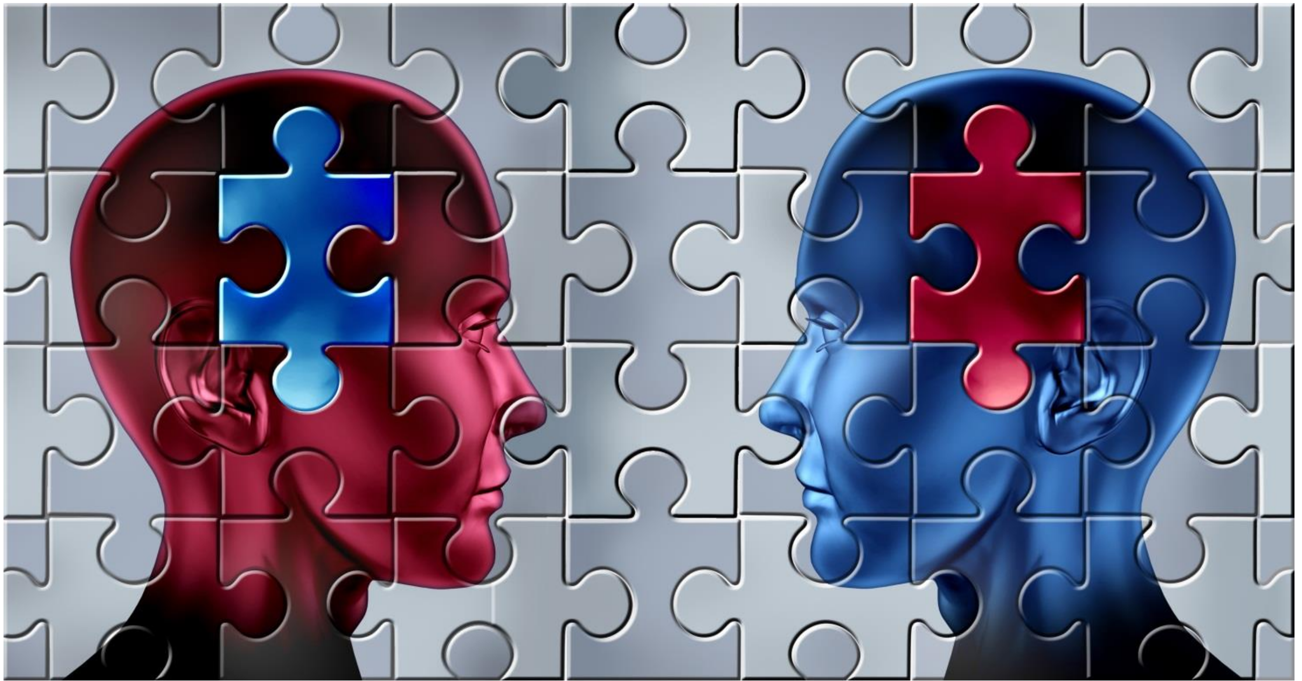

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Talking drama into being: types of talk in the drama classroom

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Abstract

This paper explores the structure of talk in drama classrooms, particularly the ways students and teachers use different kinds of talk to achieve their classroom work and construct shared moral reasoning as the basis of their practical educational activities. The data and discussion presented here bring together the curricular setting of educational drama and the methodological setting of conversation analysis and membership categorisation analysis. The transcripts and analyses emerged from a larger study that sought to explore the particular ways students interacted within process drama lessons dealing with future life prospects and pathways. The identification of three distinct kinds of talk has significance for education scholars, teacher-educators and teacher-practitioners as it has the potential to enable a more detailed awareness of the structure of classroom practice and the particular ways students engage with significant ideas in classroom settings.

Keywords

Conversation analysis, membership categorisation analysis, classroom talk, drama education

Introduction

Macbeth has suggested that "There is…in the respecification of familiar affairs as their situated assemblage, the promise that we will come to know them differently" (Macbeth, 1996: 281). This paper reports on the types of talk-in-interaction found in the 'familiar affairs' of drama classrooms in high schools. To do so, it brings together the curricular setting of educational drama and the methodological setting of conversation analysis and membership categorisation analysis[1]. This combination provides researchers with the opportunity to explore the particular ways in which students and teachers structure classroom work and share moral reasoning practices in the drama classroom. This paper outlines these methodological and curricular settings and how they were integrated in the implementation of the research before discussing the research findings.

