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Chapter 5

Reframing for Decisions: Transforming Talk About Literacy and Assessment Among Teachers and Researchers

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CENTRAL CONCEPTS

Reframing—transition strategy by which the nature and direction of the talk are negotiated

Ethnographic analysis—analyzing mundane and unusual events in the lives of research participants and attempting to understand these events from their perspectives on their lived experiences

Discourse analysis—analyzing language beyond the sentence

Critical Discourse Analysis—analyzing language beyond the sentence for meaning in relation to power

Repair—strategy by which conversation participants negotiate agreement where there is intense disagreement

> *Discourse analysis is an inclusionary multidiscipline.*
>
> —Deborah Tannen (1989)

Education research in the 21st century can be characterized by at least four dynamic, interpretive movements that include the critical analysis of pedagogy, schools, and communities; the politics of representation; the textual analyses of literary and cultural forms; and the ethnographic study of the production, consumption, and distribution of these forms in everyday life. Although these issues are beyond the scope of this chapter (see

Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, for an extensive discussion), in large part the basis of these movements in the field of education grows out of a struggle among researchers and educators to make sense of competing social and political goals for children, their teachers, and the communities in which these key players live. An example of this is the ideological and policy debates focused on the implementation of the right reading assessments in U.S. schools during the last 30 years (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998). The changes that have occurred as a result of ideological stances toward the teaching of reading have often undermined local and sometimes national efforts at change. The work of researchers and educators who attempt to critically represent everyday life in this political milieu becomes all the more complicated and complex in the research process. My aim in this chapter is to critically examine how a study group of elementary school teachers and two university researchers made decisions about the type of entries that should constitute the reading portion of an archival portfolio. Through ethnographic and discourse analysis, I explore how one group meeting served to transform the actors in the group, reconstitute previously agreed-on agendas, and shift authority in the group. This study took place in the mid- to late 1990s, at a time when the accountability movement in the United States was gaining national prominence at all levels of political life. The case of this study group (the Alternative Assessment Study Group) exemplifies a grassroots effort at change at both personal and institutional levels.

To understand how a group of researchers and teachers made decisions that would eventually transform not only their practice, but also the ways in which they understood themselves in the process, I adopt ethnographic and discourse analysis strategies as I analyze the talk. In this instance, I leave out the term *critical* because, like Deborah Tannen, by the analysis of discourse I only mean analyzing language beyond the level of the sentence. Of course to do so implies an objective stance that may deny social and political characteristics embedded in the talk and, more important, the analysis. In the field of education, discourse analysis embodies a critical agenda aimed at both understanding and improving the status quo. This double entendre—critical as vital and critical as ideologically analytical—allows for discourse analyses that draw on various disciplinary traditions. Whether one studies involvement strategies (the main focus of the case I present in this chapter), form–function relationships, turn taking, and so on, the analysis is driven by the researcher's questions and frame of reference. This stance reflects the dialectical relationship between discourse and the social practice (see Fairclough, 2001) for making decisions in the context of reform in school. Studying how people talk beyond the sentence level is discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis refers to *how* and *why* people talk and interact the way they do in their everyday lives. It means understanding

the relationship among talk, interaction, and power. In education, CDA is a window into the relationships among teachers, researchers, children, parents, communities, and government.

Of course the notion of transformation in this chapter's title implies change within this dialectical relationship. As such *transforming* denotes both my own and the study group's conscious efforts at reflexive change through talk from week to week. Transformation implies change in practice. As Hanks (1996) so aptly put it, practice denotes the point at which three things converge: form (talk), activity, and ideology. These three aspects of practice call for different types of analyses, and I think that a critical discourse and ethnographic lens is particularly salient in this enterprise because it values the insider's worldview. For example, in the process of making decisions, the Alternative Assessment Study Group employed involvement strategies that served to create functional and interpersonal involvement (Tannen, 1989). Involvement in making decisions was certainly challenging for the study group because of its internal diversity in terms of grade-level expertise, professional status, and background experience, and negotiating decisions became the group's primary function as it struggled to make the portfolio meaningful to each individual's work. As Rogers suggests (chap. 11, this volume), both Gee and Fairclough's version of CDA assumes that meaning and the potential for meaning beyond the status quo are main aims of CDA. Uncovering what people mean in various contexts is really at the heart of transformation and learning. In the rest of the chapter, I offer a way to think about and analyze talk that captures the spirit of discourse analysis in a critically minded way.

