

**Interpreting teacher talk in culturally diverse schools:
The significance of critical realist and social constructionist
understandings**

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Interpreting teacher talk in culturally diverse schools:

The significance of critical realist and social constructionist understandings

The purpose of this paper is to explain the relevance of social constructionism and critical realism to a study investigating the constitution and construction of literacy in mainstream Year 10 English lessons. This paper will describe how critical realism and a form of social constructionism informed the knowledge produced in this study through the choice of data, method of data collection and analytic method. In the first section of this paper, I briefly describe the study, identifying the data and methodological approach necessary to answer the research questions. In the second part, critical realism and social constructionism are broadly defined and related to the study. In subsequent sections the research method is described and the links to the critical realism and social constructionism are made explicit.

The study

The study referred to in this paper examined the construction and constitution of literacy in Year 10 English lessons and in teachers' talk about their teaching practice. Furthermore, the study examined teachers' accounts of cultural difference in the interview talk and the enactment of cultural difference in the lesson talk. The study was conducted in secondary schools situated in low socio economic areas with a culturally diverse student clientele. The data¹ included interview talk with five English teachers and classroom talk from their eight English lessons.

Within the study, the lesson talk was considered to be an instructional text co-constructed by teachers and students. This text was examined for both its constituent meaning and its positioning of students with respect to their attributes (Bernstein, 1990). Given that the research sought to identify the constitution and construction of literacy, it was necessary to examine in detail the talk in the lessons and the interviews to make visible the composition of the literacy practices that were co-constructed by the participants. That is, this research did not seek an explanation of the literacy practices based on the educational structures influencing curriculum (such as syllabi). Rather, the methodology of this research aimed to make apparent the literacy practices talked into being in the lessons and talked about by the teachers in their interviews. Simultaneously, the examination of the talk displayed how cultural difference was constituted and enacted by participants.

The findings about literacy practices were further described in terms of a Bernsteinian model of pedagogic practice, (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000). Bernstein (1990, 1996, 2000) conceptualised pedagogic practice as containing the 'what' and the 'how' of the teaching/learning process, relayed through the pedagogic discourse. In this study, understandings from the interview talk and the classroom talk form the pedagogic discourses of the various teachers. The pedagogic discourse is essentially a recontextualised discourse. Although one text, it contains an instructional discourse (the knowledge, skills and competencies to be learned) embedded in a regulative discourse (the rules of social order in the classroom) (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000). That is, the expectations about behaviour and the social relations among students and between students and teachers (the regulative discourse) influence the knowledge, skills and competencies co-constructed in the lessons (the instructional discourse).

Accordingly, the descriptions of the talk in the lessons and interviews fit into Bernstein's model of pedagogic practice. The model provides a means of systematically analysing the constitution of the literacy knowledge, literacy practices and cultural difference across the English lessons.

Social Constructionism

As stated above, the purpose of the study was to examine the constitution and construction of literacy practices in the Year 10 English classrooms through the interactions between students, teachers and classroom texts. The construction, distribution and acquisition of knowledge about literacy practices was accomplished by students and teachers in and through classroom and interview talk. As such, this research lay clearly within the social constructionist research paradigm. Crotty (1998) describes social constructionism as

the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed within an essentially social context (p.42).

In defining social constructionism, it is important to point out how it is distinct from constructivism. According to Crotty (1998, p. 58, 79), constructivism focuses on the individual's sense-making of objects in the world. Spivey's (1997, p. 3) account of constructivism adds that building knowledge through individual's sense-making also means that each person's ways of perceiving the world influences the knowledge produced. In this research, it was important to identify the literacy practices produced in the classroom, not what the teachers thought were produced. Hence a social constructionist approach was considered more appropriate.

It is suggested in this paper that knowledge about the literacy constructed occurred through the meaning-making in interview talk and classroom talk. The social constructionist paradigm emphasises that "all meaningful reality ... is socially constructed" (Crotty, 1998, p. 55). Social constructionism also recognises that culture shapes the way we view the world (Crotty, 1998). The shared construction of reality within a culture facilitates a common understanding of the meanings of interactions and through this process builds a version of knowledge which is culturally constituted. Analysis of the talk would indicate where teachers, students and interviewers may or may not have shared the same cultural understandings and therefore differing versions of knowledge may be produced. Such an analysis provides the opportunity to explore enactments of cultural difference.

Ethnomethodology

Characteristics of social constructionism as outlined above, are apparent in the ethnomethodological approach and informed the analysis of the talk. Ethnomethodology focuses on how people make sense of their world through accounting for their practices (Crotty, 1998, Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). These accounts relay the member's understanding of structure and order and in doing so, members construct their actions as logical, reasonable and consistent (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Therefore, accounts in this research should not be seen as the 'truth' but as the work of each teacher to build a logical, consistent version of his/her literacy teaching practice. The teachers wish to appear competent in the interviews and lessons and therefore they orient their talk to accomplish an interview or lesson (Silverman, 2001, p.104).

Informed by these understandings of ethnomethodology, the researcher focussed on identifying how the participants make sense of their teaching of literacy and therefore what counts as literacy in the classroom. In doing so, reality was viewed as being created through the talk and is situated in the time and place of its telling. This view contrasts with the assumptions a critical realist perspective brings to reality.

Critical Realism

When interpreting the significance of the classroom talk and the teachers' accounts of their English teaching practices, certain assumptions are made. Essential to the production of their talk and accounts are pre-existing patterns of talk or social norms of acceptable interaction in schools. These may not be apparent at the surface level to the participants or initially to the researcher. Such assumptions about the nature of talk between teachers and students and teachers and researchers in the school context are in keeping with the philosophical perspective of critical realism as developed by Bhaskar (1989).

