The discourse of drama supporting literacy learning in an early years classroom

Annette Harden

Education Queensland

ABSTRACT

This article describes the discourse occurring during a guided drama event, with embedded literacy teaching, in an early years classroom. In this Preparatory school classroom, in 2007, dramatic pedagogies were privileged in the teaching of literacy across a year of learning, and a longitudinal research case study examined the effects of this approach. A discourse analysis of three film transcriptions from the data was conducted as part of the study, one of which is discussed here. The findings were that the teacher used the language of the personal and particular, with little explanation, generalisation, or questions eliciting student knowledge. Language was supported with action and modelled the speculative mode of investigation of the scientist, and the literate practice of recording single-word data. Dramatic features such as mood, pace, tension and the mantle of the expert supported the learning focus. Children's responses included active, engaged voices, the adoption of the mantle of the hypothesising, literate scientist, and the confident writing of words that had never been attempted out of role. Follow-up play sustained the teacher's oral and literacy-linked model and the students' self-efficacy as users of the alphabet.

Introduction

In 2007, a transition class was introduced across Queensland schools, removing the optional preschool year and bringing the age of school entry to 5 by the end of June. In that first year, the children attending were a half-cohort, aged generally between 4 years 7 months and 5 years 1 month at school entry. They were children who would previously have enrolled in preschool, but were now tackling a curriculum that, although still rich in play, put higher literacy and numeracy demands on its participants than the preschool curriculum. Teachers of the new class were encouraged, in their professional development sessions and the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006), to employ an inquiry-based pedagogical approach. As a participating teacher and, at the same time, a post-graduate student undertaking a master's degree in drama education, I determined to employ dramatic pedagogies

in my approach, embedding inquiry into these dramatic events. I would support the experiential learning with explicit teaching sessions in alphabetic skills, including a synthetic phonics program.

The two research questions that focused the PhD study of the year of learning were:

- What happens to young children's writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?
- What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?

The analysis of the discourse occurring during drama events was embedded in a self-study of my emergence as a drama /early years literacy teacher. The self-study was one of five case studies (the other four were case studies of children's literacy progress in relation to the pedagogy). These five studies formed what Stake (2005)

calls a 'quintain': several case studies that illumine the whole multi-case. The discourse analysis provided valuable findings in relation to my second research question: drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy. I hoped from the analysis to be able to define the dynamic operating in the dramatic context that led to such enthusiastic, confident and sustained literacy activity among the children. Supplementing discourse analysis was the identification of elements of drama present in the situation, and an examination of the artefacts that children produced during and after the drama events, which I analysed through a socio-semiotic lens.

The aim of this article is to describe the pedagogical focus of one of the drama events I studied in depth, the oral and literary responses of the children that ensued, and the analysis of the dialogue that I made using discourse analysis tools, supplemented with the identification of dramatic features, and a brief examination of the writing behaviours in and after the event. The findings from this analysis and the discussion of the effects on children's oral and literary behaviour will potentially provide some insights into the possibilities of the dramatic approach in engaging children with the purposes and practices of literacy users. A fuller examination of the changes in children's literacy activity through the course of the year of dramatic pedagogy is dealt with in articles describing the children's cases studies.

Background research and theory

Discourse analysis comes from the field of functional linguistics research, particularly the theory and literature of Halliday (1973, 1978, 2004). Halliday (2004) defined children's language in terms of emerging modes of use or function, rather than Piagetian stages of cognition. He described the child as 'a semiotic being who is learning how to mean' (p. 26). He outlined a number of functions of language including interactional, informative, expository, instrumental, imaginative, personal-heuristic and regulatory. Christie (2005), another theorist who worked within the functional linguistics field, believed that, as children progress into literacy, one of the most important tasks is the control of written language as a distinct mode of expression. An understanding of this progression shaped the systematic and purposeful introduction of facets of literacy in my drama events. Until I began my first discourse analysis, however, I was not aware of the more intuitive aspects of my teacher behaviours in the discourse that ensued in drama events. Even the dynamics of drama as an art form had to be experienced, revisited in video and transcription, and reflected on in order to be made explicit in my pedagogy.

