issues that emerge from the reading. It is up to the group to decide how to handle the conversation. Relaxed buzz groups are good icebreakers; students can get acquainted and build enthusiasm for future conversation. If the teacher assign students belonging to different social and cultural groups to work together this will allow for a diversity of opinion, this facilitating heteroglossia.

Rotating Small Group Stations

One way to avoid the usual format of reporting through summaries is to place each small group at a station where members have ten minutes to discuss a provocative issue and record their ideas on newsprint or chalkboard. When time is up, the groups move to new positions in the classroom, where they continue their discussions. Rotations continue every ten minutes till each group has been at all the positions and has had a chance to consider all the other groups' comments and all the members' opinions on the task assigned. Interaction among all students allows for a diversity of points of view from students coming from different backgrounds and giving a different interpretation to the same idea. Rotating stations encourages students to examine critically ideas that originate outside the group. The safety and intimacy of small groups is retained while incorporating the diversity of viewpoints experienced in whole-class discussions.

Snowballing (or pyramiding)

Students begin this activity by responding to questions as individuals. They can create progressively larger conversation groups by doubling the size of these groups every few minutes till the large group has been reformed. This example gets a lot of people talking to each other while retaining much of the value of small groups.

Jigsaw

Teachers and students begin by generating a short list of topics they would like to study. Each student becomes an “expert” in one of those topics, first individually and then in discussion with other experts. Later these student experts become responsible again, through dialogue, for helping non-experts to become as knowledgeable as they are. Students benefit from having extended discussion with twice the usual number of students. The jigsaw gives even the most reticent students reason to speak up, bolstering their confidence. The chief drawback is that the amount of information to absorb in the second round of discussion can be overwhelming.

Strategies for Reporting to the Large Groups

It is standard procedure to have small groups report the substance of their conversation to the large group. Teachers approach the task of reporting to the whole class in a number of ways. The most common it is to invite each group to summarize the themes explored in response to the questions assigned. This can be

drawn out and repetitive. A variation is to call on each small group to share the one or two insights group members found most surprising and illuminating. Small groups can offer the key themes or concepts that seemed to recur throughout their conversation. These can spark strong reactions from others, stimulating new lines of inquiry.

Modeling Behavior to Enhance Classroom Discussion

Children learn to listen and respond to language early in life, and when they enter school they find that teachers guide expectancies through questions and directions. In a heterogeneous class, students have to learn to listen to the different ideas of their peers and the person who can best guide them into acquiring this behavior is the teacher. Modeling reinforces students' perceptions of the values and goals stated by the teacher or school. By exhibiting the behaviors desired in students, teachers strongly influence the students in their behavior patterns. As Costa states, if listening to one another is a valued behavior for discussion, the teacher who listen to students will greatly enhance the achievement of this behavior. Students will experience the satisfaction of being listened to, and as a result, will be more inclined to listen to others. When the adult deals with students' emotions empathetically, there is a greater likelihood that students will learn to respond empathetically as well.

Gallas' show-and-tell experiment represents a very good example of modeling. Gallas listened without interruptions until the student was done talking.

That can be difficult because teachers are eager to correct mistakes when they appear. But because Gallas modeled listening, all her students imitated her behavior. When a student had the chair, he/she also had the undivided attention of the listeners.

Beyers (2000) describes modeling as a procedure in which teachers explain how to carry out a cognitive activity so students can then replicate that activity on their own. It involves though more than simply walking students through steps in a cognitive procedure, it involves telling the students at each major point along the way the options available. Modeling can be preplanned and presented before student application of the operation, or it may be set spontaneously, at any point where the students show they need it.

Ex. *Teacher Talk*: To identify some effects of Great Britain's industrial revolution, we can use documents like the one you have in front of you. But before we believe everything it says, we ought to see if it is an accurate, balanced account or not. It could be *biased*. A bias is a one-sided or slanted view of a statement. Any written or oral statement could contain or reveal bias and thus not be the complete truth.

Teacher Actions: Teacher writes the word *bias* on chalkboard and then writes *one-sided or slanted statement* after bias (p.156).

Modeling is important in a classroom as it gives students a visual and mental image of how the operation modeled ought to work in practice: it provides the students with an execution of a procedure for carrying out the operation being demonstrated with an accompanying explanation of the key steps and rule.

One-on-One Scaffolding

As it has previously been discussed, dialogue has a significant role in increasing the degree of comfort of the students in class. It is important to allow students to express their ideas freely in the classroom setting, but once teachers engage themselves in a dialogue with students, they become the students' conversational partners. This occurs when the teacher and the student share a relationship of trust and respect for one another's opinions and are equally engaged in the dialogue, the teacher providing verbal scaffolds that enable students to build powerful thinking strategies. This technique is called scaffolding by Kathleen Hogan and Michael Pressley (1990), and it ideally involves equal contributions by the adult and the child, resulting in a fluid communication process in which the emotional quality of the interpersonal relations and the values attached to the learning situation play important roles. A key feature of the interaction is that the scaffolder provides enough support for the learner to make progress on his/her own. Because the optimal level of support is different for each student, teachers must be aware of the student's needs and the content they are teaching. Students vary in the amount of prompting they need and in how proximal the next skill is for them.