Critical realism recognises that a real world exists outside of the subjective experiences of an individual researcher, and social phenomena are conceived as "the product of a plurality of (social) structures" (Bhaskar, 1989, p 3). These social structures are not readily apparent but may be after systematic detailed analysis of the data (Bhaskar, 1989). Bhaskar (1989) provides further detail on social structures.

All social structures - for instance the economy, the state, the family, language - depend upon or presuppose social relations - which may include the social relations between capital and labour, ministers and civil servants, parents and children. The relations into which people enter pre-exist the individuals who enter into them, and whose activity reproduces or transforms them; so they themselves are structures. And it is to these structures of social relations that realism directs our attention - both as the explanatory key to understanding social events and trends and as the focus of social activity aimed at the self-emancipation of the exploited and oppressed. (p. 4)

Thus, critical realism focuses on human relations as structures that constitute but do not determine the nature of the social activity. Furthermore, according to critical realism, these structures shaping the nature of the interaction are not immediately apparent from the interaction. In this research, the critical realist assumption is that these cultural norms or structures lie beneath the surface level interpretations of the talk in the English lessons or the teachers' accounts of their practice.

According to critical realism, the social structures or mechanisms that constitute the talk in interaction are termed "intransitive", because they can be seen as stable patterns of talk and usually represent the cultural norms (Joseph, 1998, Frazer, 1995). For example, when examining the classroom talk for its meaning, the institutional nature of the talk (in this case, the social rules that constitute normative or acceptable patterns of classroom talk) must be considered. In classrooms, talk usually fits into a pattern whereby the teacher initiates the talk, the student responds and the teacher follows up with an evaluation and maybe elaboration (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, Edwards & Westgate, 1994, Edwards & Mercer, 1987, Mercer, 1995, Lemke, 1990, Cazden, 1988 and Mehan, 1979).

In this study, the interviews take place in the school and the interviewers are university-based researchers. The location of the interview, identities of the interview participants and type of interview provide a framework for the style of interview talk taking place. Interview participants tend to orient their talk to suit these social worlds, constituted through the location, perceived purpose of the interview and the numbers and interactional style of the participants. For instance, in the interview Extract A, the teacher explains the teaching of the current unit of work.

Extract A

Teacher: Then what we'll also be looking at is turning a newspaper report into um, a TV news story and then at the end, I, do you want to know this now?

R: Oh, yeah, tell me now, yes.

The reason the teacher asks "Do you want me to tell you this now?" is that she wants her interview account to be appropriate to the purposes of the research study. The fact that she is talking to the researcher and not someone else affects the way the account is co-constructed.

In addition, the semi-structured nature of the interviews in this research meant that there was an implicit expectation that teachers would account for their answers and that the researcher might have queried those accounts further. Such foundational expectations about the type of talk form the intransitive knowledge and shape the institutional talk that is apparent in the interviews and classrooms. Corson (1991) maintains that Bhaskar considered "reasons and accounts" as "real ontological entities" because "the mechanisms ... that produce beliefs ... and actions, are produced, exist and evolve in that social world" (p. 10).

These patterns of interaction and assumptions about talk in the interview and classroom form the intransitive knowledge. According to Bhaskar, the concepts "intransitive" and "transitive" forms of knowledge are used to accentuate the distinction between ontology and epistemology respectively (Joseph, 1998). Frazer (1995) explains that examples of transitive knowledge can include facts, concepts and categories but that these can ultimately change or vary according to cultural contexts. For example, in this study, although there is similarity in the basic structures of talk from lesson to lesson and interview to interview, the understandings about literacy teaching practice created through those interactions may vary (Baker & Christensen, 2001). The knowledge constructed is transient; it is "transitive".

In the brief descriptions above, I have described the key features of critical realism, and social constructionism, specifically ethnomethodology. In the next section, I outline the contrasting characteristics, laying the groundwork for how these approaches were used in this research.

Aligning critical realism and social constructionism

The main difference between critical realist and social constructionist perspectives concerns the existence or otherwise of external structures which influence social interaction. In critical realism the structures are the explanatory source of the interaction (Joseph, 1998, Crothers, 1999, Frazer, 1995) which generate various behaviours. Such causal structures are not part of the social constructionist approach and different social constructionist perspectives theorise structures in a variety of ways. Ethnomethodology directs its analytic attention to how "institutionality and social relations are built into and organised by, the texture of the talk" (Baker, 1997b, p. 47). Rules of conversational behaviour are recognised as structures but they do not generate conversation (Taylor & Cameron, 1987). Rather, participants conform to such rules or else they are expected to account for their deviation from the rules (Taylor & Cameron, 1987). In this way participants orient their talk to the institutional context (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Heap (1997), from an applied ethnomethodological perspective, maintains that "Institutions by their very nature transcend any particular setting" (p 223), and knowledge about institutional interaction can highlight what to research, while the

ethnomethodological analysis can show how the talk produces the institutional features. In both critical realism and ethnomethodology the structures or institutions are hearable through the talk. Hence, both share the assumption that a structure, be it an institution of society or a social practice, plays a role in the construction of the social phenomenon under investigation, albeit in very different ways.

