"What do you do after you've met poststructuralism?"

Feminist empirical research on language in primary school.

ABSTRACT

Practices in classrooms are changing as a result of students' and practitioners' growing awarenesses of gender equity issues. In part, this change comes from research, though not necessarily from research in education. This paper explores some of the practices in educational research that are called for by feminist poststructuralists. It also explores some of the spoken and written language of primary school girls and their teachers.

Encouraging ambiguity and multiplicity, opening up traditional boundaries and breaking out of frames are not actions unique to feminist research. However, because of the impact of feminism and its compatibility with poststructuralism, such researchers are changing the foci of classrooms and of research. In addition, they are challenging the ways of writing research. At the same time, they reinscribe traditional research practices in education.

INTRODUCTION

Framings I have selected for my current research, which is about young girls beginning to write, are selected because of their perceived usefulness to me now in the 1990s as a feminist. In saying this I am conscious that I myself am socially and historically positioned to make these choices. This particular paper focusses on poststructuralism, but in
order to come to it I need first to briefly describe the ethnography that enabled me to collect the data. I shall then briefly describe structuralist positions as regards girls, language and feminist research.

The forms of poststructuralism I explore relate to feminist applications of Derrida's strategies of deconstruction, although I mention Foucault's critical and interpretative analytics as they allow me to develop my work. (1)

Following this, I discuss ways in which feminist poststructuralist approaches to the writing of research differ and do not differ from feminist ethnographic research, (Lather, 1991). I see ethnographic data as being able to be theorized either structurally, poststructurally, or both. Cherryholmes, (1988; 107-111 and 198), however, sees it as form of poststructuralism, and as such, he calls it "phenomenology and interpretive research." (2)

RESEARCH, POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND GENDER

Helen Hocking (1990; 2) calls for "new ways of operating without violating canons of disciplined enquiry" in research in education. Poststructuralism challenges such canons; at best it can transform them, and this may involve, if not violation, the deletion of research practices no longer seen as appropriate. (3) In calling for new ways of operating as researchers, however, Hocking acknowledges the "knowledge and understanding of the relationship between research and educational change." Feminist research, because of the personal and public politics of feminism, is closely linked to changes in educational practice and policy.

The current links between research and practice as regards gender issues are particularly strong. In education, feminist scholarship is both causing, and is caused by, change for women and for girls. "Gender issues have become a major focus of attention at all levels from the Minister's office to the classroom. Research has made a greater impact here than anywhere else in accelerating the process of debate, not least because it has developed an internal critical dynamic; questioning practice, methodology and theory; which has kept it well ahead of the game." (Walker, 1991; 7) It is feminism's questioning of the research aspects of poststructuralism and their implications for feminist empirical work in education, which I am dealing with here. In particular, I needed to know where to position myself in relation to the many poststructuralists who are not feminist, as historically my own feminism came before my awareness of poststructuralism. A second need is for alternative pedagogy and the means to teach education students poststructuralist analysis. This pedagogy is, as I see it, still in its embryonic stage, although its strategies are more readily accessible to students with literary or artistic backgrounds.

The question I ask in the title of this paper is a modification of a question posed by Patti Lather, (1991a; 29), regarding use of data. As answers to this question of how to poststructurally theorize and present
research for a reading audience, Lather draws four narrative vignettes. These are drawn from her collected interviews, research reports, journal entries and musings. By using each vignette to tell a different story about the same research problem, Lather allows for various readings of the research situation, and includes her own self being visibly inserted into the research process. All of this is in accordance with poststructuralist ideas, which stress radically different genres, (and genre juxtapositions), in writing as ways of allowing readers to deconstruct a range of meanings for themselves.

The next question is: how does this differ from the ethnographic research in education that we are now accustomed to reading, and perhaps writing? And how does it differ from what feminists have been trying to do all along, which is to include the personal and to radically rewrite for difference? Is poststructuralism a term to cover both ethnography and feminism; or is it more; or less? I ask this last question as the three terms apply to the presentation of my own research data, (knowing there are many answers to such a question applied elsewhere.)