The teacher selects an appropriate task by anticipating student difficulties, needs and strategies, by taking into consideration cultural differences and by considering curriculum goals. The teacher sets instructional goals and provides assistance. Through these verbal acts, the teacher adjusts the scaffolding to the

student's needs by considering the student's cultural background. A key role of the scaffolder is to summarize the progress that has been made and point out behaviors that led to success, expecting that eventually students will learn to monitor their own progress. One type of feedback is pointing out the distinction between the child's performance and the ideal.

Students also differ in the ability to articulate what they are thinking and where they are having problems. As students have been exposed to different types of information at home and had been taught how to process this information in ways that differ from one culture to another, teachers have to adjust the content of the subject they are teaching and the method of teaching in such a way as to meet each student's needs. This works easier in the case of one-on-one scaffolding, because the teacher only has to focus on one student. The core elements of scaffolding are: student ownership of the goals, the appropriateness of the task for the student, supportive instruction, shared responsibility for the learning, internalization of the products of the interchange.

Research (Lepper, Drake, O'Donnell-Johnson, 1997) has shown that expert tutoring is still considered a very important type of scaffolding, since the most important goal of the expert tutors is the enhancement of students' feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem. This seems important for the remedial students with a history of difficulty with the subject at hand and who begin the tutoring sessions with low self-esteem and little confidence in their abilities. It is also important for diverse students who came to schools with a different cultural background.

While the expert tutors seek to enhance the student's self-esteem and confidence, they do not "dumb down" the material, concentrating on problems so simple they know the student will be able to succeed at them. It is important that the child feels challenged so that the satisfaction will be greater after completing a more difficult task and the student's self-confidence will increase. At the same time, the tutors seek to create situations that will heighten students' curiosity about the material under study and they work hard instill in their pupils a sense of control of self-efficacy.

The following are the strategies and characteristics displayed by expert tutors: human tutors should INSPIRE (they should be intelligent, nurturing, socratic, progressive, indirect, reflective and encouraging). First, expert tutors are intelligent. They seem to have a lot of knowledge of the subject matter. They also are particularly well versed in subject-specific pedagogical knowledge. They draw from a large repertoire of analogies and metaphors related to the student's cultural background to help explain or illustrate difficult concepts.

Second, expert tutors are nurturing. They display a high level of affective support and nurturance in their interactions with students. For example, they spend more time building a rapport with students, they inquire about the students' home, school, favorite sports and hobbies, they pay attention to the emotional needs of the students and at the same time display a high level of empathy for the difficulties their students experience. This enhances the degree of comfort of the students and allows for a better student-teacher interaction. When failure occurs, human tutors find ways to transform these evident failures into at least partial success (i.e. "Well,

that's exactly right, if we had been trying to solve that problem" or "Perfect! Except that you missed it.") Sometimes they take responsibility for a pupil's errors, claiming for example that they had not explained the problem clearly or selected too difficult a challenge.

Third, expert tutors are Socratic. They rely upon questions rather than statements and directions and they prefer asking to telling; progressive tutors are committed to make increasing demands on the students and they are reluctant to convey negative feedback to them. The expert tutors encourage and motivate students not only to work hard, but also to enjoy their work and feel challenged, empowered and curious about the domain under study. They minimize the students' failures (e.g. by commiserating, reassuring, making excuses or defining roles) and maximize their successes (e.g. by expressing confidence, emphasizing student agency).

Expert tutors modulate both the objective difficulty of the task (through the selection of problems presented or through provision of assistance and scaffolding during the solution process) and the subjective difficulty of the task (through direct challenges to the student or by labeling the task as less or more difficult). They increase both the students' level of actual control (by offering choices and transferring control to students) and the student's level of perceived control (by emphasizing students' agency and promoting illusions of control).

Leading Whole Class Discussion

The number of students in a large class poses a problem, since a teacher cannot possibly interact for sustained periods of time with each individual student. Large classes present also multiple zones of proximal development, and instruction pitched at some student's zones will be behind or beyond other student's zones. This is more like to happen in culturally diverse classrooms, where teachers have to attend students whose learning styles may be different as a result of their cultural background and of the way these students acquired information.

One way to manage these problems is to organize students to work in groups as often as possible. This allows the teacher to scaffold groups rather than individuals. However, not all students engage with the teacher during group scaffolding. While organizing the groups, teachers should take into consideration the culturally diverse students' reactions to group work, since the studies presented in the previous chapter introduced several cultural groups for which group work was not as efficient as one-on-one work proved to be.