THE SETTING

To document our decision-making process, I audiotaped discussions and took notes during the meetings. In addition, I observed the teachers' classrooms and wrote field notes to get a better sense of how alternative assessment could be implemented in their work. These observations also allowed me to understand the teachers' perspectives in the decision-making process as they used various classroom examples to make sense out of the demands of the portfolio.

Before describing our discussions and the conversation that I think is indicative of the decision-making process, I want to first relate how our study group came to be and then describe the physical context within which we met. Ron, a professor at a large midwestern university, wished to develop alternative assessment measures in schools to better engage both students and teachers in their own learning. Through personal and professional contacts, he met with teachers (K–5) at Arnold Elementary School at the beginning of the 1995–1996 academic year. I agreed to participate in this

study and accompanied Ron every other week on Mondays to talk with Arnold's teachers and principal. Initially, Ron's main contact at Arnold was a teacher (Rhonda) who was in charge of the literacy program for the entire school. However, after the second meeting, university researchers were told that she had left her job. Teachers who were interested in implementing the portfolio into their assessment repertoire attended the meetings. The teachers and principal endeavored to make this project a school-wide goal.

In the mid-1990s, Arnold Elementary School was a professional development school located in Miller. This means that since 1983 teachers at Arnold have worked in alliance with Miller University studying ways to improve teaching, learning, and teacher education. Ongoing projects at Arnold included the Archival portfolio, the development of inclusion teams, and a strong commitment to teacher education. Of Arnold's 284 students, 58% were male and 42% were female. Minority students composed 71% of the population at Arnold (57% African American, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 11% Hispanic, 29% White, .007% American Indian). Arnold was a Title I school and was designated by the state as a school with a significant number of at-risk students: 48% of the eligible (Grades 1–5) students received free or reduced lunch. Arnold was a highly sought after school of choice: 41% of Arnold's students attended as students in the schools of choice programs. Arnold Elementary was the most highly requested school of choice for minority parents in the Miller area. Its mission statement was prominent in the school handbook description:

> At Arnold, all people are teachers and learners. The curriculum consists of important ideas and skills including the students' own questions and interests. All students find acceptance and support for learning in their unique ways. Our professional culture encourages mutual support, professionalism, and collegiality.

During each meeting, the study group sat around three tables pushed together in the media center. Animal crackers were usually passed around, and all of us took notes on what was being said. I briefly describe each of the participants in our assessment group next (see Fig. 5.1).

Participants

Ron was a professor at Miller University and conducted nationally recognized research in reading and literacy.

I (Loukia) was a graduate student at the time of this project. I mediated between Ron, who expected me to be organized and ready with the recording equipment, and the teachers, who welcomed me into their classrooms for observations. Both Ron and I found the observations to be helpful in our conversations with the teachers.

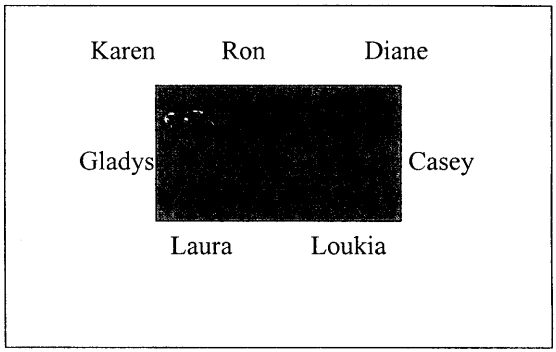

FIG. 5.1. Alternative assessment study group.

Gladys was a fourth-grade teacher who was enrolled in a PhD program at the local university, although she said that she did not have the time to work on her graduate program. She was outspoken and dominated most of our conversations. At the same time, she was thoughtful and very interested in assessment, although she did not want to "reinvent the wheel" when the group talked about rubrics.

Laura was a second-grade teacher who was soft spoken, but who added much insight to the assessment issue because she had attended conferences and was aware of recent research in reading.

Diane was a second/third-grade combination teacher who worked closely with Rhonda before she left. Diane asked many questions of the other teachers during our conversations. She was the only one who looked thoroughly at the materials that Ron and I passed around the table. Diane was also very outspoken and had definite ideas about what worked and did not work in her classroom.

Karen was a new fifth-grade teacher at Arnold. She did not speak much at our meetings, but always brought a huge jar of animal crackers to share with everyone. She was struggling to find ways to teach genres more specifically in her classroom—a goal that Arnold had for its students before they graduate.