The data and discussion presented in this paper emerged from a larger research study that sought to explore whether students from schools located in differing socio-economic status

[1] This methodology involves the detailed study of transcripts in order to explore the sense-making practices of those speaking. It is explored further in this article under 'the methodological setting'.

areas interact differently in process drama lessons dealing with future life prospects and pathways. A preliminary step in exploring this issue, and the focus of this paper, was to identify the differing types of talk that were present in the drama classrooms involved in the study. This identification not only led to more precise answers to the research questions and to clearer professional and theoretical implications, but also helped develop a deeper understanding of the purpose and structure of talk in drama classrooms. Such an understanding is of significance to education scholars and practitioners as it has the potential to enable a more detailed awareness of the structure of classroom practice and the particular ways students engage with ideas in classroom settings.

The methodological setting

Developed by Sacks, and informed by the work of Goffman and Garfinkel, conversation analysis is concerned with everyday interactions and sense-making practices. Sacks took the view that social order was both observable and analysable in the smallest of interactions. He was concerned with investigating "the procedures and resources by which actors can engage in mutually intelligible social interaction whose organisation is assured through an architecture of intersubjectivity and moral accountability" (Drew & Heritage, 1992: 17). As a result of this concern, Sacks and his colleagues (notably Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff) developed a form of sociology that explored particular aspects of everyday interactions with reference to the way in which participants in an interaction organised meaning, built and shared understandings, conducted repair, and drew on particular understandings of identities as they exist in social categorises (sometimes known as membership categorisation devices (MCD); such as Mother in Family or Teacher in School).

The study of conversation, regardless of particular theoretical perspectives it may follow, generally draws from three assumptions regarding talk-in-interaction:

1. talk-in-interaction is structurally organised;
2. contributions to talk-in-interaction are contextually oriented, specifically that all interaction is both context shaping and context renewing; and
3. no order of detail can be dismissed a priori as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant (from Heritage, 1984).

Therefore, not only is there an examinable structure evident in interaction, but each turn of talk shapes and reinforces the topic or action that the interaction is accomplishing. As a

result of this, every detail of an interaction impacts on that interaction's overall structure and action.

Emerging from Sacks's work on MCDs, the study of membership categorisation analysis is "that of discovering the methods or practices members use to produce and recognize those connections that thereby render the world of actions, events, persons, and settings analyzably transparent" (Eglin & Hester, 1992: 250). Central to this work is how participants make relevant, either explicitly or implicitly, the presence of particular membership categories to which they, or those that are being discussed, belong. Membership categories are classifications of classes of people that carry with them clusters of expectable features, such as personality traits, preferences, or possible actions.

The moral reasoning of categorisations is informed by the shared understanding that is built between participants in an interaction, or members of a society more broadly, about what a particular kind of person a member of a category is. For example, the membership category Teacher contains general attributions that express what a teacher **is**, such as patient, informed and caring. These attributions, in turn, have cultural or moral implications, particularly in the judgement of our shared understanding of a Good Teacher compared to a Bad Teacher. This moral reasoning can take place either topically, or be drawn upon as a resource, when a particular categorisation is made publicly available within an interaction.

Within the institution School, which is the institution of focus in this study, much research has explored the particular patterns and purpose of the talk of both teachers and students. A major finding of research into classroom interactions is that in school students are typically viewed as pre-competent rather than competent or incompetent, therefore much talk in classrooms is focused on is what Students or Children do not have in relation to what Adults or Teachers do have (e.g., Austin, Dwyer & P. Freebody, 2003). As a result of this focus, conversation features often found in everyday interactions, are found less regularly in classrooms. For example, teachers seldom use the utterance *oh*, which is usually used to demonstrate acceptance of news or new knowledge (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Frieberg & P. Freebody, 1995). The fact that Teachers (as well as cross-examiners in courtrooms, news readers and many other institutional roles) do not generally use *oh* indicates that within classroom interactions, there is not supposed to be new knowledge or news unless the teacher is introducing it: It is the students' 'role' to utter *oh*, not the teacher's. This feature of classroom interaction is also evident in research by Mehan (1985) with an exploration of

teacher questioning finding that teachers generally ask questions they already know the answer to, termed ‘exam questions’ by Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998).

Classroom interactions can be understood using Schegloff’s (2007) understanding of the sequence organisation imposed by teachers. Turn-taking in classrooms is teacher-driven, which deliberately provides a reduction in the range of interactional options for students and an increase in options for teachers. These options include the ‘right’ to: change topic when they want without giving reason, commence a discussion without referring to its relevance, and provide sanctions to those that depart from the teacher-driven turn-taking structure. This sequence organisation can also be used by teachers to maintain control of what topics are discussed within interactions. Teachers may use their ability to incite topic change, to stop issues becoming topics, and to keep the students on the track of what is relevant for the lesson-at-hand.