DATA FROM CLASSROOM PRACTICE

As a result of raised consciousness of the positioning of women and girls, many changes are beginning to take place in Australian schools. These changes are not only in the minds of enlightened teachers and assertive students. They are sometimes apparent in changing curricula, in changing use of language, in changing of teacher action and in changing use of school space and property. They are not so apparent in books used in classrooms, although there is some evidence that girls are resisting the stereotypes set for them. (Clark, 1990; Gilbert, 1989; Rhedding-Jones and Atkinson, 1991; White, 1991.)

The research which I am engaged in involves a case-study of girls beginning to write. Generating knowledge from experience is an empirical research activity in that the theories produced are derived not from other theories, but from what happens and what is seen to happen in the process of data collection. I wanted to know whether the femininity of young girls, of primary school age, was in part constructed by their own writing, and whether the discourses of the primary school are reflected in the writing's gender contents. In particular, I have studied writing deemed by Australian teachers to be freely selected as regards topic. In the past, such classroom writing would have been called creative writing, whereas now it is more likely to be called process or conference writing. My research began as a form of ethnography and continued for three years of regular contact with a small group of girls at their school and occasionally at their homes. The school is in a rural setting and has only one teacher and one room for girls and boys aged four to eleven.

Data gathered includes three years of handwriting and computer print-outs photocopied and given to me by the girls, of transcripts of spoken language inside and outside of the classroom and of my own research biography and
journal written either in the school, (with the girls sometimes reading it over my shoulder), or in my (parked) car just after I left the school.

Here are three samples from such data:

(Eg.1) from the research biography:
I've brought Wallap and Serentip with me. They have jobs like mine in Thailand. They have never seen a small school in Australia before. They say its a bit like the village schools at home. They ask Mr B lots of questions while the children are playing outside ... Wallapa is talking to Brenda, the woman who comes out once a week to "do the books". They're looking at the School Policy booklet together. Lots of talking...
(May 91)

(Eg.2) from Sally's photocopied handwriting:
Tonight I'm having a slumber party. And Camille, Crystal and Sonja are coming and we are going to the beach at 6.00 to 8.00...I saw a shark and it bit someone and he die. Then we went back home and went to bed...
(11.2.91)

(Eg.3) from a transcript of spoken language:
K: (age 6) Jeanette will you sharpen these for me?
JRJ: no, I don't want to sharpen pencils.
K: (undeterred) Mr B will you sharpen these pencils for me?
Mr B: Bring them over here. (I hadn't realized she cannot sharpen them for herself. What is wrong with a rotating plastic sharpener? Mr B. sharpens them all with a Stanley knife.)
(30.4.91)

As such, my research is an inquiry into the subjectivity of young girls and their relationship to language. The methodological and theoretical questions driving my writing of this particular paper relate to the position of the researcher working within feminist frameworks and wishing to adopt poststructuralist analyses and associated academic writing strategies. In order to discuss this positioning it is necessary to give some background.

APPROACHES TO THE PRODUCTION OF CRITICISM

Three approaches to the production of criticism are suggested by Cherryholmes, (1988;160). (I am using the term "critique/analysis", in place of the word "criticism", as it seems to better describe what is produced by the range of research processes to be described.) In my research, all three approaches are useful, although only the last two can be seen as poststructuralist. Cherryholmes describes their action as:

1. Structural criticism illuminates counterstructures that texts and discourses ignore or seek to silence.
2. In a Foucauldian genre, criticism produces histories and politics of the present, wherein texts and discourses-practices are the effects of the exercise of power.
3. In a Derridean deconstruction, criticism exposes silences and gaps between that which is valued and disvalued, traces the
sedimentation of meanings, and documents contradictions and ambiguities within texts and discourses-practices."