According to critical realism, there is interplay between humans and the structures within which they live their lives (Crothers, 1999). People are positioned by the structures, but at the same time, constitute them through their participation in activities relevant to those structures (Crothers, 1999, Joseph, 1998). Therefore, human interactions can change, replicate or constitute the social structures (Joseph, 1998, Corson, 1991). As mentioned previously, the structures in critical realism are external, whereas in ethnomethodology they are talked into being. Furthermore, in ethnomethodology, participants are not positioned by the structures. They design their talk for specific purposes and to suit the context. Hence, participants can also change or reproduce the structures because the structures or normative practices are designed and produced in situ.

Despite dissimilarities between critical realism and an ethnomethodological form of social constructionism, each approach has contributed to this research. Critical realism offers the perspective that there are underlying structures, interpreted as social relations, within any institution. In terms of this research, those can be related to the patterns of talk evident in classrooms and interviews. Moreover, in the Bernsteinian model of pedagogic practice, different types of interactions serve particular purposes in the teaching/learning process. For example, the regulative discourse described earlier, refers to those interactions concerned with establishing, transforming, or maintaining the moral order. These different types of interaction can be seen as the underlying structures and while they do not necessarily generate interaction (as critical realism might suggest), they do provide a means of understanding the teaching practice.

Ethnomethodology brings to the research the perspective that the talk is a sense-making activity and the knowledge produced is what the participants have co-constructed, not what the researcher has interpreted. The resulting description of the talk from the ethnomethodological analysis can then be used to detail the relations and interactions in the model of the pedagogic practice.

Hence, it has been methodologically useful to align critical realism and ethnomethodology (as a form of social constructionism) and explore what each has to offer to research the construction and constitution of literacy in the classroom. In the next section, I outline more specifically how each approach is reflected in the method.

Method

Data Selection

As explained above, the data used for this research, were talk in interviews and in English lessons. Because of the knowledge produced through talk in interaction, this provided the most suitable form of data to examine the co-construction and constitution of literacy practices in Year 10 English lessons. Furthermore, it is consistent with both critical realist and social constructionist approaches in recognising that knowledge is produced through social interactions.

Research into classroom interaction has shown how classroom knowledge is produced through various types of talk (Heap, 1985, Baker, 1997b). Studying the transcripts of the classroom talk enables an analysis of how and what knowledge is produced. Heap (1985, p.

252) explains that while the teacher plans for the student acquisition of specific knowledge in the lesson, the knowledge that really counts is produced only during the lesson. This means that the syllabus guidelines and work programs may provide the broad parameters within which teachers recontextualise the literacy knowledge. However, what really counts is the literate practices enacted within the lesson itself - at that moment and in that context. It is these literacy practices that students are expected to know.

In this study, interview talk is interpreted as a "situated" social activity in keeping with the social constructionist approach. Meaning is derived not from the words themselves, but from how and when they are used. As such, the talk represents an "account", that is also a co-creation of stories by the interviewer and the teacher about the teachers' experiences of teaching literacy to these culturally diverse students (Silverman, 2000).

Interview accounts can be analysed to show how the interviewee constructs order and makes sense of their social interactions (Dingwall, 1997). As such, interview accounts cannot be expected to reveal the "truth" about the reality under investigation (Silverman, 2000, Dingwall, 1997). Critical realists interpret the account as the transitive knowledge produced from the intransitive structure of the interview account. The knowledge is transitive because it is specific to each teacher and it is therefore relativist. This is compatible with social constructionist view that the knowledge produced is relativist.

The 'sense making' is achieved essentially through a description of the context of the topic of talk (Heritage, 1984, p. 156). The description is considered as an action, which elaborates its context. In other words, how the context is talked about or invoked, not only determines the sense of the talk, but also reconstitutes or transforms the context in that moment (Heritage, 1984). As Heritage (1984) explains, the interview talk is being "constructively interpreted in relation to their contexts" (p.139).

This means

viewing an utterance against a background of *who* said it, *where* and *when*, *what* was being accomplished by saying it and in the light of what possible *considerations* and in virtue of what *motives* it was said (Heritage, 1984, p.139, 140).

The following example illustrates how the context influences the talk, and the talk invokes the context. In Extract B, the researcher (R) sets the topic through his question, and the teacher, Christine Relix (CR) provides an account of how she feels about the progress of the current unit of work. Christine knows she is being interviewed as a teacher, at school, and about her teaching practice, and the interviewer is a researcher. Therefore, as Christine orients her talk to make sense in this context, she needs to elaborate as to why she is not comfortable with the unit's progress. Christine begins this explanation at the end of this small extract.

Extract B

R: OK, this is the third week we've been along to this unit. Ah, how do you feel the unit's progressing?

CR: Um, oh, to tell the truth I sort of suspect that from, personally I don't feel very comfortable with it.

R: Oh right.

CR: Um, in that I feel like I've tried to draw too many things together and I've been panicking a little bit trying to make sure that we've done short story and newspaper and TV and that it all still seems comprehensible and not confusing.

In Christine's second turn at talk, Christine provides an account, which elaborates her teaching practice to legitimatise her position as a teacher. Christine talks about the content ("*short story, newspaper and TV*") and how the teaching of these three literate forms together must seem "*comprehensible*" and "*not confusing*". This description not only makes sense in the context, but also reproduces the context in which the talk makes sense. Christine would not necessarily talk in that way in a different situation, for example, chatting to a friend.

The above extract demonstrated the situated nature of the interviews, which oriented towards the commonsense view that the participants were teachers and the researchers directed their questions with this focus (Baker, 1997a). Through the work of the interview, the role of teacher is seen as being continuously accomplished (Heap, 1997). Furthermore, the interview extract demonstrated how the interview was an occasion for demonstrating cultural knowledge necessary to legitimatise one's position (Baker, 1997, p.135) as an English teacher. Again this is consistent with the influence of culture on meaning making within the social constructionist approach.