While the teaching/learning discourse of the classroom has been the focus of some studies, research into the discourse of the early childhood classroom has been sparse, as has been research into the discourse of drama sessions. Christie surveyed the language of teachers across all ages of schooling, including early childhood. I took, as my analysis model, Christie's (2002) examination of the discourse of teachers in the early childhood context of a 'show and tell' session. Early childhood teachers, she claimed, 'weakly frame learning' because they use many implicit, oblique forms of speech, with little explanation, in contrast to teachers of older children, who explicitly teach the forms and structures of particular texts and domains of learning. She observed early childhood teachers' use of the inclusive 'we' to mask a directive approach and to position children as participants with the teacher's purposes. She traced, through an examination of thematic progression in classroom dialogue, the dominance of the adult's themes and the passive, submissive responses of students. She also highlighted, as earlier analysis of educational discourse had done (Coulthard, 1985, Coulthard & Montgomery, 1981), the forms of questions teachers use. Most, in the authoritative stance common in the classroom, use a structure that includes interrogation of knowledge by the teacher, response by the child, and evaluation by the teacher (the IRE model of questioning). Christie advocated more open-ended questioning, as did Perrott (1988), and Cazden (1988). Christie (2002) developed descriptors and categories to analyse the discourse of the classroom, including her concept of regulative and instructional registers, expressing the teacher's purposes. 'Regulative' register was concerned with overall goals, while 'instructional' register related to the particular content being taught (Christie, 2002). Within each register, she described 'metafunctions', or purposes for language, including the interpersonal, ideational and textual. The interpersonal metafunction involves issues of mood, mode and person reflecting the status and relationships between the teacher and her students. The textual metafunction deals with the ways in which themes are introduced and carried forward by participants, exercising their relative power and responsibility in the learning situation. Christie (2002) found regulation of behaviour to be high, though often masked in inclusive language, while learning goals were expressed through approval of children's choices within the 'show and tell' session, rather than explicit explanation of what was expected.

Cheyne and Terulli's (1999) also developed descriptors of classroom teacher/child classroom dialogue reflecting relationships among participants. These were termed Magistral, Socratic and Menippean. Dialogue

may follow the manner of Socrates, who encouraged equality of status in his discussions, provoking thought and expression. Alternatively, teachers may assume the directive, high-status approach of the Magistrate, a mode typical of lecture-style teaching. The third style, Menippean dialogue, occurs when the student attempts to question the status of the teacher and to subvert the pedagogical or regulative intent (Cheyne & Terulli, 1999). Dramatic pedagogies typically make use of a Socratic style.

Kress (1994, 1997) took a socio-semiotic lens when he examined children's emerging literacy. He saw all literate activity as the making and interpreting of meaning, using signs, symbols and icons. Because children use whatever materials come to hand, Kress (1997) believed that they might equally use three-dimensional objects, drawings or pieces of writing as significant tools to make meaning. As children progressed into schooling, Kress (1997) observed children still drawing and constructing objects, then beginning to represent through drawing a static 'tableaux of images which prompt the telling of an imagined story' (p. 144). Once exposed to the alphabetic symbols they moved on to drawing sounds as lettered representations, followed by narrative sequencing of events in time using a conceptual form (the sentence), and ultimately, to the writing of longer texts. Kress explored other semiotic features of children's writing, particularly the change in orientation from static image, in drawings, to chronological narrative. He saw evidence of progression from present to past tense and organisation of text in the space. An emerging understanding of this progression informed my examination of children's literate responses.

Besides discourse and semiotic analysis studies, drama research connected with learning and, in particular, literacy learning assisted my understanding of the dynamics of the drama event. The concepts of 'play worlds', 'mantle of the expert' and 'writing in role' were particularly important, as were drama features such as tension, role identity, status, pace, voice and action.

The research of Lindqvist (1995), and her concept of a 'playworld' in which children share themes and imaginary places, draws on the theory of Vygotsky (1978). Lindqvist suggested that in shared dramatic worlds children also participate in common 'zones of proximal development' or ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as the zone in which a teacher introduced new learning to a child at a level just beyond their cognitive development, but not beyond their comprehension, when scaffolded. Guided drama situations, employing strategies to build learning, also make use of the concept of a *shared* zone of proximal development in a common play world, where peers

as well as teachers can build on the skill and understanding demonstrated by participating children. As drama teachers and early childhood teachers become co-players in these worlds, they extend the language and thinking of young children at higher levels than the concrete and particular. They support children within the ZPD until they can use the higher level of thinking and learning independently (Gredler & Shields, 2008). Children carry these shared play worlds from structured drama events on into contingent dramatic play episodes, continuing the possibilities for practicing and innovating on learning.