In feminist research into the spoken and written language of young girls, examples of each of these critical analyses are found. When seeking publication, however, a writer of poststructuralist critique may find her writing/work less favourably viewed if she moves closer towards the Derridean model.

STRUCTURAL CRITIQUE/ANALYSIS

Structural critique is evident in guides to non-sexist research methods, such as Eichler's (1988) Some neo-Marxist critique is structuralist in that it argues for replacing one set of structures with another: in the case of neo-Marxism the structures relate to social class; in the case of feminism they relate to gender. Australian feminist research with a linguistic structuralist base includes Poynton (1985), Freebody and Baker (1987), Pauwels (1987), and Kamler (1990). The structuring of such analyses, which base themselves on the binary oppositions of subjects and objects, argues for replacing unacceptable dominant structures with others. This is frequently necessary, according to feminist activists. Examples include the demasculinization of pronouns and nouns seen as universal, the equitable positioning of girls and women represented in published text and in public and private life, and the abolition of marriage-related titles for women. Structuralist critique is particularly useful as feminist research in that it makes visible the gendered ideologies of text. One of its shortcomings, though, is its inability to deal theoretically with these unravelled aspects of text.

In my research at Ruralsville, the need for such structural criticism is apparent if we want to consider representations of women, comparisons of uses of gendered pronouns or bias regarding gendered activities. Taking Sally's writing, we can see that any consideration of the gendered implications of her writing is itself producing counter-structures to the discourses of the classroom. For a primary school teacher, the dominant practice in a writing session is seen as the acquisition of literacy; to consider a curriculum text as other than pedagogic according to a teacher's literacy project, is to question the status quo in schools. Looking at Sally's writing and counting the girls or women in her story, as compared to the boys and men, lets us know she places herself with a group girls. We could also say that she appears to use the masculine pronoun as generic for "universal" man; on the other hand, she may have especially wanted a male to have been eaten by the shark. A structuralist critique would possibly also include a comparison with a piece of writing by a boy. I present such a sample from the same classroom by a boy of the same age:

(Eg.4) from Scott's computer printout:
By 5 points, the ball bounced again, Dad tapped it out, it went to Dad's goal's, Dad's team got a free kick, because someone got tripped, they kicked the ball it was a goal...
POSTSTRUCTURAL CRITIQUE/ANALYSIS

"Poststructural analysis points beyond structure, utility and instrumentality. Our ability to shape and design the social world can be enhanced, I hope, if we outline, examine, analyse, interpret, criticize, and evaluate the texts and discourse-practices that surround us." (Cherryholmes, 1988;177) Here we have the concept of analysis leading not towards a vulgar pragmatism of efficiency without criticism and of viewing existing practices and institutions as the standard, but to the changing of worlds. Such change comes about, according to poststructuralists, by outlinings, examinings, analysings, interpretings, criticisings and evaluatings. As research processes, then, these activities inscribe poststructuralism. This is what a poststructuralist does.

Implicit in these poststructuralist actions is the realization that structuralism omits referents. Structuralism operates through the binary divisions of subjects and objects, of theory and practice, of word and concept, (the Saussurean linguistic division of signifier and signified), of language and speech (the Saussurean divisions of langue and parole), (Cherryholmes, 1988;19-40). In this way, structuralism in linguistics, for example, cannot deal with the referents of non-linguistic phenomena, and structuralism in the social sciences cannot deal with the referents of extensions of theories into practices and extensions of practices into theories. (The Australian Educational Researcher will not publish articles with Notes attached: this refusal of additional referents can be read as an indication of non-post-structuralism)

Culler, (1984, in Cherryholmes, 1988;31) says: "To deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions in which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or the premise." This form of poststructuralist action, which usually focusses on the written text, is associated with the theoretical work of Jacques Derrida. It challenges the binary oppositions of structuralism: it implies that "meaning is not centred or fixed because it is caught in a play of references between words and definitions where texts give only the appearance of stability but have no centre, no transcendental signifier, no transcendental semantic meaning." (Cherryholmes, 1988;36) This lack of fixation is what infuriates structuralists, who want to concentrate on solutions, coagulations and labels.