Collecting the data and producing the transcript

The talk occurring during the lessons and interviews was audiotaped and transcribed. These methods of data collection are appropriate for research designed with a critical realist and social constructionist perspective because they provide the opportunity to examine interactions. However, videotapes would have been a more appropriate choice to capture the body language and movement. Student data collected through videotapes or other visual forms may have shown more of what these students can do with respect to the literacy practices constructed in their classes.

Preparing the data for analysis required transcription of the audiotapes. The transcribed audiotapes present an account of the everyday happenings in the classroom (Baker 1997c, Silverman, 2000). That is, through the convention adopted, the transcription produces "the character of the speech or activity" (Baker, 1997c, p 111). This understanding of the status of the transcript is in keeping with the assumption that there exist other interpretations of the lessons and interviews besides those analysed in this research. These versions are available not only through other means of data collection and analysis, but also through investigating the talk in the transcript for different phenomena (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997, Silverman, 2000). In critical realist terms, the transcript is a representation of the talk generated by the intransitive structures of classroom talk. Furthermore, its representational nature is determined through the choice of transcription convention, format of the transcript, and the level of detail (for example verbal and nonverbal behaviour). These choices have implications for analytic interpretation (Baker, 1997c, Bucholtz, 2000, Ochs, 1979) and the status of reliability of the study. That is, the interpretations of the talk in the transcripts represent the transitive knowledge and will depend upon the analytic tools used to interrogate the data.

The transcripts were formatted with each speaker's turn placed one above the other. This indicates that neither student nor teacher talk is given primacy (Baker, 1997c). However, it does indicate that interpretations are made on the assumption of the relevance of previous

turns of talk (Ochs, 1979, p. 46). This is appropriate to investigate how the teachers and students together co-constructed their talk to make hearable the literacy and literate practices in these English lessons.

The transcription process outlined above, allowed the talk to be made visible as social interaction in keeping with social constructionist and critical realist frameworks. This was the first step in relating the empirical data to the theoretical framework. The next section explains the analytic process whereby the data is interpreted in a form that can be understood within the Bernsteinian theoretical concepts

Analytic Method

Interview accounts

The analytic method was designed to reflect the features of critical realism and social constructionism. The key feature was to produce knowledge about literacy teaching practice from the interaction between interviewer and teacher but which was not the researcher's interpretation of their meaning. Rather, the knowledge co-created was hearable in the turn by turn interaction.

The analytic process involved five stepsⁱⁱ, interrogating the interview accounts in increasingly finer detail and analysing the empirical data drawing on specific theoretical concepts. There is not the space here to describe the process in great detail, and where possible I will illustrate the process with examples from the data.

The first three steps identified the major topics of talk from the whole corpus of interview data and indicated stretches of interview talk illustrating the issues within these topics. Part of this process involved marking in each teacher's account the talk around major topics. These segments of talk included the interviewer's questions and the teacher's responses. This stage required recognition that the questions and responses are "packaged" in particular ways to talk about the teaching of literacy to a culturally diverse student clientele (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997, p.72). This is a clear example of the co-creation of knowledge evident in both critical realist and social constructionist approaches. For example, in Extract C, a researcher (R) asked Gladys Bolton (GB) about inclusive education.

Extract C

R: How do you go about ensuring, or designing your language and literacy curriculum so that it is inclusive of the different ethnic identities?

GB: In a formal sense, you mean?

R: In a formal sense, but also um, you know, if you make changes to the way you speak to a class?

GB: Well, the thing is, I find with my classes in the junior school, that I never expect everyone to understand everything I'm, every instruction say, the first time. So there's that. I know I'm going to have to say things in a few different ways, but everyone gets that...

The researcher's question assumes that a characteristic of the language and literacy program is inclusivity, that is inclusive of ethnic identities (and not other types of identities). Moreover, the researcher's question suggests that inclusivity could be manifested through the way the teacher speaks to the class. Gladys Bolton responded to the two key points in the researcher's question. An ethnomethodological account would say she oriented to the interview as a teacher through contextualising her answer (for example, "*my classes in junior school*"). A critical realist account may infer that the underlying structure of interview talk has generated her account in a particular way.

In the fourth step, the indicated sections of interview talk were analysed using membership categorisation analysis. Membership categorisation analysis is a form of ethnomethodological analysis and can show how the teachers produce their descriptions of the students and their literacy teaching practices. In detailing the sense-making in the teachers' accounts, the researcher has access to the "what" of the teachers' descriptions. The talk in these interviews employs cultural interpretations about teaching literacy, teaching a culturally diverse student clientele and teaching students from low socio-economic areas that "allow the members of a culture to hear these interpretations as both sensible and reasonable" (Gunn et al, 1995, p.92, 93). Documenting the ways in which teachers, as mainstream English teachers, describe the students, their literacy teaching practices and the influences on it, "is crucial to understanding what *is* and what can be changed" (my emphasis) (Gunn, et al, 1995, p. 92).

The analytic task then, is to document the speaker's logic in their explanations and descriptions and not to pre-empt their meaning. Membership categories are "categories of person, place or activity" (Baker 2000, p. 101). These categories, linked by activities or descriptions, are called membership categorisation devices (MCD) (Baker, 1997a, 2000). Thus, a membership categorisation device "consists of a collection of categories ... and some rules about how to apply these categories" (Silverman, 1998, p. 79). However, the membership categorisation device is not an established framework of categories of knowledge (Baker, 2000, p. 101). Rather, "it is in their *use* that the *collect-able* character of membership categories is constituted and membership categorisation devices assembled *in situ*" (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 20). In the following interviewer question in Extract D, the language and literacy curriculum becomes the membership categorisation device, to associate language and literacy education with the predicate "inclusivity" and the activity of teacher talk.