Within the sphere of drama education, the concept of 'the mantle of the expert', coined by Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) defines a dynamic of the pedagogy that was actively used in the fossil drama event under investigation. Heathcote deliberately positioned children as a group of experts working together to solve an ethical dilemma in some social sphere. She, as the teacher, took a lower status role. As children saw themselves as competent participants, with a significant issue at stake, they were motivated to inquire deeply into the knowledge required of 'the expert'. Drama educators have applied Heathcote's model of 'the mantle of the expert' to many guided or 'process' drama situations. As an emerging drama teacher with an early childhood background, I was discovering the power of this strategy in working with young children, who did not need to be invited to share the fiction of a drama, but slip fluidly into pretend spaces in drama events just as they do in their dramatic play. In role as powerful adults, they stand 'six feet taller' than in the real world (Vygotsky, 1978).

Drama research with children writing in role has several precedents, though none with children as young as my cohort. The flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) from literary action modelled and imitated in dramatic contexts, to enthusiastic and competent writing within and after the event, had occurred in the research projects described by Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Cremin, Goouch, Blakemore, Goff and Macdonald (2006), and Marino (2012), generally with students who could write sentences and longer texts. In my analysis, I explored the quality of the engagement with drama and literacy of very young children with only experimental alphabetic skills.

My pedagogical enquiry within the discourse of the drama event, 'The fossil find', related to my regulative purposes within the drama: to engage children with the relevance of writing labels as an aspect of the behaviours of scientists. My questions reflected what I expected to find, but Christie's model and my growing understanding of dramatic elements and

strategies, uncovered much more. I asked: Were the children engaged with my language as well as my actions? Was cognition and memory supported with visual cues and action? How effectively was the scientific investigative process presented and understood? Was learning 'framed weakly', as Christie contended, or was there evidence in the dialogue that significant elements of cultural knowledge and literate practice were being modelled, supported, applied and extended? Was there evidence from the children's behaviour in response to my modelling, that engagement reflected understanding? Were they active participants or passive recipients of learning?

Using Christie's model, I categorised the dialogue under several interpersonal modes of address. I tallied frequency of interrogation, declarative, imperative, affirmative and contradictory statements and explanations. Within the textual function she had defined, I looked for evidence of the inclusive 'we' and 'let's'. I tracked the thematic progressions between teacher and students that Christie had related to power and status. I examined instances of implicit modelling of literate behaviours and the occasional focused moments of explicit teaching within or out of role. Beyond her model I looked for dramatic features such as tension, pace, the adoption of the mantle of expertise, and identification with roles and the status assumed in role. The following paragraphs elaborate on the teaching focus, the description of what ensued including the responses of the children, the analysis of the discourse, and a brief analysis of the writing. From these, I synthesised some findings that took me much further than my original questions, and which, I believe, are significant for educators in early childhood.

The fossil find, May 2007

Focus
The focus of the drama event was to develop the oral and literate activity of children in role as palaeontologists discovering, observing, recording and speculating about fossil bones at a 'dig'. Some children took turns to be the fossils, while others, armed with clipboards, pencils and brushes took on the role of the scientists. The connections to prior learning and curricula were three-fold: the children's interest in dinosaurs, the curriculum purpose of investigating scientific phenomena and developing scientific modes of thought, action and expression, the phonemic exploration of the letter 'd' (for 'dinosaurs'), and most particularly, the fashioning of useful words for labels, applying their phonetic knowledge. (Children by now had the first 15 most useful letters/sounds in their repertoire.) I

would model this encoding practice in role, with the expectation that children would write alphabetically as recording scientists, and then use this competence in their own play.

