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THE THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES AND SPECIFICS OF PEDAGOGICAL DIALOGUE AT EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AT BRITISH EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

The theoretical and practical principles and specifics of pedagogical dialogue research at Great Britain educational establishments are considered.

Keywords: *dialogue, ideas of Bakhtin, educational process, dialogic teaching, dialogical pedagogy.*

Drawing mainly on the theoretical ideas of Bakhtin on the dialogic nature of language [2], a number of authors have stressed the educative potential of teacher-pupil interaction which enables students to play an active part in shaping the agenda of classroom discourse. Examples include: *dialogic instruction*, characterized by the teacher's uptake of student ideas, authentic questions and the opportunity for students to modify the topic [7]; *dialogic inquiry*, which stresses the potential of collaborative group work and peer assistance to promote mutually responsive learning in the zone of proximal development [6]; *dialogic teaching,* which is collective, reciprocal, cumu-

lative and supportive [1]; and *dialogical pedagogy*, in which students are invited to retell stories in their own words, using paraphrase, speculation and counter-fictional utterances [5]. These proposals share a common concern with the ritualistic nature of the predominant patterns of teacher-student interaction exposed by empirical observation studies, and an emphasis on the importance of maximizing active student participation in classroom talk as a means of enhancing inter-subjective understanding.

With their emphasis on offering students the opportunity to construct meaning in their own words, there is an affinity between these dialogic conceptions of pedagogy and the constructivist approach to education. From a constructivist perspective, learning does not take place apart from the active intellectual, moral, and social engagement of the learner. To recognize this point is to acknowledge the essentially transactional nature of teaching and learning: teaching is not a unidirectional act, something teachers *do to students*; rather, constructivist theory implies the need for a democratization of the traditional power relationships between teachers and students, built on a view of students as intellectually autonomous meaning-makers.

In this paper, we will explore the ways in which a dialogical pedagogy aimed at enabling the co-construction of knowledge between student and teacher may contribute to the development of an inclusive educational praxis [3; 5]. We will discuss the changes to prevailing instructional frameworks which are needed if schools are to make substantive progress toward an inclusion that goes beyond mere physical co-presence in classrooms, and ask what conditions might support the development of a pedagogy in which students are invited to articulate an actively responsive understanding in the course of their learning.

In *Opening Dialogue*, Nystrand [4] draws on the Bakhtinian contrast between monologic and dialogic discourse, together with Gutierrez's concept of instructional scripts to develop the notion of dialogic instruction. In monologic recitation, classroom talk is closely controlled by the teacher, with the aim of transmitting knowledge which students are required to remember. Dialogically organised instruction, on the other hand, is based on a different kind of relationship between teacher and students, in which students are asked to think, not simply to remember. For Nystrand, the study of classroom discourse is important because different modes of interaction place students in different positions as learners (p. 29):

Specific modes or genres of discourse engender particular epistemic roles for the conversants, and these roles, in turn, engender, constrain, and empower their thinking. The bottom line for instruction is that the quality of student learning is closely linked to the quality of classroom talk.

Opening Dialogue reports the findings of a large-scale study of the effects of patterns of classroom discourse on student learning in 400 English lessons in 25 US high schools. The major source of evidence was structured classroom observation in which teacher questions were coded on a series of dimensions. The research team also tape-recorded lessons and used this evidence to explore unexpected findings from the coded observations in more detail. They also interviewed participating teachers, and tested student learning outcomes by a written examination, scored against a number of criteria. Their results support the hypothesis that dialogically organised instruction is superior to monologically organised instruction in promoting student learning. Recitational patterns of talk were found to be overwhelmingly prevalent, and to have a negative effect on learning; they were particularly strongly concentrated in lower-track classes. Important aspects of the alternative, dialogic approach to instruction highlighted by the study were: the teacher's use of authentic

questions (where what counts as an acceptable answer is not prespecified); uptake, where the teacher incorporates students' responses into subsequent questions; and the extent to which the teacher allows a student response to modify the topic of discourse, a strategy which Nystrand terms 'high-level evaluation'. He identifies a number of specific classroom methods which may help to promote the development of dialogic forms of understanding, including the use of learning journals, position papers drawn up and presented by students to the class, and peer response conferences (where students meet in small groups to review each other's work).