Another approach is to provide groups with tools (cue cards, questions cards) to help them scaffold one another. The more students can regulate themselves, the more time the teacher can devote to those in need. Some students can be effective tutors, especially when given training, and often learn even more than the students they are training.

Whole-class discussions can support and extend students' understanding and prompt them to think more deeply and in more complex ways. As one student

thinks aloud, his/her thoughts and exchanges with the teacher are witnessed by the rest of the class members. In order for teachers to lead whole class discussions effectively, they need to know what the students already know, what competencies are within their reach and what their misconceptions are. Teachers also need to know the curriculum well, have insights where students are likely to have trouble, and understand the source of the trouble by probing behind the students' incorrect answers.

While leading the discussion, the teacher is supporting students' own thinking, points out similarities/differences between different cultural backgrounds and explains the ways in which the other students may benefit from these similarities/differences.

The following characteristics refer the teacher's ability to lead whole-class discussions in a culturally diverse classroom: students are treated as thinkers who have different experiences and different points of view to offer; the teacher's response is dedicated to understanding the diverse students and not evaluating them. The central aim of the lesson is to generate questions, as well as produce right answers.

In successful academic discussions, teachers maintain a balance between a student-centered and a subject-centered focus, by enabling each child's participation. Even if scaffolding whole-class discussions are not engaging at all times for all students, dynamic whole-class discussions can promote active listening from the majority of the class and can enable heteroglossia to be present.

Summary

This chapter exemplified some strategies teachers used in their classrooms in order to promote discussions. As shown, it was very important for both teachers and students to teach and study in a well-structured environment, a place where everybody knows what is expected from them and thus successfully accomplishes their tasks. A climate of comfort, in which both teacher and students are equally engaged in dialogue, and in which students are given the opportunity to talk freely and affirm themselves was shown to be extremely efficient for the development of student-student and student-teacher interaction. The ways teachers accept or respond to students is also important for the exchange of information; teacher responses may encourage or discourage students from stating their beliefs. If the teacher considers the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students while structuring the classroom for discussion and alternating large group with small group discussions while establishing the groups themselves in order to ensure a diversity of opinions, students will feel comfortable working with peers or in large groups and this will enhance the quality of discussion. By modeling the skills they require from their students, teachers will also increase the students' willingness to display the same tolerant behavior observed in their teacher. All the above will promote a classroom open to diversity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

This paper was designed to investigate the ways different cultural discourses are represented in the school setting, the impact the existence of these cultures in the classroom has upon teachers and students and the teachers' reactions towards these different discourses. The study was also meant to investigate those teacher behaviors that promote and enhance student discourse and thus lead to a better teacher-student student-student interaction.

Diversity has an impact on our daily lives at multiple levels: societal, economic and political. The sooner people acknowledge diversity and work for (instead of against it), the better for everybody. In schools, teachers are also faced with culturally diverse classroom settings, which will become more increasingly heterogeneous. All these cultures need to be acknowledged by the teacher. In his/her position of role model, the way the teacher deals with diversity has a very important impact on all his/her students.

While choosing to acknowledge the different cultures present in their classrooms and by allowing students to be heard, teachers do not only familiarize themselves with these different cultures, but also allow a cultural exchange in the classroom between all students, an exchange from which all parts involved will benefit: teacher and students equally.

As Gallas' research shows it, all cultures can learn from one another in a classroom if given the chance to express themselves. With his/her verbal and nonverbal support or denial of a discourse, the teacher transmits a clear message about the types of communication that are appropriate in school.

Teachers should understand that comfort is a significant element of classroom discourse (Lobov). They should also be aware of the differences in the social conditions that are appropriate for communication in the school setting. Environment and community play an important role in the child's life and may explain why the Native-American child remains silent. Native-American children learn little about verbal instruction but instead are patient observers. Teachers may not understand why African-American students are good at inventing stories that bring elements of their daily lives in the classrooms (as in the case of Jiana) if they ignore what is much praised among the African-American community (Gallas). Teachers may also realize that, in the case of the Hawaiian children they must have to work hard to establish themselves as authority figures, since the Hawaiian children are not used to obey parental authority at homes all the time. In order to reach these students, teachers should behave more like listeners and address questions to the group rather than to individual students; the most important strategies for classroom management involve direct praise and praise given to the group rather than individual. (D'Amato, 1998). By acknowledging the cultural differences existent among diverse students in their classrooms, by striving to meet all their students' needs for a better communication, teachers will encourage a cultural informational exchange between all cultures present in the class and thus facilitate learning. Critical

language awareness on the part of the teacher will facilitate heteroglossia by fostering diverse points of view.