Description of the event and oral and written responses
The very brief and truncated transcript below reveals a little of the pedagogy in action and the responses that emerged during and as a result of the drama event:

> *Michael, assertively:* It must be killed by a volcano. It must be killed by a volcano.
> *Self:* Uhu. Why, did you see some ash down there?
> *Michael:* Yes.
> *Self:* Okay. So write that down, scientist Michael found ash, so write that down, ash, 'a-sh', from a volcano.

Michael watches me as I write it on my clipboard.

> *Peter:* A-sh.

I also began to describe and hypothesise tentatively about my discoveries:

> *Self, in tentative tone:* Must have been from a volcano. Might draw a volcano.

I draw one as I speak.

> *Michael, still assertive:* Must have been caused by a volcano.

But his tone changes:

> *Michael, speculatively:* It must be killed by one, another one of the other dinosaurs, do you think?

And a little further on:
Someone is slowly sounding out 'T – r-e-x.'

> *Michael, slowly, scratching his head:* I think he hasn't got teeth.
> *Self, still writing:* No teeth. Must be a pteranadon.

Almost all the palaeontologists wrote labels on their drawings while in role, thoughtfully imitating my model and taking up cues from my 'think-aloud' sounding-out of words such as 't-rex' and 'tyrannosaurus'.

Dramatic play, as palaeontologists and museum curators, continued well into the following week, and included the writing of several signs. Kelly's 'in the moment' sample depicts a flying dinosaur with a beak and mentions the 'ash' found at the site:

James was one of the four children whose literacy story I examined in detail. He had begun the year with a great interest in natural science, and extreme reticence as a drama participant. After the first week and
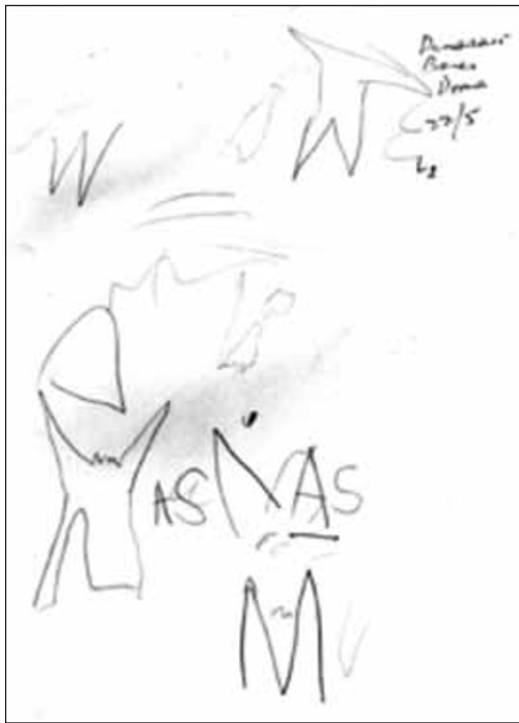
Figure 1. Kelly's notes in role

Figure 2. James' notes in role as a scientist

certainly by May, he was fully engaged with drama and puppetry, and excited by opportunities to use his emerging skills as a writer. As a palaeontologist he fully identified with the role. He drew and described pteranadon remains in ash, with recognisable symbols for 'pteranadon' and 'ash'. The first word had more than one syllable to grapple with, and he was aware of and engaged with this in his encoding of the word.

He took the literacy and the scientific role from the drama into dramatic play with palaeontologist

note-taking, which read '*no ash*' alongside a footprint. His note – taking ability here flowed fluidly from an image with a label to a longer comment beside an icon. He continued to experiment with writing multi-syllabic dinosaur names such as 'triceratops'. In attempting that word he was attentive to three syllables and his sign was complete without a visual image.

Figure 3. James sounding out 'triceratops'.

His skills in and out of role supported Martin (another of my four case study children), who was James's close companion in play and drama. James mentored Martin in literacy, while Martin encouraged James to move, act and speak during drama events. James scribed part of 'T-rex' for Martin during that drama. James then helped build the museum to house the bones they had uncovered earlier. He and Martin continued the museum theme for a few days, with James making the sign, sounding out the complex word, 'museum' which Martin copied. Martin, at this stage of the year, had advanced from scribble writing and the use of repeated 'o' and 'i' for all words, to adding letters from his own name, then copying the significant words others produced, and occasionally attempting a scaffolded consonant/vowel/consonant word of his own. Making single-word signs and labels was literacy activity within the zone of proximal development of the cohort. Hence, all were comfortable taking the activity beyond the drama event itself. James's museum sign was illustrated with a snake and another message, which may be a warning of some kind. Warnings and prohibitions came easily to children as messages for signs, familiar from their early oral language of socialisation and often used in the guided drama and puppetry.