The two arguments of Derrida's poststructuralism are that meaning is dispersed throughout language/texts and that such meanings are deferred in time. Looking again at the texts I have introduced into this paper from Ruralsville school, we can see that by these arguments:

* (Eg.1) A meaning of the questions Walapa and Serentip ask Mr B is related to their view of him as teacher and as man. This is borne out by their
conversation with the woman who does the books. Here there is "lots of talking", not an asking of questions, which implies the positioning of equals in spite of the Thai women's race and professional status.

*(Eg.2) A chain of relationships is apparent in Sally's writing. She begins with her girl friends, goes on to the shark and the person it ate and returns to her friends. The killing by the shark becomes not the central focus of the piece but an interlude between her time with her friends. The meaning of the piece is not the discontinuity of the life of the one eaten by the shark but the continuity of her friendships.

A second form of poststructuralism is taken by researchers ascribing to the analytics of Michel Foucault. Instead of deconstructing the texts, as does Derridean analysis, Foucaultian analysis isolates and identifies unequal relationships. In this way, Foucault theorizes power, particularly at the level of micropractices, (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, in Cherryholmes, 1988;31). Ruralsville school, being the smallest school unit I could deal with, certainly operates as a micropractice of pedagogy for young girls. Seeing the day to day operations that combine to construct gender-based politics is all part of the pragmatics of such research, given acknowledgment of my own subjectivity as researcher. The example of Kylie's pencil-sharpening, (Eg.3), can be seen from the point of view of Kylie as wielding power by successfully requesting her teacher to do her sharpening. It could also be read as Mr B having the power in that he is the one to manipulate the knife. In either, or both, of these ways the school can be seen to constitute and regulate discourse. Following Foucault, a researcher tries to account not for what the text really means, but how it came to be what it is. In this way, my next interrogation of the text would be about the history of Kylie not using a rotating plastic sharpener! What is unsaid in this little conversation is just as important as what has been said, and it is this ability to theorize the unsaid that makes such analysis unique (and poststructuralist).

I now turn to feminist poststructuralist theorists and practitioners, having given some background to poststructuralism generally.(4) Two relevant publications currently being talked about, and acted upon, in feminist academic circles are Chris Weedon's Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (1987) and Patti Lather's Getting Smart: Feminist Research With/In the Postmodern, (1991). I shall discuss each here as they help clarify what feminist poststructuralists do as they reinscribe Derrida's or Foucault's work.

Weedon, (1987;13) asserts that the production of powerful theories by men exclusively is a manifestation of patriarchy. Amongst its other outcomes, feminist research promotes the work of women as a recognition that gender is not a prerequisite for acknowledgement or of knowledge making. Poststructuralism allows for feminism to be located, both socially and institutionally.

In terms of a Foucault framework, it enables a reading of discourse whereby
individuals are seen as not merely shaped by institutions, but whereby they
themselves are agents of change, (1987;25). This theory has fired the
research regarding resistant reading by girls who refuse to accept the
stereotyped gender roles portrayed in published books, (Gilbert, 1989;60-63), (Patterson, 1990), (Rhedding-Jones and Atkinson, 1991; 67-68).
Luke, (1991) argues that both childhood and schooling are historical
constructs, and that rereading them can change current practice. A re-
examination of the texts given as examples for this paper shows both of
these feminist appropriations of Foucault to be applicable to Ruralsville.

*(Eg.3) A: Kylie resists my refusal to sharpen her pencil and approaches
the teacher to do so. She is in command throughout. She appears to read my
refusal as not her own positioning but my indisposition.