Extract D

R: How do you go about ensuring, or designing your language and literacy curriculum so that it is inclusive of the different ethnic identities?

GB: In a formal sense, you mean?

R: In a formal sense, but also um, you know, if you make changes to the way you speak to a class?

The use of "language and literacy curriculum" as the MCD in the question and the orientation of the teacher to this MCD illustrate how the MCD are talked into being.

Various MCD, such as "students" and "language and literacy curriculum", could be found across the interview accounts. Hester and Eglin (1997) explain that "what a device collects depends on how it is used *this time*" (p. 17) and further "a device can mean different things and hence collect different categories on different occasions and in different contexts" (p.

18). Categories invoked through participants' interview talk are maintained or changed through what is associated with them (Heritage, 1984, p.147), that is, their predicates. Predicates are "category-relevant features" such as "actions, motives, reasons, beliefs", and attributes (Eglin & Hester, 1992, p 244). The following Extract E shows how the categories, classroom management, and students can be heard as belonging to the MCD "teaching strategies". This interview extract (on the left hand side) with a researcher (R) and Joe Deprim (JD) was taken from the long response to the question. (A discussion of the talk is on the right hand side.)

Extract E

R: ... In terms of how you see the kids and the diversity, ...issues you've raised about the curriculum approaches to the teaching of literacy. What would you like to see occurring in the school to deal with a lot of those issues? ...

...

JD:... I had the attitude of getting away from the teacher-centred ((inaudible)) and letting things happen more with discussion etcetera maybe, you'd realise that ah, stop and think about this, that ah, it's nice on paper but not necessarily so good in practice. ... especially in schools like this. A lot of the English speaking kids, for different reasons, laziness whatever. The ease of distraction, a lot of them are easily distracted. ... So if you give them something clear to focus on, they'll do that in a few minutes. It's horses for courses. Teaching strategies that would be wonderful at Forestwood would probably go over like a lead balloon here, and visa versa. Things that I'd do here that are successful you'd probably get kicked out of some schools for doing this.

R: So what would be some of those examples, a couple of examples of those?

JD: Well, here, as you've probably noticed, you have to spend a fair amount of time and attention on classroom management. Yeah, I've got no objection to constructive noise in the classroom as long as it is constructive. Here if you use the techniques that bring up the noise level it has a compounding effect and you find very quickly that it goes from positive to negative.

Teacher centred is heard as belonging to the collection "teaching strategy". *Discussion* is heard as being a strategy in contrast to teacher-centred strategies. However it is heard also as being a teaching strategy.

The teacher then talks about student behaviour, another category, but because of the sequence of his talk; teacher centred - discussion - student behaviour - distraction - teaching strategies; student behaviour is heard as belonging to the collection teaching strategies.

The teacher hears the question about successful strategies and invokes the category "classroom management" and a predicate "constructive noise". Therefore these categories also belong to the collection teaching strategies.

Through a fine-grained analysis of the transcripts such as the extract above, the situated nature of the talk is evident as is the logic of the teachers' talk. That this teacher invoked such categories as classroom management, and students and their attributes, with the

collection teaching strategies suggests that these may be important to consider before implementing certain teaching strategies at this school.

This analytic process interpreted and organised the teachers' talk about their literacy teaching in a form that, in the fifth step, could be further investigated drawing on Bernsteinian theoretical concepts.

In the fifth step, the descriptions of categories and their predicates within the major topics were associated with the concepts necessary to a theory of instruction (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000), for further analysis. The theory of instruction is a recontextualising principle, which modifies the pedagogic discourse through the regulative discourse. In this research, teachers' interview talk about the learners, and the English teaching practice constitutes the theory of instruction. The topics of talk, concerning the learner, included talk about different groupings of students, relations between teachers and students and between students, and students' abilities with respect to literacy. The teachers' explanations of their English teaching practice related to categories about what to teach and how to teach it, that is, the selection, sequencing and pacing of the literacy knowledge and skills. For example, teachers' explanations about how they make their language and literacy curriculum inclusive may refer to categories of literacy knowledge they consider relevant for this student clientele.

Through the analytic process described above, the theory of instruction can be described comprehensively in terms of its constituent parts, as accounted for by the teachers in their interview talk. This description provides a perspective on the sorts of literate practices and knowledge considered appropriate for these students in these schools.

The purpose of analysis of the talk in English lessons is to see what sorts of literacy and literate practices are actually enacted in the classroom in these particular lessons. The analytic procedure is explained in the next section.

Analysis of talk in English lessons

Classroom talk (with a particular focus on teacher talk) was analysed for its production of what counts as literacy knowledge and practices in the lesson. Classroom members organise their talk to both reflect and constitute their classroom setting and to accomplish some task within that setting (Baker, 1997b) indicating the sense-making activity typical of social constructionist approaches. Therefore, it was important to analyse the organisation and nature of the talk to realise the work it accomplished in constructing and constituting literacy practices. Analysis occurred at two broad levels - the overall structural organisation of the lesson and the organisation of the talk within the various lesson structures.