It has been regularly found that turn-taking structures in classrooms often follow a pattern of initiation (usually by the teacher), response (usually by a student), and evaluation (again, by the teacher) (IRE). This pattern is thought to be so prevalent in schools because it easily allows for instruction and review whilst maintaining teacher-dominance of turn-taking (Drew & Heritage 1992: 40; Lee, 2007). The IRE pattern is significant in both the sequential analysis of an interaction because it affects turns, sequences and orientation to particular topics, and also in the analysis of categorisation, as participants within these interactions orient to particular roles, drawn from their understanding of the MCD School and the expected attributions of Teachers and Students.

This organisation of classroom interaction is also distinct because, unlike mundane conversation, many of the topics and possible turn-taking structures are pre-planned by the teacher. Macbeth, in a study of the classroom, concluded that “though lessons stand on behalf of knowledge, they first stand on behalf of practical tasks and orientations” (2000: 59). Therefore the planned nature of these activity sequences, and the perceived necessity teachers see in achieving them, not only affects the ways in which the sequences are organised, but also gives the teacher the power of being ‘in the know’ about the relevance of interactions to upcoming sequences. A process drama classroom – the curricular setting of this research - allows teachers opportunities to use less exam-style questions, and instead ask more ‘freeing questions’ (Wagner, 1979: 60). This gives students the chance to introduce new knowledge, initiate activities and ask questions to other members of the drama (including the teacher).

This presents, at least the possibility of, disruption to institutional features commonly associated with classrooms.

The curricular setting

The classrooms explored in this paper were secondary drama classrooms in an Australian city, both undertaking a unit on process drama. 'Process drama' is the term used here to describe a particular style of educational improvisatory drama. Drama theorists and researchers have claimed that using process drama in the classroom provides opportunities for students and teachers to disrupt the generally accepted roles of teacher and student; that teachers are co-artists, answer seekers; and 'structure operators' (Taylor & Warner, 2006: 6). Particularly relevant to this paper, it is claimed that within process drama lessons, students not only talk more, but engage in talk for a variety of purposes (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). The specific features of process drama outlined here have been collected from the work of a variety of influential practitioners. Some defining features of process drama are:

- the absence of script (O'Neill, 1995) or a script developed through action (Taylor & Warner, 2006);
- the use of pretexts as a basis for dramatic context and tension (Kao & O'Neill, 1998);
- the provision of opportunities for participants to utilise their context and purposes when negotiating the elements of dramatic form (O'Toole, 1992);
- the generation of a dramatic "elsewhere", a fictional world, which will be inhabited for the insights, interpretations, and understandings it may yield (O'Neill, 1995);
- the involvement of the entire group in the same enterprise (Bolton, 1998), with all participants (teachers and students) both spectators and actors or "spectators" (Boal, 1979: 155);
- the collection of drama activities over an extended period of time (Kao & O'Neill, 1998); and
- teachers and students negotiating and responding to each other's ideas in order to build the drama (Bowell & Heap, 2001).

A process drama employs the elements of drama and allows students opportunities to engage, develop and use their dramatic skills such as characterisation, improvisation, voice, movement, playbuilding and so on. There is a shift in focus away from a finished dramatic product with the end product in a process drama often the experience of participating in the drama and the reflections of the students after the drama is over (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). This shift in purpose aims to allow for students to concentrate on the social and dramatic context and explore their understandings and assumptions about the world, rather than focusing on perfecting a performance. This shift also has the potential to allow for other shifts within the classroom. The institutional setting of a classroom is one with rather strict roles and expected behaviours. In a process drama classroom there are opportunities for those roles to blur; the teacher may become a facilitator or "enabler" of drama (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985: 174) while allowing students to make decisions and choose which direction they may want the drama to take. This provides scholars with a rich site in which to explore classroom interaction as students and teachers shift and negotiate topic, relevance and control in their classroom talk.

Methods

The recorded data were collected in two drama classrooms in two school sites. For the purpose of addressing the larger scale research question outlined in the introduction the school sites were located in differing socio-economic areas. Teachers in both classrooms used the same lesson plans and facilitated a process drama titled 'The Future' which explored the students' hopes and goals for their future. The collected data was analysed following a template provided by ten Have (1999), who listed the following set of procedures for studying interactions:

1. create recordings of some kind, for example audio or video taped records;
2. from this, create a transcript and check this transcript for accuracy against the recording;
3. select episodes or exchanges for particular study;
4. make sense of the episode initially in commonsense ways comparable to the ways in which the participants evidently make sense of what is going on, that is, how they know the actions are in fact interconnected;

5. use the details of talk in interaction and the researcher's members knowledge to provide explication of these exchanges;
6. elaborate the hearings and look for what follows in subsequent apparent hearings; and
7. compare these explications with the explications of other kinds of events or phenomena in the setting or from other settings.