*(Eg.3) B: Kylie appears to constructs herself not as a child is generally
constructed in classroom discourse. What I say, as a researcher in the
classroom, can be seen as an adult acting upon a child to position her in
historically constructed schoolgirlhood.

Following Derrida's framings, where signification is seen as a process of
infinite free play, providing such neat little examples of meaning is not
as important as the critique of rationalization which comes from the
various readings. Meaning occurs only in specific textual locations and in
a relation to difference from all other textual locations, (Weedon, 1987;53). This is why the gathering of both written language and spoken
language data is important to the Ruralsville research project. Knowing
what Kylie wants to sharpen her pencil FOR is what counts. Linking what she
actually wrote, on 30.4.91, to this conversation, is therefore crucial, as
the meaning of the conversation is deferred to the meaning of the writing.
Similarly, the Derridean notion that words are only signs of real
substance, which is always elsewhere, can lead poststructuralist
researchers to non-verbal data. In this case, my research notes describing
Kylie's body language may be useful. (In fact, the research notes are most
enlightening for this particular day and a series of events preceding it.)

Deconstruction can be useful to feminists in that it decentres heirarchical
oppositions, such as those on which gender itself is based. Davies' research, (1989; 111-141), moves beyond the male-female dualism in ways
that my girl-centred research cannot attempt to do. (9)
Weedon warns that whilst deconstruction's stress on the non-fixity of
meaning is important, it may serve to reaffirm the patriarchal status quo,
(1987;165), if such deconstructions make invisible the social powers which
contextualize discursive texts. For this reason, Weedon advises feminist
researchers/theorists to link the work of Derrida to the work of Foucault.

Some feminist researchers are writing academic text as poststructuralists
putting their theories into practice. One such writer of multi-dimensional
meanings is Patti Lather, who structures "four narrative vignettes, to
tell four different 'stories' about (her) data." (Lather, 1991a; 83) As a
means of deconstructing meanings, of presenting information capable of
various readings, of inserting herself into the text she constructs, Lather challenges the expectations of those who seek to understand what she says.

Michael Apple, in his editor's introduction to Getting Smart, says "We must shift the role of critical intellectuals from being universalizing spokespersons to acting as cultural workers whose task is to take away the barriers that prevent people from speaking for themselves. It is feminism that will enable us to find a way through this maze...Because feminism has had long experience in self-reflexivity and in making commonsense problematic, it can provide the basis for the development of practices of self-interrogation and critique." (Lather, 1991;ix) Putting real voices into the texts of academic discourse is one way to do this; working with poststructuralist deconstructions and interpretative analytics is another.

In empirical enquiry, the focus of feminist research of this nature is not on the dominant power but on "oppositional discourses of criticism and resistance", (Lather, 1991; xvii). The Ruralsville data must be searched and researched for points within the discourse where this happens. As an approach to the generation of knowledge, deconstructing moves beyond Habermas's categories of predicting, understanding and emancipating, (1991;7); and this is how deconstruction takes research into the postmodern age. As with art and architecture, postmodern text is "evocative rather than didactic." (1991;10). Following Derrida, such text "produces a language of its own, in itself," (Derrida, 1984, in Lather, 1991;10). "Writing under erasure", as Derrida describes it, means to Lather being aware of one's own positioning as sunverter and inscriber. Thus the Ruralsville research potentially both subverts the school system, where femininity is constructed, and reinscribes traditional practices regarding femininity. Subversion happens by foregrounding discourses that introduce gender constructions: a Foucault concept. Reinscription happens by conforming to discourse conventions and by telling the girls, their parents and their teacher my research agenda.

Working with the research data as I have done for the last three years has shown me that such deconstructions are the only way I can do justice to their complexity and their multi-meanings. This is what I think Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak means by saying "you deconstructively critique something which is so useful to you that you cannot speak another way," (Spivak, 1989, in Lather 1991;13). To constantly displace meaning is to disclose the function of a text. In this way deconstruction is a different way of thinking and a challenge for research. Liz Grosz (1989, in Lather, 13) suggests three steps to deconstructive researching:

1. identify the binaries, the oppositions that structure an argument;
2. reverse/displace the independent term from its negative position to a place that locates it as the very condition of the positive term; and
3. create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organization of terms which transcends a binary logic by
simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms."