Casey was a second-grade teacher who replaced Rhonda after the winter break. I had the chance to be in meetings with her twice. Casey was very soft spoken. When she talked, she addressed the topic with examples from her own experience at her previous school or from her master's work.

Peter was the principal at Arnold. He did not attend most of our meetings or attended for only a short time. He thought it important that teachers talk about their work together because he felt there should more cohesiveness and carryover from grade to grade. When he commented during meetings, it was usually to reinforce and support teachers' comments.

ANALYSIS

In examining the conversations to determine our group's decision-making process, which would ultimately influence the teachers' classroom work, I chose to concentrate on our fourth meeting. This meeting was a turning point for our study group because we finally *acted* or engaged ourselves and made decisions about the contents of the archival portfolio. This active engagement led me to ask several questions: When do we know what decisions have been made and agreed on? Who makes those decisions? Are high involvement, high intensity, and overlapping talk ways through which conversational participants voice agreement or disagreement? How is turn taking affected? Whose proposition is taken into account when there is an established authority? How are decisions negotiated within this study group? I turned to Davies and Harré's (1990) work on positioning and Goffman's (1981) explication of footing to construct what occurred during out meeting. In addition, I found Florio-Ruane and de Tar's (1995) analysis on reframing quite useful as I attempted to explore turn taking and floor uptake through Edelsky's (1981) work. I return to these ideas and concepts as I analyze the discourse.

For the first time during this conversation, each teacher identified herself and her position on certain issues. This self-identification included making decisions based on personal experience in the classroom. As Davies and Harré (1990) pointed out, "positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of a conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up and in what story, and how they are then positioned" (p. 48). In turn, Ron's own position as facilitator was quite clear in the discussion of assessment issues. As "animator," "author," and "principal," Ron often occupied multiple social roles (Goffman, 1981, p. 147). Davies and Harré summarized these speaker roles as follows. The "animator" is he or she who speaks. The "author" is he or she who is responsible for the text. The "principal" is he or she whose position is established by what is said. All three of these roles can be identified in any one person.

This inhabiting of a multiplicity of social roles was also available to the teachers, but I think that the speaker role of "principal" was mediated by implicit (to the teachers) political and/or status constraints. In other words, because Rhonda's absence left her position as the literacy liaison between Arnold and the university open, the teachers in our study group began to realign themselves in terms of the goals they intended to pursue within the project. Much more was at stake than assessment issues, particularly for Gladys and perhaps for Diane, who had worked closely with Rhonda. At the time this conversation took place, I was not aware of the political undercurrent. In the data I present in this chapter, I think that the politics at Arnold Elementary only play a marginal role during the decision-making process.

Having read and analyzed the transcription of the entire or speech event, I noticed that certain discursive patterns developed in the talk. The speech event began and ended with procedural talk. For example, the meeting started with people seating themselves, wondering where everyone else was, and talking about e-mail communication. The meeting ended with people talking about when we would meet next and what would be on the agenda. Procedural talk is characterized by high involvement and overlapping talk, in which almost everyone participates in getting ready to engage in the day's agenda or constructing a future agenda (Tannen, 1989). Florio-Ruane and de Tar (1995) called what I named *procedural talk* at the beginning of the meeting as *topic finding*. I hesitate to use their term because the agenda for this meeting had already been decided at the previous meeting. The remainder of the speech event embodies one discursive pattern that I call *reframing*, within which *sharing* and *topic shifting* occur subsequently as co-patterns. By reframing I mean that during talk there are transitions in which "the nature and direction of the talk are negotiated" to sustain the conversation (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 22). Furthermore, reframing involves a change in a participant's alignment or footing where the projected self and what is said is at issue (Goffman, 1981). Davies and Harré countered this notion by suggesting that Goffman "takes for granted that alignments exist prior to speaking . . . , rather than that alignments are actual relations jointly produced in the very act of conversing" (p. 55). I tend to agree with Goffman's notion of footing because it seems reasonable to suggest that alignment, footing, or positioning are relational conceptualizations of group talk. By its very nature, *relational* presupposes a priori experience as well as the present, co-constructed experience of the group. As I mentioned before, political undercurrents may influence the co-constructed footing of group members. In addition, reframing is a way to seek consensus or agreement and/or a way to summarize what has been said. In part, topic shifting is implicit in the sense that a topic shift denotes that the previous topic has ended and/or been decided. Of course who shifts topics is a key element in the reframing. For the participants in this study group, reframing also initiated sharing. By sharing I mean that members of the group disclosed past experiences in the classroom as a way to validate the reframing. Consequently, reframing was dependent on the sharing. In the analysis of the conversation, reframing and all of its components are indicative of the decision-making process that took place.