Some minor deviations from these procedures took place. First there was a slight modification to steps 2 and 3, whereby, owing to the vast amount of recordings, transcripts could not be made of the entire corpus. To offset this, segments were chosen from the raw DVD footage based on either their topical relevance, such as a discussion about money, or for their particular organisational relevance, such as segment of in-role activities. These segments were then transcribed, and particular exchanges within these transcripts were chosen for further exploration. The second deviation from ten Have's procedures involved the inclusion of another layer of analysis. This study not only involved in sequence-based conversation analysis, but also included the exploration of category-based membership catetgorisation analysis. Throughout these seven steps, therefore, the aim was not only to explicate the participants' hearings of interactions and the kinds of events taking place in the setting, but also to explore the categorisations and attributions the members explicitly outlined or drew upon as a resource.

Discussion

Within the overall structure of the drama lessons that were observed and transcribed, three distinguishable categories of talk were identified:

1. Pedagogic/Logistic Talk (PLT) – managing of school and lesson behaviour, the logistics of lesson activities, and discussions or instructions concerning how learning should take place;
2. Socio-Cultural Talk (SCT) – engaging the cultural, social and moral potential of the lesson and aiming to create shared accounts and public reasoning practices; and
3. In Role Talk (IRT) – students demonstrating their understandings of the expectations signalled in the SCT and improvising reactions to scenarios as they display these in role as character-participants in the drama.

School talk has been found to have certain structural features that were found in these sites to be common across these three types of talk-in-interaction. For example the IRE structure mentioned earlier was found in the transcripts within all three types of talk. However different activities were achieved in the different sequences in each type of talk. Understanding the structure and purpose of these three categories of talk allows for a more nuanced understanding of what activities and actions were achieved through the differing talk across the sites. The discussion below explores these three types of talk incorporating transcripts of classroom talk to illustrate specific actions and activities.

Pedagogic/Logistic Talk

The Pedagogic/Logistic Talk in the two sites was concerned with making the various activities into a 'lesson' in 'school'. It was found that this talk referred to two levels of relevance:

1. relevance to 'school behaviour' in general; and
2. relevance to behaviour and participation in this activity, here-and-now.

First, teachers used PLT to manage school- or sequence-based pedagogical issues. This included opening/closing of lessons and the general management of students' bodies and attention with relevance to school in general. This type of PLT was not focused on the management of a particular activity, but rather the management of Students and their roles and responsibilities within the institutional context of the classroom. Second, the teachers used PLT to manage particular activities. This presented itself as either short interruptive utterances from the teacher, usually to manage the turn taking or materials within the activity, or as longer phases whereby the teacher and students worked on an activity that outlined the logistics of a SCT or IRT phase. This latter use of PLT also often included IRE sequences and the use of resources such as worksheets or whiteboards. A key element of these longer PLT phases that was distinctive to SCT phases was the extent to which teacher questions contained a 'right' answer that is both known to, and judged by, the teacher.

Within these categories, the PLT achieved pedagogic and logistic work that particularly met the management needs of the participants. Specifically, it will be shown that PLT managed:

1. the turns of talk;
2. the positions and movements of bodies in the classroom space;
3. the use of materials in the classroom space;
4. the attention of the participants;
5. the topic relevance; and
6. the productiveness of the moral reasoning practices (Freebody, 2010).

Examples of the intersection of these domains of management within PLT are discussed further below to provide a general sense of this category of interaction. The locations of these examples are given in Table 1.

	Turns	**Bodies**	**Materials**	**Attention**	**Topic**	**Moral reasoning**
School in general				PLT example 1		
Activity here and now		**PLT example 2**				

Table 1: PLT matrix with examples

PLT Example 1: appropriate attention in School

3. Nick: ok (1) stop (1) talking (3) be respectful and give me eye contact can everyone give me eye contact and just close their mouths ok^ don't talk to anybody it should be relatively easy that (2) ok give me eye contact don't be distracted by little things that might be going on around you wherever they may be happening concentrate on me

This example took place at the beginning of a lesson. Nick was organising the attention of the class before taking the roll. This transcript is part of a longer utterance from Nick. It is sampled here because it demonstrates the management of attention with relevance to the institutional context of school. In this transcript, Nick introduced attention as equivalent to

respectfulness. Establishing appropriate attention as an attribution of Student that is synonymous with respectful and contrasted with distracted. This attribution is expressed by Nick as not only necessary for the success of the interactions in the classroom, but also as *relatively easy* for the students to achieve. The description of appropriate attention as *easy*, coupled with the use of the words *little things* to express the possible distractions, made the roles and responsibilities of being Students important and easy. In contrast the distractions that may influence the behaviour of participants that are not being Good Students are insignificant. This excerpt demonstrates the ways in which Nick used PLT to formulate attention as an attribute of Good Students in general, not for a specific activity, but as morally compatible with the responsibilities of Students, that is, their respectfulness, within the institutional context of school.