Nystrand makes a particular contribution to our understanding in his discussion of the relationship between patterns of classroom discourse and the nature of the pedagogic contract established between a teacher and his/her students. As we have explained, the findings of his study do document that particular styles of interaction have an effect on student learning, for better or worse; but he goes on to argue that understanding this relationship cannot be mechanically reduced to measuring the relative proportion of authentic vs. 'display' questions over the course of a lesson, for example. He quotes transcripts of extracts from lessons by two teachers with contrasting styles to illustrate that the inappropriate use of authentic questions can be counter-productive; and that the skilful use of a lecturing style can on occasion be effective. For example, if the teacher asks many authentic questions which are unrelated to the topic of the lesson, then this is unlikely to help develop students' understanding fruitfully; whereas a concise, clear exposition by the teacher may be the most efficient way of explaining the nature and purpose of a task before the class moves on to a new activity. Dialogic instruction will be supported by an increased use of authentic, topic-relevant questions on the part of the teacher, but more fundamental is the quality of the interaction which surrounds those questions [4]. What matters most is not simply the frequency of particular exchange-structures in classroom discourse, but how far students are treated as active epistemic agents, i.e. participants in the production of their own knowledge.

Nystrand's work marks the first sustained attempt to explore the significance of the Bakhtinian theory of dialogism for our understanding of the language of classroom instruction. His study demonstrates that choices made by the teacher can influence the conditions for learning established in the classroom, and in particular that the teacher does exert a measure of control on the structure and organisation of classroom discourse. He goes on to show that the preferred mode of interaction adopted by the teacher carries consequences for the epistemology of the classroom: broadly, the teacher can orient towards controlling what knowledge is produced, or towards structuring the activities through which students produce knowledge. The study is impressive in scope and makes a strong case for the superior effectiveness of dialogically-organised instruction: students taught in this way tend to do better in written tests than those taught using a monologic, recitational approach [2; 4].

One drawback of the methodology used in the study is that the central plank of evidence is a record of the coding of classroom interaction made by observers in real time. Although simultaneous tape recordings were made of the lessons observed, these are treated as supplementary evidence rather than the chief source on which the findings are built. Consequently, with the exception of a small number of short transcribed extracts, the original discourse which was spoken cannot be reconstructed; rather we have a global summary of the tendencies in the data (e.g. the preponderance of test questions from teachers and the infrequency with which authentic questions are used). However, as Nystrand's own findings indicate, in understanding

how the structuring of classroom discourse operates, the devil lies in the detail. For example, he notes how the research team's initial coding of the data threw up some unexpected results, such as the fact that the use of group work appeared to have a negative effect on student learning. When the research team inspected the data more closely, including checking their coding against the recordings they made, it emerged that activities which had been coded as group work were often, in practice, individual work by students who were merely seated in groups. A re-analysis of the data showed that group work was effective when the activity required genuine collaboration, and when the teacher specified the goals clearly, but gave groups autonomy in carrying out the task. Whilst Nystrand makes a convincing case for this general interpretation, putting the flesh on the bones of a theory of dialogic instruction will require closer attention to the detailed analysis of transcripts of the discourse actually spoken by participants in classroom exchanges, since it is at this level of granularity that we can see talk at work in shaping the learning process that students experience. A further question which his study raises, and which future research in this area needs to explore, is why recitational approaches to teaching continue to be so prevalent, given their apparent ineffectiveness in engaging student interest or in securing improved outcomes in attainment. Since it seems unlikely that the majority of teachers would choose to rely on a pedagogic style calculated to depress student learning in the absence of strong constraining factors, we need to investigate the structural conditions which reproduce monologic patterns of instruction on a social scale.

In *Culture and Pedagogy*, Alexander [1] presents and interprets evidence from a large-scale comparative study of primary school teaching in five countries (India, Russia, France, England and the United States). The project sought to explore how national cultural traditions influenced the processes and practices of teaching at the classroom level. The analytical core of the book lies in a discussion of 17 transcripts of extracts of lessons from different schools in the various countries. On the basis of this analysis, Alexander sets forth a typology of classroom discourse, distinguished along the dimensions of: classroom organization (whole class, group, individual); pedagogic mode (direct instruction, discussion, monitoring); pedagogic function (rote learning, instruction, scaffolding, assessment, information sharing, problem solving, scaffolding, supervision); and discourse form (interrogatory, expository, evaluative, dialogic). The evidence of the study suggested that interrogatory whole class direct instruction. However, there are moments in the data where the talk takes a different form and the teacher treats the students as fellow discussants, striking a 'less unequal' relationship between them for the time being. In a formulation indebted to the theoretical work of Bruner, Alexander proposes the following definition of 'scaffolded dialogue' (p. 527):

Scaffolded dialogue achieving common understanding through structured and sequenced questioning, and through 'joint activity and shared conceptions,' which guide, prompt, reduce choices and expedite 'handover' of concepts and principles.