In examining the talk, I found that Ron did most of the reframing and all it entails and that the teachers usually shared after he reframed. Topic shifts were also usually made by Ron, but Gladys and Diane each shifted topics two and three times, respectively. I sometimes used examples from their classrooms to explain to the teachers what Ron asked them to consider, but my participation was minimal. The following table quantifies the

Reframing and Shifting Topics During 1 hour 45 minutes

	Reframes	*Shifts Topics*
Loukia	2	0
Ron	12	4
Diane	0	3
Gladys	0	2

reframing and topic shifting for the entire speech event. I reframed twice at the beginning of the discussion because I was the one who had notes from the previous meeting and who had typed the agenda for this meeting. Appendix A shows the entire transcribed timeline of our meeting.

Although the timeline helped me shape a framework for what was happening during the conversation, one specific segment (Side B, counter numbers 176–338) alerted me to the negotiation and decision-making process. In this 11-minute segment of the discussion, teachers are highly engaged and in conflict with one another and with Ron when he takes up only a part of what Diane shares, logging instead of genres.

Ron	(176)Well, I think it could come up in the, in things like what do, what does this writer assume, you know, about this particular group of people or something like that, yea. (Pause) So, so far in reading, we have uh, response to informational text, and response to literature as common entries. Anything else occur to you? Uh, there's uh, uh . . .	Reframing
Diane	At one time, and I don't know if that's still important, we felt that at least by the end of when they left this school, **that they should be** exposed to all the genres. This is a place for that. And I don't necessarily think all the, I mean, **we can't keep track of all the books.** We did that and I don't ever want to do that again.	Proposition from teacher; backchannel noise of agreement Logging is a marginal proposition
Ron	Laughs.	
Diane	Um, but I would think it would be important because, I, it seems to me that first year we found out you had some gaps and the kids left the school without—	Shares proposition

Gladys	Being exposed.	
Diane	Being exposed to—	
Ron	Did someone here tell me, was it another school I was at, that they had computer programs where kids could enter their books that they were reading?	Responds not to main proposition but to marginal proposition
Gladys	(192)OH! There's hypercard.	
Ron	Yea.	
Laura	Gladys does that.	
Elena	That's your book log, right?	
Gladys	Uhum.	
Ron	Computerized book log. Uh, and I don't know if you wanna get into that but if you did want to get into that—	Proposes shift from genre to log
Diane	*I don't, but go ahead.*	
Laura	Laughs.	Disagrees
Diane	My kids, I have my kids—	
Gladys	Well, now wait a minute. Let me tell you what's going on with that!	Asks for turn
Diane	But I also, some read, you know, a book that takes two minutes so they can write the title down.	

At the beginning of the 11-minute segment, Ron reframed by summarizing what had been decided so far and asked the group to share any new entries for the portfolio. Ron was the established authority figure in the group, yet in reframing he adopted a type of talk that distanced him from his status as the expert on assessment in the group to make sharing all-inclusive. He used in this segment and throughout all meetings a modal verb such as *think*, and in the entire discussion he often *hedged* by using the first-person plural pronoun to be inclusive. "For one thing, hedges and qualifiers introduced in the form of performative modal verbs (I 'wish,' 'think,' 'could,' 'hope,' etc.) become possible, introducing some distance between the figure and its avowal" (Goffman, 1981, p. 148). Ron's footing as he reframed aligns with Harré and Van Langenhove's (1991) assertion that "when a person is engaged in a deliberate self-positioning process this often will imply that they try to achieve specific goals with their act of self-positioning" (p. 401). Ron was looking for something specific when he asked the teachers for more ideas. When Diane replied with a primary proposition of students being exposed to all the genres and the marginal proposition of logging books, Ron immediately took up the marginal proposition because an important element of the portfolio is to show breadth in reading. Gladys, who had been logging books in fourth grade for a long

time, also took up Diane's marginal proposition, and this led Diane to say that she was not interested in computerized logging of books after Ron shifted the topic to logging. Logging books became the primary topic on the floor when Diane's main proposition was dropped. Essentially, Diane gave up her space on a floor that had been co-constructed by the group without her. In doing so, she acknowledged that she was not interested in logging, but that the conversation could go on without her or her primary proposition. In effect, Diane took a turn, but did not have the floor because her primary proposition was not taken up by the group.