PLT Example 2: Organising an activity

1. Carol: I want you to stand next to the photograph that you think is of the happiest person (.) so without talking go and stand next to the photograph of the happiest person (9) and just take a seat next to your photograph in the circle

This excerpt took place at the beginning of a particular activity. Again, it is a segment of a larger utterance, sampled here to demonstrate how Carol used PLT to issue logistical instructions specific to the particular activity-at-hand. Unlike PLT Example 1, where Nick formulated the attribution of attention for Students Carol's utterance here is not concerned with attributions of participants and their relation to the MCD School. Rather, Carol used the PLT to direct the movement of the students' bodies for the participants to successfully complete the task required. Although in Examples 1 and 2 the teachers expressed the need for students not to talk, in PLT Example 2 the request for students not to talk was connected to the instructions to stand next to the photo of the person *you think* is the happiest. Therefore the need for students to stand next to those photographs *without talking* implied to students that they should not be sharing their ideas or influencing each others' decisions. The 9-second pause during Carol's instruction suggests that students were acting on Carol's directions as she was uttering them. This was confirmed at the end of the pause when Carol instructed students to sit next to their chosen photograph. Throughout this excerpt Carol used

PLT to manage the students' physical movements as needed for the particular classroom activity, then and there.

The activities accomplished by interactions categorised as PLT related to the doing of school and the doing of an activity. Those that related to the doing of school were likely to make relevant the moral rights and responsibilities of Teacher and Student within a lesson. In contrast, PLT relating to the accomplishment of an activity was likely to focus on directive utterances aimed at managing the particular task. The elements of the PLT phases that made it distinct other types of talk were the control of the teacher over topic management and relevance, and the presence of a 'right' answer. This is compared with SCT and IRT phases that tended to have the purpose of exploring multiple acceptable answers to create shared understandings. The PLT phases were often task-oriented, and revolved around the achievement of an outcome, of which only the teacher had prior knowledge. Again, in contrast, SCT phases were content-driven, tended to allow more scope for exploration, and usually did not require students to arrive at a predetermined answer.

Socio-Cultural Talk

The key criterion for an activity to be included under the heading of Socio-Cultural Talk (SCT) in the drama classrooms was an interactive engagement in the development of shared accounts of people/events/character actions, as the participants take these accounts to be either prospectively or retrospectively relevant to the drama. Within this, the exchanges generally oriented to the cultural/social/moral aspects of the drama as a socio-cultural event, rather than as an institutionalised classroom event. For example, after a teacher read out a story and asked students for their reactions, the students responded with agreement or disagreement with the characters' actions, ideas about the fairness of the events in the story, or what they would have done differently had they been faced with similar events, and why. Students did not respond to the teacher's invitation to share their thoughts with comments focused on the institutional importance or relevance of the story, its usefulness to the process drama, or whether they thought the story was a good pretext for the process drama. Students treated the invitation to express their ideas as an invitation to share their thoughts about the socio-cultural aspects of the story rather than its institutional importance or relevance.

Unlike similar talk often found in humanities or arts-based classrooms surrounding a text, artefact or historical event, SCT did not, in the corpus of data referred to here, routinely show

the teacher behaving as more knowledgeable than students. Rather, the teacher generally facilitated the discussion and usually managed the turn-taking and topic selection for the group's public production of reasoning practices. The teacher also monitored the adequacy of the students' reasoning practices according to their value to the activities to follow, in particular to the IRT.

The activity outcome of a sequence of SCT varied depending on the topic at hand, the apparent moral importance of the topic from the teacher's perspective, and the explicit or implicit activity or topic connection with the in-role segments of the drama. Some identifiably typical functions accomplished through SCT were:

- collecting points of view that might be relevant to the drama or to the lives of the classroom members;
- orienting to MCDs and categories that might be relevant to the drama or to the teacher's or the students' own lives;
- providing models of appropriate justifications for the students' reasoning practices through the use of categorisations, attributions, cause-effect relationships, and evaluations of the topic-at-hand;
- monitoring the reasoning and justification of others; and
- negotiating aspects of moral reasoning (Freebody, 2010).