Figure 4. The museum sign.

Peter went further in his dramatic play, requesting a 'dinosaur play' with me directing, involving the eruption

of a volcano and the discovery of toy dinosaurs under 'ash'. The theme was clearly understood and developed over and over again with model dinosaurs.

All of the observations above were available in my reflective journal, the collected artefacts and the reviewing of the video evidence. Dramatically, I was able to observe a drop in tension complicated by the donning of white coats and collection of brushes and clipboards, and the eventual strong arousal and excitement of 'discovering' the bones of their peers, who were enjoying being tickled with the brushes, and obligingly presented wings, teeth and claws.

An analysis of the interpersonal and textual features of the language of the transcription itself revealed more.

Analysis of the discourse

Interpersonal features

Within the interpersonal metafunction there were *twenty-seven* declarative statements over the course of the whole drama transcript from children to the team generally or to myself, relating their discoveries. There were eight other exchanges in which declarations were made by the team members in response to leading questions from the chief, facilitating the movement of the improvisation. This compared to twenty-eight declaratives of my own, all speculative. This mode of speculative statement and question, modelled by myself as a researching scientist, transferred to the responses of participants as well. Michael, for instance, could add 'do you think' to his assertion: 'It must be killed by another one of the other dinosaurs, do you think?' and 'I wonder what this died of?' Later he said, 'I want to see those teeth. I think he hasn't got teeth'. Thoughtful action was suggested by scratching his head and speaking slowly, and the 'must be' had a tentative rise in intonation. Peter commented on a 'short *sort* of bone …' as well, a comment with a tentative mood. Contradictions had not occurred in drama sessions before, only affirmations from teacher and students. Contradictions perhaps arose out of the strong connection Michael and Peter had with the palaeontologist role and the knowledge they had to back up their convictions. They reflected as well the relative status of the investigating team and the chief. Given the speculative nature of my assertions, my team felt empowered to argue with one another and with me even though, as chief, I had a higher status role.

There were no explanatory teacher monologues. As in the first drama event I analysed, practices were rarely explained; they were modelled, demonstrated and imitated. The interrogations were open-ended, not the 'interrogation-response-evaluation' (IRE) model

Christie (2002) had noted in much of teacher discourse. Children made use of imperatives, using my model of 'Let's …', 'just' and 'look'. These linguistic elements seemed to reflect the strong sense of agency developing among the children, as equal players with me in their scientific dialogue and activity. This was further illustrated in the analysis of textual features.

The presence of imperatives was high compared to the two other drama events surveyed. They were mostly within my high-status role as chief, directing proceedings at the beginning. Regulation of behaviour was implicit, through fast-pacing the action and the frequent discovery of new fossils, which kept interest high. The typical early childhood teaching model of ignoring aberrant behaviours or addressing them obliquely could be observed in the regulation of one participant, who grew bored with his passive role as a fossil.

Textual features

Within the textual metafunction I tracked the production of themes by myself and the students. Themes initiated by 'self as chief' led the improvisation seven times at the commencement of action, and twenty-seven times as a feature of the speculative discoveries. Among these, children themselves provided seventeen of what Christie (2002) called 'topical' themes, some stimulated by leading questions, more offered spontaneously. Their contributions actively led and developed the improvisation.

In addition, the early childhood teacher stance, continually scaffolding language with action, was important, as it had been in every key event. Dialogue maintained, reflected and sustained the action and the 'think aloud' modelling during discovery. Following Vygotsky's model of emerging cognition, as the children's cognition and concept-formation moved slowly from the perceptual and concrete toward the verbal and abstract, they were being scaffolded in their cognitive zone with many concrete examples and models of speculative language, until they demonstrated this language themselves.