In these ways poststructuralists "reveal the text's own construction of meaning" (Lather, 1991;99), whether the text is the text written by the researcher or whether it is the text being researched. Poststructuralism becomes, by this, a discourse on discourse.

WRITING AND READING RESEARCH

Stephen Ball and Richard Bowe (1990) link the writing of research to Roland Barthes' descriptions of reading, as either allowing the reader to self-consciously join in as a co-author; or not to. When signifier /signified relationships are clearly delineated this latter form of reading can allow the reader to become a mere consumer of writing produced by the author. When they are not, that is when the structuralism of Saussurean linguistics is taken away or is added to, the reading opens itself up to the reader. The delight some readers find on discovering the "sense of breakdown or interruption" (Ball and Bowe, 1990; 60), has been described by Barthes with the untranslatable word, "jouissance." In the reading of literary work, this jouissance (eye-opening ecstasy, bliss, delight) comes from "seeing through to something beyond." It is a critical and creative response to the text akin to the critical creativeness that caused it to be written.

Researchers in education, however, may have very little experience with this kind of response to text. How then can they be expected to create it? The answer is that most of them don't. Because of the context in which academic text is circulated, such explorations have until very recently, been rare. (Did you ignore the title of Ball and Bowe's article cited in my bibliography? What have gaping garments got to do with research? What do you think of me suddenly addressing you as ..?) The practices of writing research, though, are constantly changing to match both the language of the worlds around us and that world itself. One of the main functions of research is its suspension of taken for granted assumptions. This is the function of Cleo Cherryholmes' poststructuralist readings of three classic texts upon which much of mainstream education has, at least nominally, operated, (Cherryholmes, 1988; 40-47).

Here Cherryholmes exposes the silencing of the critical and evaluative through the structural rationales and taxonomies of Ralph Tyler (1949), Joseph Schwab (1962) and Benjamin Blomm (1956). In the cases of each of these influential and much-publicised theorists, all acted/wrote from positionings apparently appropriate to their times. However, their work in some places continues to be perpetuated, without poststructurlist critique, in times that query structurist single-values and authoritarianisms.

What, though, does it mean to turn away from the relative security of claiming neutrality, of claiming to know the answers and of serving the status quo? For researchers in education it means not only abolishing binary distinctions and being unafraid of the appearance of disorder, of irrationality and and of lack of engineering; it means presenting these
abolitions and unafraid stances in ways that are appropriate. This will involve language written and spoken, language of other media and of other genres, the gaps, silences and non-verbal aspects of language such as the body.

Poststructuralism's impact is yet to be felt on traditional research writing practices. Beyond the use of the "I" of ethnography and the italics font of the computer, poststructuralists expect deconstructive readers who will open up writing for themselves to semantics not even intended by the writer. Such deviance and resistance on the part of the reader, whilst being encouraged by enlightened teachers of English in schools, is not always similarly encouraged by academics teaching higher degree students.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Since ethnography came into vogue in education in the very early 1980s we have become accustomed to reading it in ways that differed radically from reading the research that preceded it. Obviously the appearance of ethnography came about because of the postmodern condition, although many of us who worked in education and not in humanities were not aware of this at the time.

This brings me back to where I started: my research operates as a 1990s feminist writing of ethnography. Because of this, it also operates poststructurally. It seems to me that if ethnography can be seen as a research method and a related way of writing up research, then feminism can be viewed as a standpoint from which to decide the research topic, the analysing and any concluding of the work and the notion of research audience. In my case, it is this underlayering and overlaying of feminism that has led me to both ethnography and poststructuralism.