Structural organisation of lessons

First, lessons were examined for their organisational structures. A lesson can be described as the "effort by teachers and students to maintain a common focus of attention and some shared activity structures for as much of the typical 40-minute period as possible" (Lemke, 1990, p. 51). Lessons involve a set of group interactions, and communication occurs through some order of turn taking, where each party to the interaction must make their talk comprehensible to all (Heap, 1990). Furthermore, a lesson is a "human social construction" (Lemke, 1990, p.2, Cazden, 1988) where it is expected that some learning will take place. Again, this can clearly be seen within social constructionist and critical realist approaches. Such a conception of lessons captures the organisational structure but also allows for meaning to be constructed through the interactions.

The lessons analysed in this research were divided into phases, which are segments of lessons with a particular purpose or focus of activity and/or learning. The lessons were divided into phases such as introductory, diagnostic (Lemke, 1990), preliminary, and main lessonⁱⁱⁱ.

Second, the activity structures within each phase were identified^{iv}. Lemke (1990, p. 198) describes an "activity structure as a socially recognisable sequence of actions". The parts of the activity structure each have a purpose and occur in a certain order (Lemke, 1990). In this research, these activity structures provided the basic organisational unit within which the literacy knowledge is constructed (Baker, 1992). Heap (1985) explains that it is through the various structures of talk that certain tasks are accomplished.

A further analysis of the talk within these activity structures, specifically the turn-taking organisation and features of the talk, showed participants constructing the literacy knowledge through their 'sense making' of the interactions in the lessons.

Organisation of talk within activity structures

In the third step of the analysis, the organisation of the talk within selected activity structures was examined. The activity structures described different forms of turn-taking organisation. For example, in a teacher monologue there was only the teacher's turn and the students were not expected to comment or respond (cf Heap, 1992) whilst a triadic dialogue included at least three turns, a teacher question, student response and teacher feedback. These differing forms of turn organisation provided various means of co-constructing the literacy knowledge and produced different types of knowledge. For instance, propositional knowledge, skills or know-how and cultural knowledge can be produced through the triadic dialogue, often achieved in the teacher's final turn of talk, the evaluation or feedback turn (Heap, 1985).

Within each activity structure, the design of each turn and the various utterances within each turn served particular purposes, but these purposes are recoverable only through an analysis of the sequential organisation of the talk (Heap, 1992). It is the place within the sequence and how the utterance is heard that determines the meaning (Freiberg & Freebody, 1995). Heap (1992) states that

Of primary importance (is) not what an actor/speaker intends or claims to intend by some action, but rather, what the consociate/hearer can understand from the actor/speaker doings or sayings (p 26).

Furthermore, the knowledge is shaped through the turn by turn interaction during which students' and teachers' talk orients to prior and subsequent turns at talk (Mehan, 1979, Freiberg & Freebody, 1995, Baker, 1997b). This is especially evident across and within the triadic dialogues, the predominant activity structures in lessons (Mehan, 1979). Prospective and retrospective orientation to talk is important to the progression of the lesson. When participants don't orient to talk in the preferred way then interactional troubles are produced (Heap, 1990, Freiberg & Freebody, 1995). Repair strategies are then used that can alter the pace of the lesson and affect the knowledge produced through the talk.

A number of research studies (Heap, 1985, 1990, Baker and Freebody, 1989, Freiberg & Freebody, 1995, Mercer, 1995) have shown how teachers shape the knowledge and orient the students towards a particular shared interpretation of the text under discussion through various features of talk^v. The use of these various techniques not only construes knowledge in certain ways but also imparts or assumes cultural knowledge. For example, Heap (1985)

found that cultural knowledge was necessary to answering the teacher's questions about a text. He describes what the student must do.

...What counts, in effect, as comprehension is not simply loading and retrieving propositions from memory. Instead, the student must take the text off the page and into the culture, which can only be his or her culture as he or she understands it. In this sense, reading comprehension is comprehension of culture and the logic of its organisation and possibilities. The text is simply the site for launching that comprehension. (p 265).

Cultural knowledge or logic implicit in the classroom talk is important to investigate to show how cultural difference is enacted in these English lessons. Examination of the talk for what is heard, turn by turn, can make visible the hidden assumptions about each participant's knowledge base. Furthermore, exploring the teacher's turns at talk may reveal a logic that is not heard by the students.

As a consequence of the interrogation of the lesson talk for the features explained above, the data is redescribed to inform the researcher about the literacy and literate practices accomplished in these lessons. The redescription also facilitates a further analysis using the Bernsteinian model of the pedagogic practice.

Describing the Pedagogic Practice

Below an extract of data (Extract F) from a Year 10 English lesson is analysed to show how the features of the talk are reinterpreted into the Bernsteinian theoretical concepts and what this means for the type of literate practice co constructed in the lesson.

This extract occurred early in the lesson and is part of a main lesson phase. The lesson is part of a unit on media, in particular newspaper stories. Gladys Bolton (GB) is the teacher and S represents students' talk.

Extract F

GB OK. The next one you can't even read, so we'll continue on. Now, what we're going to be looking at over the next couple of lessons is how to sequence your news story. You already know that by the time you looked at the headline and your lead paragraph or your intro, you should know all the key facts of how what when where at least, of your story. The why and the how come very soon later. But, you have to prioritise from most important to least important as well. When you're given your press release to do, and we're going to practice press releases, you can be given a whole lot of information, and what you've gotta do is say well, rightoh, what is the news here. What is the most important thing that people will want to know. You then include all the information, but you unpack it from most important to least important. OK so you sequence it. Yea, don't worry, it's not switched on, I don't think it is anyway. OK right, first, the sensational news. Right, so if you've got a, aahm, sensational part of a story, obviously, that's going to be what gets your reader in. So you mention that bit first. OK Tanya. So let's have a look at it. I should, this is suggested journalist's scenario, OK. I should [

S [Isn't it real.