Edelsky (1981) defined the notion of *conversational turn* as "an on-record 'speaking' (which may include nonverbal activities) behind which lies an intention to convey a message that is both referential and functional" (p. 403) and *floor* as "the acknowledged what's-going-on within a psychological time/space" (p. 405). Diane's position was that she shared in her turn and did not get the floor and then gave up the floor when asked by Ron if she was interested in computerized logging. The next section of the 11-minute segment includes an intense disagreement between Gladys and Diane concerning their goals for reading. Here Diane attempts to regain her space on the floor by reintroducing the importance of including genres in the assessment project.

Gladys	Yea, hypercard, the problem with it is Shelly had her own program and we couldn't boot it in. So we've asked Linda to order it for the school so it'll go on the server, so that means that everybody in the school can have access to hypercard and then the kid starts his own disk and that disk could move with him right through kindergarten all the way through 5th. Just the same way— (raises her voice and yells this out because of backchannel talk)	Long turn Backchannel consensus]]
Diane	(206)I don't want them spending time typing it all the titles of the books they read. I want them to spend time writing and other things—	]] Overlapping talk]]
Laura	Don't have enough time, no.	]
Gladys	Is this something, ok, but is this something that—	]]
Diane	(interrupts)No, what I think is important, well, I don't, I think it's important that kids read. I think it's important that they have their choice reading and all that. I don't think it's	

	necessarily important that I keep track of all that. What I think is important is keeping track of what I INSTRUCT THEM IN, WHAT I KNOW THEY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO.	Emphatic
Gladys	Yea.	
Diane	(213)I mean, because they write down that they read *Sarah, Plain and Tall,* does not mean they read *Sarah, Plain and Tall.* (Sarcastic)I hope that's what it means, but I happen to know the truth with the a lot of the kids that age what it means, but if I have done x amount of trade books—	}Overlapping talk } } } } } }High intensity
Gladys	Yea.	}
Diane	And I'm in instruction and I know that we've talked about the author's meaning, the way they wrote and all of that, I think that's, might be important.	} } } } }
Gladys	Then, what about—	}
Diane	Not necessarily a list of books.	}
Gladys	Well—	}
Diane	Even then, I don't even think I need to write down all the books.	} }High involvement
Gladys	Ok, I, we may use it for our— *(makes time-out sign, looks around for help).*	} }
Everyone laughs at the tension.		}
Diane	—For historical fiction—I can go into a portfolio—	} }
Gladys	(221)Upper grades, they can do that, they can even do that during silent reading or whatever. How about this? Ah, I think you've done this, and we had space on, I don't know, we had space on our grade cards. You list books kids had read and I've never done it. I just typed it up and it's not listing books kids have read. What I put down are books we have done together or in small group for each quarter of the marking period. I've used that consistently for the last several years. It goes in their permanent record. Why couldn't we flip that into portfolio? And, I mean, and that will—	} } } } }Compromise } } } } } } } } } }

Diane	(230)I guess what I wanted is to make sure they've had all the genre. That's more important to me. Like I take a book that I really want to do some things with it, and uh, (more in a stage whisper), "she read that last year. So, books are like friends, we'll do this book again"—	Back to initial proposition (shift)
Gladys	(233)I'm saying, Diane, we can label it, we can create our own page that would follow, but that could be an entry per year. The genre, the books that have been attended to either in small group or large group or read aloud and separate them—	Compromise
Diane	If I remember correctly, we did that. We did that when Rhonda was here. That was part of that first piece of that study. I still have my copies. There's hundreds of books listed, especially for some of the lower levels where you do someone reading aloud—	
Everyone talks at once.		

In this excerpt, Diane shifted back to the importance of tracking genres and argued with Gladys about what she thought was important in her classroom. This part of the segment shows high involvement, overlapping talk, high intensity, and a lot of backchannel talk (side conversations and movement that are not part of the floor). Diane interrupted Gladys so many times that Gladys was forced to look around the table at the group with an exasperated expression and made a time-out sign. By the end (233), Gladys attempted to reconstruct the floor to include Diane as a participant on the floor. In effect, Gladys did some repair work on the original uptake of Diane's suggestion about genres. Sacks et al. (1974) commented that repair exists for "dealing with turn-taking errors and violations" (p. 723). This is a mechanistic view of repair work in conversations. I would like to suggest that in this segment of talk, in which there is high involvement and high intensity, interruption and turn violations fit the norms of social practice of school meetings for these teachers. I take repair to mean that the participants, principally Gladys, are negotiating agreement where there is intense disagreement. The repair work is a way for the group to make decisions without excluding or keeping the floor from being available to everyone. This view of repair is closely related to Florio-Ruane and de Tar's use of the concept. At this point, Gladys and Diane seemed to enter into an implicit consensus about what is important in their practice.