The emergence of writing in-role

Mediating the opportunity and expectation for children to become capable scientists included assuming their capability as literate as well as investigating and hypothesising adults. These five-year-olds confidently accepted the 'mantle of the expert' (Heathcote in Heathcote & Bolton,) and believed with me that they could hypothesise and write. This was true even for children such as Martin who had not sounded out a word independently before. It appeared that, because

the children in play stood 'six feet tall(er)' (Vygotsky, 1978) than in real life, they could assume the status of the adults they were emulating, and identify with their actions. Because the expectations of the writing tasks involved were within their zone of proximal development, they could act on them immediately and continue to make labels and dinosaur names in their own play. For James, with more skill with syllables, this involved challenging himself with 'triceratops' and other longer names, in the classroom play area, and in his 'office' at home. He attempted 'Here is a coelphisi' a month later, by which time he could make a whole sentence statement to label his static image.

Summary of findings within the discourse analysis

Initially the findings reflected my questions and my experience through the previous four months of confident engagement and sustained use of models in play.

- Instruction was modelled implicitly and experientially, not given through typical closed question, response and teacher evaluation, or through explanation.

- Literate practice modelled in the drama flowed on into dramatic play, with children continuing to exhibit, in dialogue and action, the sense of competence, the modelled teacher behaviours with their peers, and the practice of skills that were clearly valued in their play.

- Regulation was generally implicit and oblique, using pacing and positive attention rather than direct confrontation of action outside the frame of the drama. Imperatives were connected to dramatic role and action rather than aberrant behaviour.

Other findings clarified particular features of the dramatic, interactive learning situation and the significant differences between the declaratives of early childhood pedagogy and those of formal teaching:

- Students who were in role as scientists exercised voice and agency as active contributors to the action and dialogue, questioning, arguing, making declarations of discovery and knowledge consistently and frequently during the drama event. Those who were the passive fossils were mostly engaged and contributed occasional comment. One rejected the passive role.
- The modelled oral language of scientific investigation was taken up and used competently by participating 'scientists'.
- Instruction was related to action, and *not often generalised or categorised*. Where explanations

were given they were connected to the *particular and personal*. There was further evidence of this in both the initial and later drama event transcriptions.

Explicitly modelled literacy instruction was provided at the level of children's needs and learning, *in the dramatic moments* of discovery when every child was attentive to my modelling. Dramatic tension focused the teaching moment. The mantle of the expert buoyed confidence to proceed with encoding skills just within their reach. Every child had access to this model and wrote alphabetic symbols on their labels.

Discussion

Limitations of the findings

This analysis dealt with a small sample of discourse from one drama event in a classroom in a high socio-economic social context. Not all experiences that year were as idyllic, nor would they be, in other early childhood contexts. Children do not focus and participate enthusiastically all the time, and some already have concepts of themselves as incompetent writers and readers, or cautious speakers, that even the mantle of the expert may not dispel. Menippean participants may wreck even the best-thought-out and most engaging drama plan, or disengage once the act of writing begins. This occurred in my first drama, when some of the children showed no interest in literacy activity even though they were engaged by the presence of the puppets, and others were affronted at the thought of active participation and withdrew to the fringe. Many more examples of imperative teacher language, and far less student participation, might occur under different circumstances, particularly in large groups, or across cultural and language barriers. Nevertheless, the results from the analysis of this isolated drama event are significant for several reasons, not least being the need for more research into the discourse of effective early childhood pedagogy in relation to children's literacy.

Implications of the findings

Further analysis of teacher discourse

Research into early childhood teacher discourse is sparse. My own tentative explorations here demonstrated the language of the implicit, personal and particular that characterised my experiential drama teaching. The differences between this and primary school discourse reflect the growing capacity of children to comprehend generalisations, explanations and interrogations of knowledge. Adults may begin their teaching and interaction with young children

unaware of these distinct differences, and the cognitive assumptions their discourse makes. Clarifying differences between early childhood and primary 'teacher talk' through further analysis of teacher discourse in other social contexts could assist beginning teachers in communicating with young children, in understanding their thinking and expression, and in supporting the language of the children as they move toward the cognitively more demanding discourse of the primary school classroom. The findings from this area of the study may support researchers and educators generally in understanding the linguistic adaptations many children have to make as they enter the classroom and grapple with the mode of teacher talk and written discourse. Discourse analysis of contexts of direct instruction of young children or of investigations in the real world may provide a basis for comparison of different approaches, as they demonstrate children's engagement, voice, agency, understanding and application of learning.