In these instances the activity of SCT generally comprised stimulating, modelling, negotiating, and monitoring/evaluating, either by the teacher or students, of participants' reasoning practices (categorisations, attributions, cause-effect relationships, and evaluations) relating to the topic at hand. Within this, participants scrutinised and evaluated utterances with respect to their adequacy, coherence, productivity for the task in terms of generating further relevant exchanges, internal validity (i.e., not self-contradictory), and external validity (i.e., makes sense in the world). Examples of this stimulating, modelling, negotiating, and monitoring of reasoning practices are noted in Table 2.

	Categorisation	Attributions	Cause/effect relationships	evaluation
Stimulating			SCT Example 1	
Modelling		SCT example 2		
Monitoring				**SCT example 3**
Negotiating	**SCT example 4**			

Table 2: Matrix of SCT with examples in selected cells

SCT Example 1: Stimulating cause-effect relationships

1. Nick: do you think (1) do you think that's something he's been doing for a long time
2. Liam: yep
3. Nick: why
4. Liam: because you can't just jump on a guitar (.) you have to practice (.) it takes time

Within this excerpt Nick prompted the student concerning what he saw in a picture of a Rock-Star and stimulated the production of a cause/effect relationship – specifically that the categorisation Rock-Star conveys the attribution of having played music for a long time because playing a guitar takes time and practice.

SCT Example 2: Modelling and assembling attribution

1. Trac: his parents are selfish
2. Lin: that's what I was just going to say
3. Nick: why (.) why do you say that
4. Trac: because he's like really smart and he wants to go and be one of those genius people, really smart people, and the parents don't want him to go (.)
5. Nick: they're encouraging him not to go aren't they (.) why
6. Trac: because they're [( )]
7. Nick: [just prove] to me you were listening (.) go on

8. Trac: because they were poor and they wanted him to look after his brothers and sisters

9. Nick: ok Brent

SCT was sometimes concerned with the modelling of appropriate or correct ways of publicly engaging in moral reasoning. In the 9-turn sequence above, Nick modelled a way in which attributions can be acceptably allocated to categorisations for this practical purpose at hand, here and now, in this discussion. Tracy's utterance *his parents are selfish* was treated by the teacher as not necessarily inappropriate in sentiment, but inadequate in expression and therefore needing to be justified (*why (.) why do you say that*). For this particular activity sequence, Nick extended the need for justification with the need for Tracy to connect her reasoning with the specific scenarios under discussion. He did this through further prompting in Turn 5, followed by Turn 7's *just prove to me you were listening (.) go on*. After Tracy's Turn 8 utterance, the composite response (drawing together Turns 1, 4, 6, 8) was accepted as appropriate. This was the first student contribution in the activity sequence, and so Nick and Tracy can be taken to have modelled to the members of the discussion what a successful and acceptable reasoning would be taken to entail.

<u>SCT Example 3: Monitoring evaluation</u>

1. Nick: Kate why did that ((a picture of a jail)) stand out for you

2. Kate: I don't know (.) it just did (.) it looked like a real unhappy place to be and it was just (.) the easiest one to do

3. Nick: really is that was that is that why you chose that because it was the easiest one to do

4. Kate: yeah because it didn't have much to focus on or anything (.) but also it drew attention to me I don't know why (.) just stood out

5. Nick: I think in some ways in some ways I disagree with you Kate because I think in that location in that environment there's probably even more to write about cause it's (.) well wha tell me what is prison (2) ((lots of students answer at once))

6. Ant: where you get bashed//

7. Nick: //am just asking Kate (.) come on Kate

8. Kate: where bad people go to get punished (1)

9. Nick: ok (.) alright [can you tell] me Kate

10. Kate: [and get locked away

11. Nick: just loudly as well can you tell me what you wrote down

In this sequence, Nick disagreed with Kate's evaluation of the picture of prison as the easiest picture to write about. His disagreement is explicit in Turn 5 but is continued by his prompting for a more acceptable and complex answer through the questions *what is prison* and *can you tell me what you wrote down*. This is a demonstration of how Nick monitored the evaluations made by the members of the group for their appropriateness to the task at hand. *It was just (.) the easiest one to do* was not an acceptable answer to the nuclear question of the activity (*why did that stand out for you*).