Citing Bakhtin, he draws a distinction between dialogue and conversation, arguing that dialogue possesses a greater degree of structure, and is differentiated from conversation by the purposeful use of questioning in the pursuit of enquiry. Despite the ubiquity of transmission styles of teaching demonstrated by the study, he argues that macro-sociological theory tends to underestimate the potential autonomy of teachers to reshape classroom discourse along dialogic lines. For Alexander, such dialogic discourse is the main method for fostering a 'pedagogy of mutuality', which

treats students not as empty vessels to be filled with received wisdom by the teacher, but as competent thinkers in their own right [2].

The concept of scaffolded dialogue adumbrated in *Culture and Pedagogy* is developed in a later booklet which elaborates a model of 'dialogic teaching' [1]. Alexander describes the principles of this approach as teaching which is: collective; reciprocal; supportive; cumulative; and purposeful [1]. He goes on to specify a lengthy list of indicators which can be used to identify dialogic teaching in the classroom [1]. The first 14 of these refer to contextual conditions rather than to characteristics of the discourse *per se* (e. g. lesson transitions are managed economically). The remaining 47 indicators relate to more concrete properties of classroom interaction, and are grouped under seven headings: teacher-pupil interaction; pupil-pupil interaction; teacher-pupil monitoring; teacher questioning; pupil responses to questioning; teacher feedback on responses; and the functions served by pupil talk. For example, Alexander suggests that dialogic teaching is indicated by teacher-pupil interaction in which turns are managed by shared routines rather than through competitive bidding. In the final section of the booklet, he summarises the interim findings from development projects aimed at promoting the use of a dialogic style of teaching in two Local Education Authorities in England. The findings indicate that shifts in the prevailing styles of interaction had taken place in some classrooms, and there was evidence of improvements in oracy among students. In particular, where these shifts had taken place, the classroom climate had become more inclusive, as the changed dynamics of teacher-student interaction furnished greater opportunities for less able students to participate competently in lesson activities. Against these positive outcomes, the projects also demonstrated the 'staying power' of recitation as the default mode of pedagogy, as there were many classrooms where little or no change in the conduct of discourse had taken place.

One of the most significant insights to emerge from Alexander's work is that the kind of communicative competence which students are required to display in the classroom is culturally specific, since different norms of interaction are valued in different countries. For example, his analysis shows that in Russia and France it is more common for one student to participate on behalf of the class in a conceptually complete cycle of exchanges with the teacher, whereas in England and the United States whole class discussion tends to be managed by students bidding competitively for each turn, with the teacher rotating turns by nominating the next speaker, each successive response slot typically being allocated to a different student. For Alexander, these differences in the management of classroom discourse are linked with different cultural traditions in the philosophy of pedagogy: a central European tradition of collectivist pedagogy, on the one hand, which encourages a convergence of learning outcomes whereby the whole class moves forward together; and, on the other hand, an Anglo-American tradition which treats the class as an aggregate of individuals, and fosters a divergence of learning outcomes within the group. These observations lead him to make a welcome critique of the concept of 'interactive whole class teaching', which was heavily promoted in government policy in the UK in the 1990ˢ, for its failure to distinguish between the cognitive pace of teaching and the pace of interaction exchange. Quick-fire questioning around the class may appear to lend pace to a lesson, but since it typically elicits a sequence of short, undeveloped responses from students, it may do little to extend their thinking. Alexander commends instead the development of discourse strategies aimed at encouraging students to 'think aloud' and develop their ideas at greater length, for example by the teacher pitching a ques-

tion at a particular, named individual (managing turn-taking by nomination without competitive bidding), and the use of follow-up questions directed at the same student (extending the teacher-student exchange on a given topic rather than rotating successive turns around the class). He emphasises that speech should not be seen as an inferior, less developed form of language use than writing, but that the development of oracy is an important goal of education in its own right, and that increased competence in oracy accompanies and contributes to the development of competence in literacy rather than being in competition with it.

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ІРИНА РОМАНКО

ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ Й СПЕЦИФІКА ПЕДАГОГІЧНОГО ДІАЛОГУ В НАВЧАЛЬНОМУ ПРОЦЕСІ ОСВІТНІХ ЗАКЛАДІВ ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ

Розглянуто теоретичні й практичні положення дослідження педагогічного діалогу в навчальних закладах Великої Британії.

Ключові слова: *діалог, ідеї Бахтіна, освітній процес, діалогічне навчання, діалогічна педагогіка.*

ИРИНА РОМАНКО

ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ И СПЕЦИФИКА ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОГО ДИАЛОГА В УЧЕБНОМ ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ

Рассмотрены теоретические и практические положения исследования педагогического диалога в учебных заведениях Великобритании.

Ключевые слова: *диалог, идеи Бахтина, образовательный процесс, диалогический процесс, диалогическая педагогика.*