At the end of the segment, Ron reframed by offering a compromise that accounted for both logging and genres (breadth and depth). By this time Gladys had shifted her position and the topic back to genres instead of logging, and, as stated earlier she and Diane stood firm on the issue of genres. Ron reframed one last time without resolving the logging issue. The following quantifies the number of reframings and topic shifts in the 11-minute segment. I also created a timeline to capture the sequence of discursive moves made by Ron, Gladys, and Diane.

Reframing and Shifting Topics During 11 Minutes

	Reframes	*Shifts Topics*
Loukia	0	0
Ron	4	2
Diane	0	1
Gladys	0	1

11 minute Timeline

Ron	*Diane*	*Ron*	*Diane*	*Ron*	*Ron*	*Gladys*	*Ron*
Reframes (176)	Shares	Shifts (Gladys uptakes)	Shifts (230)	Reframes compromise (261)	Reframes (283)	Shifts (299)	Reframes (338)

To recapitulate what occurred in this segment is to denote what made it different from the rest of the speech event. Ron reframed by summarizing and asking for more ideas. Diane shared the importance of genres, and Ron shifted to uptake the part in her sharing about logging books. Gladys took up the logging by talking about hypercard. Diane entered again by shifting the topic back to genre. Gladys did some repair work at this point (not on timeline), and Ron reframed by suggesting again that breadth was important. Ron reframed again and compromised by suggesting that depth (genres) was also important, but that we should still try to get at breadth (logging). Gladys shifted back to genres in a move to support Diane. Ron reframed one more time, but the issue remained unresolved.

DISCUSSION

What is unique about this segment is that it is an atypical example of the decision-making process that occurred during the entire speech event and even during the three previous meetings. First, two teachers dominated the floor. Second, turns were short and overlapped. Third, there was much

backchannel talk throughout. Fourth, even if Diane and Gladys disagreed with each other, Gladys shifted her position from supporting Ron to that of supporting Diane. Fifth, this was the first time a participant other than Ron or I had shifted the topic. Finally, the discourse can be characterized as intense and involved because the teachers had something at stake. As Goffman (1959) perceptively pointed out, "when the individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have" (p. 276). What Ron had not been aware of before this meeting is that in years past Diane had attempted to have her students log all of their books because all the teachers had been doing so. She found that logging was not productive; she was never sure what her students actually learned or understood or even if they had read the books they logged. To Diane, what mattered most was the instruction that she had control over—what she thought she was teaching. Also one of Arnold Elementary's goals as a professional development school had been to emphasize genres in the curriculum because the students were often unprepared in that area when they reached junior high school. Interestingly enough, Karen had said earlier in the conversation and in the previous meeting that she needed to improve her teaching of the different genres at the fifth-grade level and that the assessment project was a way to do this. In retrospect, it is quite evident, although I did not interview each teacher, that each group member came to the meeting with an agenda based on previous professional and personal experiences. The conflict that arose between logging and genres reflected a series of past experiences that needed to be taken into account.

How were decisions negotiated within this study group? After Ron and I left Arnold Elementary that day, we were pleased with how engaged the whole group had become over the course of the meeting. It was not until I reread over the transcript many times that I started to think of engagement as positively and/or negatively driven. In a sense, the reframing that took place in the speech event centered on finding the right answers for building an archival portfolio. We as researchers attended the meeting with many presuppositions regarding the types of evidence and documentation that were necessary about students' lives in school for the successful implementation of the portfolio. What we did not take into account, at least in this instance, was that Diane had tried to gather that type of evidence, logging books, in the past and had not been successful because it was not instructionally helpful to her or educationally relevant to her students. In Diane's case, sharing was extremely important because she wanted to reinforce her classroom teaching by implementing the most appropriate portfolio possible. In a group of six people with different perspectives and agendas, this was a difficult task. Ron's reframing enforced positive engagement, but the lack of uptake of the primary proposition initiated conflict or negative engagement that resulted in repair work and supportive coalition from

the teachers in the group. In the end, the group moved on to a different topic, and the logging versus genre controversy remained unresolved. In attempting to make decisions, our study group utilized reframing to achieve its goals. Yet because reframing entails a complicated and complex process, decision making proved to be difficult.