SCT Example 4: Negotiating categorisations

1. Carol: ok and quickly guys (.) we're going to go a bit faster this time (.) ok this group here (.) first of all what did you decide (.) what is sad about this actual (.) first of all what do you think the occupation is

2. Em: we have no// idea

3. Nath: //prostitute

4. Em: she could be a prostitute she could be (.) a mental patient she could be anything

5. Nath: mental patient ^

6. Em: yeah

7. Nath: I don't see that

8. Tina: she could be a drug addict

In this sequence, students negotiated the possible categories depicted in a photograph. Besides initiating the question *what do you think the occupation is*, Carol had no further input, and instead, students negotiated among themselves what the occupation could be, and

therefore what category was going to be put into play when the group discussed the picture with the rest of the class, as the activity required. Within the SCT, particularly when the interaction was focused on negotiation of ideas or understandings, the turn-taking was often organised in such a way that a participant who has something to contribute could self-allocate for a turn, as seen by Nathan's interruption and Tina's uninvited utterance.

The activities achieved by SCT usually involved the introduction and discussion of individual formulations that lead to a shared understanding of categorisations relating to a topic at hand. It was the domain in which much of the moral work on or surrounding the topic(s) presented by the pretext for the drama, and the subsequent discussions surrounding the in-role segments of the drama, was done collectively.

In-Role Talk

During In Role Talk (IRT) students are asked to work in role to produce a simulation of an authentic interaction. The basic structure of conversation (how participants did this through talk) warrants exploration because the students had to work to produce an artefact that seemed to be, and would be evaluated as if it were, an adequate simulation of authentic talk. Therefore, how members demonstrated and shared with the other participants even the simplest interaction was self-consciously produced. Unlike the other types of talk outlined here, IRT is not defined by a common set of specific features. Nonetheless, participants, through their interactions, generally showed that they held themselves responsible for:

- producing interactions that are compatible with standard expected norms of conversation (as outlined by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974); that is, for simulating authentic conversation;
- facilitating rather than obstructing the interactional options of the other character-participants;
- producing physical (bodily movement, use of space, use of props) and verbal interactions that are recognisable by the other character-participants as plausibly attributable to their character type (e.g., would a mother really say that?);
- physically and verbally interacting within the power structures of the characters being portrayed (e.g., how would a teacher talk to a principal – not how would Anton talk to Craig);

- producing interactions that have retrospective relevance to the SCT that formed the pretext and planning phases of the unit; and
- producing interactions that are appropriate for the institutional context 'in-school' (Freebody, 2010).

During IRT, participants' utterances were used to advance, obstruct, shift or reinstate the plot of a drama. This was achieved through using their interactions to confirm, challenge, query or act out particulars. Therefore, a participant could advance the plot using an interaction within IRT by:

1. confirming an element of the plot or action of another participant;
2. challenging another participant or disagreeing with a particular aspect of the situation;
3. querying an aspect of the situation which others have taken to be true; or
4. acting out and making explicit an important element within the context of the drama.

Examples of the ways students in the two sites achieved these various interactions, for a variety of purposes, are outlined in Table 3, and elaborated on in the following section.

	Advance	**Obstruct**	**Shift**	**Reinstate**
Confirm	IRT example 1			
Challenge		IRT example 2		
Query				**IRT example 3**
Act out			**IRT example 4**	

Table 3: matrix of IRT with examples in selected cells

<u>IRT Example 1 – advancing the plot through confirmation:</u>

1. Carol: ok ok look well I'll see what I can do and obviously we'll get back to you (.) sorry I know this has been tough on your family (.) um what was Kelly planning to do next year^

2. Val: she wanted to do journalism (.) but um due to the break up our financial situation's kind of changed (   ) so we're not sure if we're going to be able to send her (.)

3. Carol: I see she was very very keen I remember her getting up and talking to all the girls in assembly about focus and so do you think this might be part of the problem as well as the family side

4. Val: I think this will have definitely have a big impact

This excerpt demonstrates how Valerie-being-Mother confirmed the relevance of Carol's question *what was Kelly planning to do next year* by using her response to advance the plot: introducing both the subject of the discussion's dream for the future (to be a journalist) and a new dimension to Kelly's problem (financial issues that may inhibit that dream). When Carol responded by orienting to the severity of the problem, Valerie confirmed her formulation – that this added dimension to the problem will *have a big impact*. This demonstrates how both Valerie and Carol used IRT within the context of this meeting to confirm and advance their existing understandings of the situation.