GB Well, it's a scenario for a story, it's just the outline of a story, sssh, not prioritised, not prioritised. So we look at how you get from that to the story. So Ashley, you might like to read that paragraph please.

S A SHIPWRECKED SAILOR ((word is SOLO)) YAT, YACHTSMAN TELLS THE NEWSPAPER HOW ((word is THAT)) HE LIVED ON CRABS, OYSTERS AND LIZARDS FOR SIX DAYS WHILE STRANDED ON AN UNINHABITED PART OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTLINE. HOW WOULD THE NEWSPAPERS REPORT HIS DIET? CRABS AND OYSTERS ARE SERVED IN RESTAURANTS.

GB So crabs and oysters might even be fun, mightn't it? So, who's going to that's news or, uuuugh, you now, something that makes your spine go cold. OK [

S [Lizards?

GB Yea, but lizards, we don't eat lizards all that often, OK?

S We don't eat lizards period. That's disgusting.

GB No, that's right.

S I eat goannas.

GB OK, keep going Ashley.

S A DIET OF LIZARDS IS SENSATIONAL ((left out AND)) NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH. THE NEWSPAPER WOULD HEAD THE LIST OF FOODS WITH RAW LIZARD.

GB Yea, so obviously, you know, you conveniently forget the crabs and oysters unless the story goes on much later, it's a very insignificant detail. That's going to be what gets people into reading that article. ((Reading)) MAN LIVES ON LIZARD FOR SIX DAYS.

This extract begins with a teacher monologue (lines 3 to 16) where Gladys outlines the content of the next few lessons. The students will be learning about how to sequence a news story. Gladys reminds the students of what they already should know about the structure of a news story (lines 3 - 8) but she then explains it again, without questioning the students about what they remember. In this way, the knowledge about the structure of news stories is being made public and therefore the students are accountable for knowing it.

Gladys provides the students with an abstract explanation of how to structure the story "*But you have to prioritise from most important to least important as well.*" (lines 7,8) and then explains it using more everyday language "*.. well rightoh, what is the news here? What is the most important thing that people will want to know*" (lines 10,11) and later in lines 11 and 12 "*but you unpack it from most important to least important. OK, so you sequence it.*". In doing so, Gladys provides the students with a method to determine the most newsworthy piece of information. Already in the first 16 lines of teacher talk, the structured nature of this particular literacy practice is evident.

The next activity structure (lines 18 to 25) is an external text dialogue where the student is reading from a text (in capital letters in the transcript). It is interesting that the text states "CRABS AND OYSTERS ARE SERVED IN RESTAURANTS". This could be seen as a piece of cultural information whose significance must be recognised in order to be able to write a news story in English in an Australian newspaper. Gladys colludes in emphasising this piece of cultural information in her next turn (line 26). She then uses a cued elicitation (lines 27 to 29) to ensure the students recognise the most newsworthy piece of information - the eating of lizards. The eating of lizards is presented as something unpleasant both by Gladys and a student (and later the text) and therefore newsworthy, although there could be students in the room who may have eaten lizards as part of a "traditional" diet. We do not know whether the student who eats goannas (line 32) is trying to be disruptive or just contributing, although this student's response is ignored.

In the final activity structure (lines 34 to 39), Gladys emphasises through elaboration the importance of prioritising the information and uses words such as "*you forget the crabs and oysters*", "*insignificant detail*", and "*what gets people into reading the article*".

In summary, Gladys explicitly structured how to write the lead of a newspaper story and in doing so constructed a category of literacy practice with defined features that is distinct from other types of literacy practices. In so doing, she provided students with the knowledge of the constituent parts of headline writing and with the cultural knowledge necessary to recognise the sensational news (the instructional discourse). Concerning the regulative aspect of her talk, Gladys exerted tight control over the talk. She did not invite other ways of interacting other than listening to the teacher and answering her questions. Furthermore, in her explicit sequencing of the method for writing the headlines, Gladys directed student behaviour in dealing with the text. This form of talk strongly controlled the knowledge produced in the lesson.

Thus far in this lesson, the instructional and regulative talk is evident in constituting knowledge about the literate practice of writing the lead for a news story headlines. Through making these explicit, and identifying the patterns of talk, there is the opportunity to understand this particular teaching practice and if necessary determine where and how to change it.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this paper, this research occurred within the social interactions in a school and meaning is both influenced and constructed by its social context. The understandings provided by critical realism and social constructionism, specifically ethnomethodology, offer an explanatory framework for researching talk and also anchor the meaning-making process in the turn by turn organisation of the talk. The design of the research instruments, data collection, transcripts and analytic procedures are compatible with these understandings and produce knowledge about the constitution and construction of literacy in these lessons.

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NOTES

i This data was drawn from an Australian Research Council project "Constructing Australian Identities"

ii The first four steps have been adapted from Gunn, Forrest and Freebody's analytic procedures in the project "Perspectives on Poverty, Schools and Literacy" (1995).

iii These four types of phases are described as follows and were not necessarily present in every lesson.