The studies that appear in this paper all show examples of teachers' interaction with different children coming from different cultural backgrounds, the problems they faced, as well as the different strategies they made use of in order to promote discussion among all the students. Chapter 4 provides examples of teacher behaviors that are intended to enhance student discourse, cooperation and a positive self-worth: the ways teachers structure the classrooms for discussion by controlling environmental resources such as time, space and materials has a direct influence on students achievement. While conveying to students that the goal of the instruction is to learn how to conduct and participate in discussion, students increase their understanding of the directions and are successfully engaged in acquiring the skills necessary for classroom interaction

When children enter school, they find that teachers guide expectancies through questions and directions. With the authority their position gives them, teachers can elicit, invite and enable discussions. The manner in which teachers respond to students has a great influence on the students' behavior. Teacher's responses may be categorized according to their effects on students: those that tend to terminate participation and those that maintain attention. When the teacher perceives that the student needs information, he/she provides it or makes it possible for the students to acquire the data and information needed. The teacher models behavior consistent with the goals and objectives. Modeling reinforces students' perceptions of the values and goals stated by the teacher or school. By exhibiting the behaviors desired in students, teachers strongly influence the students in their behavior patterns. By modeling listening to the students, for example, teachers

will enhance the achievement of this behavior in students. Students will experience the satisfaction of being listened to and as a result they will be more inclined to listen to others.

Utilizing all these steps, teachers may enable students to become conversational partners. Since dialogue means a conversation between members with an equal status, through dialogues both teachers and students may reverse the conventional roles assigned traditionally in the classroom setting; they can communicate ideas, feelings and experiences to one another and both sides would gain through this exchange.

These strategies do not guarantee a complete success in the classroom. They were applied by different teachers in different classroom settings and in different circumstances. Although they cannot guarantee that all teachers will be as successful as the teachers in the research, at least this prompts teachers to be aware of the differences students bring with them in the classrooms and to understand and acknowledge different cultures in their classrooms. In doing so, they will involve diverse students in the learning process.

Recommendations

In this study of the impact of teacher discourse on culturally diverse classrooms, it became apparent that because teachers are not always aware of linguistic differences in their classrooms, they may sometimes fail to encourage their culturally diverse students to represent themselves while exposing different ways of thinking and speaking. It is of extreme significance for the teachers to encourage all these cultures to affirm themselves

in the classroom setting, to explain the differences among their students when appropriate and, most of all, to foster interaction between all students. This will not only allow students to share experiences and learn from each other, it will also allow teachers to get accustomed with the students' cultural backgrounds and familiarize themselves with their students' primary discourses. It is not easy for teachers to deal with classes where multiple cultures are represented, mainly because of the time constraints that can prevent all the voices to be heard. It is, nevertheless the teacher's duty to make sure that standard American-English is not the only language accepted, and equal time is allowed to enable culturally diverse students to share their points of view while honoring the ways these children share information about their lives.

Maintown ways of acquiring communicative competencies do not offer a universally applicable model of development as they can be improved with the narrative techniques of the students coming from other cultures yet on the other hand they can influence the cultural discourses of diverse students. Heteroglossia is then the solution: teachers should try to approach the different cultural learning styles of their students rather than to dismiss the already existent cultural background of diverse students. This requires a lot of tolerance from the part of the teacher and tolerance represents one of the most important characteristics of a democratic setting.

Future research is needed from the culturally diverse children and the teachers' perspectives on how the teachers and peers' attitudes and behaviors affect culturally diverse students academically and behaviorally; on what the teachers feel would be the best strategies to use in the classrooms in order to address multiculturalism and include all students in the classroom discourse.

Conclusion

Effective classroom discussion occurs when teachers and students take part in the dialogue and contribute to the dialogue in an equal manner. Dialogue exists when the two participants have an equal status, which means that the number of exchanges they each make is equal. This happens when the teacher becomes the students' conversational partner, when he/she models behaviors he/she wants the students to display. By listening to the students without interrupting them all the time in order to make corrections, by showing tolerance towards the different types of discourses present and by not favoring one language or dialect over other languages or varieties of languages, the teacher allows diversity to be present. Being different does not make one bad or strange, it makes one human. It is then up to the teacher to prompt discussions and allow different human beings to represent their cultures, being aware that both sides benefit from such an exchange. The teacher will benefit by getting to know his/her diverse students better, understand their communication problems and help them affirm themselves while making use of their strengths rather than struggling with their weaknesses. The students will benefit as they come to understand that there is not one discourse better than the other, or better said that there is not only one discourse considered appropriate in the classroom setting and if they do not belong to that discourse they would be outcast. They will learn more about their classmates through their discourse, they will appropriate parts of these discourses while, at the same time, they will share parts of their own discourse with their classmates and will thus become tolerant citizens in a world of diversity.

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