Although I based my analysis on 11 minutes of talk, the implications drawn about the decision-making process in a group of researchers and teachers in an intervention study are consequential. First, one could argue that through conflict people are able to verify their own positions regarding certain matters and that conflict is productive. In that sense, CDA is crucial to the understanding of reflexive modes of expression in talk. However, as researchers, and knowing what the normative aspects of portfolios are, we should have done some preliminary work to find out what had worked for the Arnold Elementary teachers in the past and what would not be constructive for them before going into this meeting. In other words, more ethnographic fieldwork might have provided insight during this particular meeting. Taking account of the school culture and teachers' prior experiences with assessment, standards, and evidence could have helped us negotiate through positive instead of negative engagement. Second, this short segment effectively illustrates the difficulty of listening and hearing accurately when high involvement and overlapping talk occur. Is it possible for a study group to know what its members are feeling and saying in that situated moment? Diane found that the floor did not belong to her after her initial sharing, but she argued her way onto it by giving an autobiographical account of past experiences. This instigated Gladys' shift of perspective, and a new floor was co-constructed. Ron had to make his way to it. Perhaps all of this floor construction suggests that conversations are developed through co-construction, but I would like to argue that we must become better listeners and customize our research knowledge to individual schools and individual teachers. In the same vein, teachers should help in the customization process by being more open and confident about their experiences. As Fairclough (2001) pointed out, "social actors within any practice produce representations of other practices, as well as ('reflexive') representations of their own practice, in the course of their activity within the practice" (p. 2). For instance, some teachers have been using alternative assessment measures for years, but just never called it "alternative assessment" or "portfolio." To assume that researchers can just hold meetings in a *tabula rasa* setting is far too presumptuous. Of course Ron and I did not do that, but we could have been better listeners and could have avoided those uncertain and uncomfortable moments. Finally, I think positive engagement means that power and authority in any one person are not driving the decision-making process. As I stated earlier, Ron was explicitly inclusive in his discourse throughout the meeting although he was the es-

tablished authority. Ironically, perhaps this made for easier eruption of conflict. In any event, when teachers did not agree with Ron's direction, they disagreed, took the floor, and even formed support structures among themselves. Thus, power was distributed easily among the group because Ron's reframing actions from the beginning (and in previous meetings) allowed for that possibility.

Following this analysis, I am left with some questions. I wonder how far one can extend implications drawn from CDA across phenomena such as the intricate world of researcher–teacher collaboration during the research process. I argued that researchers and teachers can learn from an 11-minute segment, but to what end? Is it possible to say more about how researchers and teachers across school sites and intervention studies can learn from this analysis? As I noted earlier, the relationship between discourse and social practice is a dialectical one, and CDA both transforms the phenomenon studied and privileges the actions and individuals whose social practices are meant to transform the world around them. The case of this study group shows that, "we need a way of describing practice as production . . . inflected with value" (Hanks, 1996, p. 13). The study of talk, the activity in which it is embedded, and the value(s) ascribed to it is by no means an easy task. A critically minded discourse analysis in conjunction with ethnography begins to help us understand how to get at meaning produced by our everyday practices in education. As a researcher and educator, one of my goals is to find patterns of communication that have relevance for those people and situations that I study.

Reflection and Action

Discourse Analysis Activity

These two activities, adapted from the work of Florio-Ruane (1996), are stages among many of the analysis of discourse. My students and I use these activities in combination with others to make sense of talk and interaction in a variety of settings.

Cataloguing and Analyzing Taped Discourse Data

1. Inventory all your data, including tapes (video/audio), field notes, interview transcripts, work samples, and so on.

2. Identify one complete activity for which you have taped data (e.g., whole lesson, meeting). Listen to/view the taped activity, stopping as often as necessary to make a running catalogue of its contents according to counter number on the tape recorder (or real-time readout). (Note in the catalogue the counter numbers for parts of the tape that stand out to

you—i.e., where something happens, where things change, where there seems to be discomfort, etc. Briefly note contents of the tape at these points, trying to stick with descriptions of speech and related behaviors rather than making interpretations of their meaning or judgments of their quality.)

3. Listen to/view that segment of tape once without stopping. Summarize your impressions of the interactional behaviors recorded in this segment of tape. These behaviors may include speech, intonation, prosody, movement, use of space, and so on. Initial questions you might ask include: What is going on? Who are the participants? What is being done and said? To whom? By whom?