Some feminists would object to having feminism excluded from research methods and ways of writing; on the other hand, some ethnographers would argue that ethnography reflects a way of seeing the world, which in itself is a theoretical positioning which determines what to research, how to research and how to write it up. Poststructuralism both overlaps and fails to overlap feminism. As an approach to writing, it has potential for feminists as it addresses a range of differing audiences within the text, it juxtaposes genres, layers meaning and includes the writer herself occasionally as a personal and reflective voice, (Rhedding-Jones, 1991:30).

Feminist ethnographer Alison Jones (1989) can be seen to be conforming to publishing expectations of The British Journal of Sociology in Education in that she (here) presents herself as the person in the research together with the New Zealand schoolgirls, but that she lets the academic text she produces speak in structuralist ways. Jones' (1990) paper, presented to the American Association for Research in Education, develops the positioning of the writer as subject within the text, she is less concerned than is Lather.
with how she uses language and how language uses her, (Lather, 1991;14). (10)

Until reading Lather, who describes feminist research in education as being both within it and against it, I had not come across a text that dealt with both ethnography and with poststructuralism. This is either my bad luck or a sign of the times or the blinkered vision of the two (one?) groups of researchers. (6) I can see no reason why ethnography cannot develop to produce case studies more appropriate as publications for today's poststructuralist readers; and, more importantly, for theorizing data produced as ethnography. Simply presenting an ethnography, is not, as I see it, enough: we need to go beyond descriptions and presentations to knowledge: we need to know why situations, actions and people are as they are: we need theories that will be a part of practice and not apart from it. In these ways poststructuralism extends critical pragmatism.

Because the language we use is itself socially and historically constructed, we constantly find ourselves amongst others similarly positioned because of the sameness of their social history with ours. Thus feminist academics frequently have not only ideas and life experience in common, but ways of saying things. Being of the dominant social group, for example, is not the same linguistically as being in the non-dominant social group; addressing an audience of the same gender as oneself seems to be not the same for men as it is for women.

CRITICAL PRAGMATICS

What do you do after you've met poststructuralism? A poststructuralist position is that there is no after. Or before. All of this happens constantly. And you don't really meet it, it dawns on you slowly. Following Derrida means working not with frames, but framing. What poststructuralists do is describe the world differently. It is possible, though not usual, to work poststructurally with highly structured data, such as statistics or systemic linguistic analysis, in conjunction with other forms of data or with other readings of the same. What is most apparent on the surface of poststructuralist research, as compared to qualitative research in general, is the lack of substantial conclusion and the acceptance of difference. This difference lies not only in the theorizing but in the crafting of the writing about it. For poststructuralists following Derrida there is not the kind of satisfaction granted to Foucault followers: whereas Foucault enables the theorizing of social power and education change, (and in practice does not exclude structuralist readings), Derrida (who does not allow for structuralism in theorizing or in writing) enables us only to claim the ever-continuing deference of meaning. This form of analysis and criticism, however, contributes interpretation, criticism and evaluation to pragmatism. (Cherryholmes, 1988;185). In Derridean poststructuralism, there is rigorous scholarship, constant quest for knowledge, continual trying on of different interpretations, going back over and over again to the data, reading and rereading other poeple's textual theorizings, keeping up to date with what is being said or published, staying thirsty for words,
keeping on writing, writing into the text, writing against the text.

NOTES

(1) In my Doctoral thesis I build on a framework which includes feminist psychoanalyses, but in this paper I omit such theories although I see such analyses as a form of poststructuralism. (Rhedding-Jones, in process)

(2) Cherryholmes (1988; 107-124)) sees non-positivist qualitative empirical research as either:
   1. Phenomenology and Interpretative Research
   2. Critical Theory and Research (after Habermas)
   3. Interpretive Analytics (after Foucault)
   4. Deconstruction (after Derrida)

(3) Rob Walker, in his invited address to the Singapore Educational Research Conference, Sept. 1991:
   Real change often involves taking things out rather than adding things on. In the move to the basics in the primary school curriculum in England and in Australia what has been taken out of the curriculum is more significant than what has been added. Research, because of its empiricist presumptions, tends not to focus on such questions, lacking methods for dealing with omissions, gaps and silence.