<u>IRT Example 2 – challenging the plot through obstruction</u>

1. Nick ok do we think that's going to help?

2. Ant: yep

3. Son: I don't

4. Nick: ok why

5. Son: I think yoga is (so dumb)

6. Call: yeah same

7. Son: honestly yoga doesn't work

In this excerpt, Sonia-being-Teacher uses her turns of talk to challenge an idea introduced by another participant (that a student should take up yoga). Her formulations did not act to advance the plot or introduce a new idea. Instead they obstructed the furthering of the plot by providing only general negative formulations about the idea (that it will not help because *it is so dumb*) rather than outlining any specific problems she has with the idea that would allow

other participants to discuss the idea. This excerpt demonstrates how a participant used the IRT to obstruct and challenge the furthering of the plot by expressing disagreement with another participant's idea, without providing participants with avenues to discuss her challenge.

IRT Example 3 – reinstating earlier ideas through a query

1. Jane: has she said anything to you
2. Nad: um no she just said she's fine um what about the newspaper (.) is she still doing that^
3. Jane: no she gave the newspaper to me (.) I don't know why
4. Nad: oh so you're chief editor now (.) oh ok (she really did like that) she wanted to be a journalist I'm surprised that she gave it up

Within this excerpt Nadine-being-Guidance Counsellor responded to a query in Turn 2 by demonstrating that she cannot further the plot in the requested way and instead introduced her own query regarding whether a student is still working on the school newspaper. This not only passed the responsibility for advancing the plot onto another participant, but also reinstated a component of the plot that had been discussed in previous lessons but not yet made relevant in this particular meeting: that the protagonist-in-question wanted to be a journalist. This demonstrates how a participant used a query to redirect and reinstate an element of the plot that they believed should be made relevant.

IRT Example 4 – shifting the plot through action

1.	Ant:	um Mr principal I'll just ask a question (.) did you invite um um Jacinta's friends to this meeting
2.	Nick:	well we I I've spoken to Jacinta's friends previously
3.	Ant:	yep
4.	Nick:	um but (.) why why^
5.	Ant:	um cause um I was kinda thinking that if we bring them in and um kind of like have so with the Mum and just have a word with them (.) cause she said that she didn't know that she had any friends so maybe the Jacinta's friends and Amber can work something out to better help Jacinta (1) I think that the more people we have to help Jacinta out the better (1)

This excerpt demonstrates how a student (Anton-being-Chaplain) used IRT to change the way the situation was being acted out, in this case altering the characters involved in the interaction by inviting Jacinta's friends to the meeting. Anton-being-Chaplain's acting out of an introduction to possible directions in the plot shifted the focus from the current participants of the meeting to possible new participants in the IRT.

IRT is a formal part of the drama lesson and therefore institutionally demarcated, as opposed to being distinct in its features. Despite being the easiest of the three types of talk to define, in that it is any talk-in-interaction that occurs while the participants are seen publicly to be in role as a character, it is the most difficult to analyse because it appears to have few prevalent or regular features; it can essentially follow any conversation structure within the organisational structure of 'in role in the classroom'.

Conclusion

The three types of talk found in these lessons document how teachers and students paid close attention to both the dramatic and institutional contexts within which the interactions took place, developing close mutual understandings and procedures for action. The context of the process drama classroom further allowed their artful manipulation of institutional roles to be pulled into view; with the classroom participants engaged in expert use of the turn taking systems and teachers and students both participating in interactional structures usually

reserved for teachers or students only. The participants demonstrated a resourcefulness in the ways they worked within and between the three types of talk to express both their understanding of the workings of the drama classroom, and their personal opinions and views on life.

Worthy of further investigation is the particular ways in which the in-role talk is informed by how teachers organise and facilitate the activity (PLT) as well as the socio-cultural understanding of who is involved and what are the purposes of the talk (SCT). Such investigation would offer researchers and teachers a unique perspective on how teachers and students do classroom work in an interactionally distinctive setting such as process drama. These types of talk achieve specific actions individually; but the interplay between these three types of talk also reveals the nuance and artfulness of participants as they jointly produce a drama lesson by developing meaning, shaping shared moral reasoning practices, and establishing boundaries between the dramatic context and the classroom space.

So, in conclusion, we can re-pose Macbeth's (1996) suggestion that re-specifying familiar affairs allows for a deeper, different, understanding of them: Drama classrooms offer a rich site for the study of discourse – with students and teachers disrupting conventional membership categorisation devices and engaging in talk that is relevant to both dramatic context and institutional rules. The detailed study of discourse offers the possibility of exploring classroom talk through a different lens and allows teachers, teacher educators, students, and policy-makers to understand the work they do better, develop new ways of working, and become more purposeful in the planning and implementation of their programs, lessons and activities. As Heap claimed "if some activity is important to our lives, then knowing how it is organized may make a difference to how we act" (Heap 1990, p.43).

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