4. As you review the tapes and your completed catalogue, make a preliminary analysis in terms of your research questions. Pay special attention to questions such as the following:

   a. Based on the patterns you are noticing in the data as well as information from the readings and your knowledge of the wider social context of these data, what analytic categories do you see as potentially useful in making sense of the discourse data?
   b. How have your initial questions and impressions changed as you catalogued the tape?
   c. How might someone else (e.g., participant or researcher with different questions) catalogue the tape differently?
   d. What parts of the tape would you like to revisit for a closer look and why?

5. Link this initial analysis to the one or two main research questions with which you started and revise those questions as appropriate. List several more focused questions about language, social life, and teaching/learning you would like to answer by analyzing this segment of tape.

Selecting, Transcribing, and Analyzing a Segment of Conversation From Your Data Set

1. Identify one focused research question addressable by analysis of discourse and related to the "big questions" motivating your research.

2. Revisit the catalogued round of activity you identified and develop a timeline in which you attempt to note transitions between various phases of the activity/talk (speech events) and the transitions between them.

3. Based on this timeline, locate one or several segments for transcription and close analysis. Explain why you chose this segment(s) and how it relates to the questions about discourse that you are attempting to address.

4. Review the segment repeatedly being careful to start the tape before the segment begins and play it more until after the segment ends (i.e., pay attention to transitions).

5. Transcribe the talk in the segment(s). (If you are using videotape, in addition to the transcript you may want also to find ways of documenting the use of space, gaze, posture, and movements of participants.)

6. In making the transcript, think about the conventions you would like to use. At a minimum, you should note as best you can who is speaking and show when speech is overlapping. In addition, depending on your data and the analysis you craft, you may also want to note pauses, rising or falling intonation, and so on.

7. Use constructs from your reading of theory to help you "read the transcript closely"—turn taking, form–function relationships, strategies for conversational involvement.

8. Write a timeline (identifying clearly the segment you are analyzing and its relation to other parts of the round of activity you catalogued).

9. Include the transcript (with conventions explained) and other documentation you may have made to help you with your analysis (e.g., charts or diagrams).

10. Show and explain your work-in-progress to interested colleagues for feedback.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF ENTIRE CONVERSATION—1 HOUR AND 45 MINUTES

Side A of Audiotape

(4) Preliminary talk and procedure talk
(110) Framing of meeting's business (Loukia)
(162) Long turns: Frames meeting (Ron)
  -Mitigating and exercising authority
  -use of 1st person plural
(139) Teacher sharing
(207) Framing (Loukia)
  -teachers share
(238) Decision-making process starts (Ron)
  -teachers share
  -long turns as Ron redirects
(279) Teachers share (Diane)
  -Loukia contextualizes with observation from Diane's classroom
  -Ron reframes
(345) Teacher solidarity
(455) Ron reframes
  -teachers share
(427) Suggestion from Loukia
  -no take-up
  -Ron shifts topic
(482) Diane clarifies topical shift for all the teachers
  -Ron reframes and summarizes
(522) Topical shift (Gladys)
  -takes up Loukia's suggestion
  -teachers share
(550) Ron reframes and adds Loukia's suggestion
  -Gladys & Loukia share

(605) Ron reframes and makes topical shift
(632) Teachers share
(654) Ron frames consensus
-teachers share off-topic
(683) Loukia on topic with classroom example

Side B of Audiotape

(10) Ron reframes
(17) Teachers share
(55) Teacher solidarity—disagreement w/Ron's suggestion
(128) Decision made (Gladys)
-Ron reframes
(143) Loukia contextualizes Ron's frame
(176) Ron reframes
-Diane shares about genres
-Ron shifts topic to logs
-Gladys takes up logs
-Diane does not agree
-Gladys compromises
(230) Diane shifts back to genre
-teachers share and focus on genre
(261) Ron reframes logging—long turn
(283) Ron reframes genre
(299) Gladys shifts topic and disagrees with logging—long turn
(338) Ron reframes and makes topic shift
-teachers share
(376) Ron ready to summarize
-Diane shifts topic and reframes
-teachers share
(422) Ron reframes w/Diane's suggestion—topic shift
(437) Postmeeting procedure talk—Peter is present

Published in:

An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education. Edited by Rebecca Rogers. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers: Mahwah, New Jersey & London, 2004. Pages 97–116.

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