(4) I use the word 'poststructuralism' in preference to the word 'postmodernism'. I see poststructuralism as having the ability to theorize postmodernism; and postmodernism as a major cultural shift of our time. Some writers, such as Lather (1990; 1991) use 'postmodern' where I would use 'poststructuralist'. (See Rhedding-Jones, 1991; 25-29) Here I am in agreement with Cherryholmes, (1988; 9-15).

(5) Researching the spoken and written language of young girls, Poynton's critique is structuralist in that she analyses, and describes, writing and talking topics and quantities, (1985; 28-36). Steedman's critique, (1982; 85-131), can be seen as poststructuralist (after Foucault, of whom she makes no reference, however,) in that she produces a history and a politics of the present and of the past for her girl writers. Davies' critique of pre-school children's understanding of feminist stories, (1989;43-69), and hence of gendered positionings, is discursive in the Derridean tradition in that it is a series of different readings from a range of perspectives, none of which is given final authority.

(6) This was our experience in writing the chapter on gender and literacy (Rhedding-Jones and Atkinson, 1991). The published version of our meanings had to be rewritten many times to fit the structures required by the editors. As a completed piece of writing, we are finding it is having an impact on the audience for which it was intended, namely teachers and pre-service teachers. However, it could deal only with counterstructures to eliminate sexisms, which it did by foregrounding the current literacies of
young girls in schools. It fails to theorize the production of power through discourse, although it succeeds in making apparent some of the gender-related theories held by the teachers we talked with and tape-recorded, and it does include the postmodern/poststructuralist device of three carefully chosen and captioned photographs. In spite of its structurally oriented analysis, though, we hope that at least some readers will see through its silences and gaps to traces of meanings, contradictions and ambiguities. The deconstructive readings that we hope for can themselves be a critique of our own discursive practices as writers. In this way, then, we are aware of what Derrida means by the deferring/differance of meaning.

(7) Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler, (1985; 233), define linguists as "Scholars who treat language as subject and object." Cherryholmes, (1988;19-20), describes Saussurean linguistics, on which all linguistic study is based, as concerning "only linguistic systems, not non-linguistic phenomena." This leads to the distinctive dichotomy in linguistics, where all language is either signifier or signified, together called "sign." For critics of linguistics, this failure to deal with phenomena referred to or operating as an extension of the sign is crucial. Such lack is dealt with by poststructuralists, who go beyond the sign and include all non-linguistic dealings as the text/action considered. An example of this is the consideration of the subject as the person doing the speaking or writing, and being constructed through language. Confusing this description of structuralism and poststructuralism is work such as Deborah Cameron's, (1985), which gives none of this explanation, but chooses to take what I would term a linguistic viewpoint, whilst including a chapter on "Silence, Alienation and Oppression," which I would not consider to be contentually linguistic and in fact is contentually not dealt with. As a gesture to poststructuralism, which is not acknowledged, Cameron prefaces her chapters with quotations from Mary Daly, Julia Kristeva, Dale Spender, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Audre Lorde. Because of all this, Cameron is worth reading. Her more recent The Feminist Critique of Language, (1990), for which she is editor and introduction writer only, similarly avoids the poststructuralist/postmodern debate.

(8) Ball and Bowe (1990) and Ball (1990) make no mention of poststructuralism, at least by name. Weedon makes no mention of ethnography (1987), although she writes of feminist practice and poststructuralist theory.

(9) In having elected to study only girls I have avoided this debate, although I am inclined to agree with Davies.

(10) Feminist knowledges of language are varied and complex. See Cameron (1990).

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