Supporting young writers

The discourse analysis of the fossil drama demonstrated how teacher-in-role in a guided drama, and as a user of the cultural capital of literacy can support children's oral language and mediate and model writing opportunities and skills, skills that these young children were able to take up immediately within the dramatic situation because they had an authentic play purpose. When Heathcote's 'mantle of the expert', bestowed on children during dramatic dialogue, empowered them to take responsible, literate roles as recorders of significant discoveries, they could continue these roles in their play museum and at home in their own 'offices'. Young children in role as competent and literate adults could exercise agency and voice as thinkers and recorders, whether arguing over the relative appearance of a fossil's beak or teeth, or scribing 't-rex' for a peer.

Teachers can support children in high-stakes dramatic situations as they grapple with the mechanical tasks of writing. Learning in a dramatic context in early childhood may be strongly supported, not weakly framed as Christie (2002) noted, even when it does not include typical modes of teacher explanation, generalisation or IRE questioning.

Cross-cultural applications

Some students come into Prep or Foundation classes without English language or models of school behaviour. My discourse analysis and pedagogical model illustrate the potential for student oral language development and embedded literacy modelling and imitation in a context where action illuminates speech, emotion fuels focus, and the particular and relational connect with children's past experiences at home and early care situations. The broader contexts of indigenous settings, or those where English is a second language, may be sites for further applications of the pedagogy and for discourse analysis as well, demonstrating the effectiveness or otherwise of dramatic interaction and scaffolded experiential literacy learning.

References

Cazden, C. (1988). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cheyne, J. & Terulli, D. (1999). Dialogue, difference and voice in the zone of proximal development. *Theory & Psychology*, 9, 5–28.

Christie, F. (2002). *Classroom discourse analysis: A functional perspective.* London, New York: Continuum.

Christie, F. (2005). *Language education in the primary years.* UNSW Press.

Coulthard, M. (1985). *An introduction to discourse analysis* (New Edition). London & New York: Longman.

Coulthard, M. & Montgomery, M. (1981). *Studies in discourse analysis.* London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Cremin, T., Goouch, K., Blakemore, L., Goff, E. & Macdonald, R. (2006). Connecting drama and writing: Seizing the moment to write. *Research in Drama Education*, *11* (3), 273–291.

Crumpler, T. & Schneider, J. (2002). Writing with their whole being: A cross study analysis of children' writing from five classrooms using process drama. *Research in Drama Education, 7* (1), 61–79.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* London: Harper Perennial.

Gredler, M. & Shields, C. (2008). *Vygotsky's legacy: A foundation for research and practice.* New York, London: The Guilford Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1973). *Language as a social semiotic.* London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning.* University Park Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (2004). Appendix: The Functional Basis of Language. Class, codes, and control. In B. Bernstein (Ed.) *Class, codes and control: Vol II: Applied studies towards a sociology of language. (*pp. 343–366). New York: Routledge.

Heathcote, D. & Bolton, G. (1995). *Drama for learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert approach to education.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kress, (1994). *Learning to write* (2nd ed.). London & New York: Routledge.

Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy.* London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Lindqvist, G. (2001). When small children play: How adults dramatise and children create meaning, *Early Years*, *21* (1), 7–14.

Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools.* Uppsala Studies in Education, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Uppsala University.

Marino, S. (2012). *'It's easy to imagine … because you've been there!' – A case study of drama as a pedagogy for writing in one New Zealand classroom.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Perrott, C. (1988). *Classroom talk and pupil learning: Guidelines for educators.* Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers.

Queensland Studies Authority (2006). *Early years curriculum guidelines.* Queensland Government.

Stake, R. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Annette Harden is an early childhood teacher and gifted and talented co-ordinator, heavily involved in the arts and literacy curricula at St Bernard State School, Mt Tamborine, Q 4271. (ph: (07) 5545 7666, anhar1@eq.edu.au). She currently participates in and mentors teachers in projects illuminating the Australian curriculum through dramatic pedagogies in early years classrooms. She has taught in Indigenous situations in northern Queensland and Papua New Guinea, and schools in south-east Queensland.