- In the introductory phase, the teacher explained how the lesson would proceed. Sometimes the teacher included a rationale for this process. Also during this phase, students were usually getting their materials ready for the lesson under the teacher's direction.
- During the diagnostic phase the teacher tried to ascertain what the students already knew about the topic (Lemke, 1993).
- The preliminary phase took place just before new material was introduced. It can occur at the beginning of a lesson or during the lesson.
- The main lesson phase was where most of the learning activities occurred and there may be several main phases to reflect the varying activities and knowledge work underway.

iv A list of the types of activity structures used in the analysis and a brief description is presented in the table below. These activity structures have been drawn from Jay Lemke's work on analysing the talk in Science lessons (1990, p. 215 - 218 in particular). They have been adapted to suit the talk in these English lessons.

Activity	Description
Going over the homework (Lemke, 1990)	Homework is reviewed usually as a whole class activity.
Classroom business (Lemke, 1990)	The teacher talks about due dates for assignments, upcoming tests etc. Students sometimes ask questions about these.
Explanation of the Do Now	The teacher gives an explanation of what must be done to complete a task.
Monitoring the Do Now	Usually the teacher is roaming the class assisting students where necessary and checking on student progress - a form of control to keep students on task.

Teacher exposition.(Lemke, 1990)	A teacher monologue giving an explanation of new material, the contents of the lesson, or following on from an elaboration of a student's response.
Triadic dialogue (Lemke, 1990)	Lemke (1990, p.8) describes this as "at least a three-part Question-Answer-Evaluation pattern". However, in the third part of the pattern the teacher may elaborate either following the evaluation or instead of the evaluation. Through a series of triadic dialogues the knowledge to be learned is broken up into smaller units for sequential learning. Therefore triadic dialogues in sequence are essential for the progress of the lesson (Cazden, 1988).
Triadic dialogue (Lemke, 1990)- Trail and collect	The same pattern as the triadic dialogue, except that the teacher gathers a number of answers from around the class.
Triadic dialogue - Trail and hunt	The same basic pattern as the Triadic dialogue, however the teacher searches for a specific answer to a question and may ask the same question several times.
Teacher-student duolog. (Lemke, 1990)	Dialogues between the teacher and a particular student in a triadic dialogue structure.
Student questioning dialogue (Lemke, 1990)	Students ask questions about the current topic under discussion.
True dialogue (Lemke, 1990)	Students and teachers respond to each other's questions and comments as if they were equal participants in the conversation, ie the relationship was symmetrical (Lemke, 1990, p. 217).
Copying Notes (Lemke, 1990)	The students are copying notes from the board or overhead transparency.
External text dialogue (Lemke, 1990)	An external text (from a text book or overhead transparency or notes on the board) is read aloud and acts as a stimulus for questions or further explanations and elaborations.
Seatwork (Lemke, 1990)	Students work independently on a task set by the teacher (Lemke, 1990, p. 217).
Groupwork (Lemke, 1990)	Students work in groups on a task set by the teacher.
Student - student dialogue.	Students discuss the task set although they are to complete it independently
Teacher summary. (Lemke, 1990)	The teacher summarises as a monologue the subject matter (of the lesson or the unit).
Teacher narrative (Lemke,	Teacher tells an anecdote to foster understanding of a concept

1990)	or to motivate students.
Demonstration (Lemke, 1990)	The teacher demonstrates how a particular theory or concept is applied to a text.
Media Presentation (Lemke, 1990)	A video is used as part of the text of the lesson to demonstrate the use of a genre or as a stimulus.
Setting homework.	The teacher explains what is expected to be completed for homework.

v Features of classroom talk are outlined below. This list is not exhaustive rather it is indicative of the features identified at this stage of analysis.

These features of talk have been discussed widely in the literature on classroom discourse (Mehan, 1979, MacLure & French, 1980, Edwards and Mercer, 1987, Cazden, 1988, Baker and Freebody, 1989, Baker, 1991, 1992, Edwards and Westgate, 1994, Mercer, 1995).

Features of classroom talk	Comments
Questions	Teachers invariably ask questions to which they know the answers. Teachers use different types of questions to check student knowledge, to guide students' learning, and to emphasise certain knowledge. Teachers formulate questions to foster correct answers however students use a variety of strategies to search for and choose the correct answer.
Cued elicitation	Teachers provide clues to the information required when eliciting information from students.
Reformulation	Teachers reformulate questions by restating the question in a different way, when the first answer is incorrect. A teacher may also reformulate a student's answer to credit a student for their contribution and through the reformulation assist students in developing the academically appropriate ways of talking (O'Connor & Michaels, 1996, p. 7, 8). Reformulations also make public a suitable version of the literate practice or knowledge.
Elaboration	The elaboration usually follows the evaluation in the third turn of talk within a triadic dialogue. The elaboration offers the teacher further opportunity to make knowledge public, link various concepts, or reformulate the knowledge. It inevitably signifies the teacher as the arbiter of knowledge.
Echo	Teachers repeat a student's response to acknowledge it, and to alert other students to the significance of this response.
Retrospective	Teachers ask students to repeat their responses so that they are

elicitation	shown to be salient and are made public.
Recapping	Teachers talk about previously taught/learned material to link it to the current topic.
Repetition	Teachers repeat information already talked about to ensure it is heard by all, and to alert students to its significance.
Lexical choice	The meaning of vocabulary and expressions in situ has to be determined by participants each time those words are used (Baker, 1997b). To be able to choose the appropriate meaning, students may need to invoke cultural knowledge.
Use of "we"	The teacher uses "we" to mark knowledge as shared and accountable by all.
Meta-textual commentary	This is the talk about a text and includes the teacher's questions, comments and ways the teacher focuses on selected sections of the text (Baker, 1991, p. 104). The meta-textual commentary therefore promotes a particular type of reading of the text.