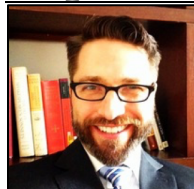




Theoretical Promises and Methodological Troubles Capturing Dialogical Discourse in Classroom Research



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Abstract

A review of Skidmore, D & K. Murakami (Eds). (2016). Dialogic Pedagogy: The importance of dialogue in teaching and learning. Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.

Skidmore and Murakami's collection of essays takes on a dual theoretical and empirical project: first, to define and advocate for dialogical classroom pedagogy; and second, to unearth such practice through microstudies of classroom dialogue. This project divides itself neatly in half: the first six chapters trace the theory of dialogic pedagogy, including the history of discourse, coding, and practices, while the remaining seven are devoted to empirical studies marked by a careful microanalysis of dialogue.

The work distinguishes itself from scholarship on the dialogical the past 20 years, during which works have either been single-authored, deeply-researched, and theoretical (Matusov, 2009a; Wegerif, 2013) or vast collections of essays organized conceptually (Ball & Freedman, 2004; White & Peters, 2011; Ligorio & Cesar, 2013). While special journal editions have brought new focus to unexplored threads of the dialogical, such as the exploration of silence in the classroom or the history of the School of the Dialogue of Cultures (Matusov 2009b), this collection affords considerable latitude to its theoretical and historical frame. A comparable work of conceptual breadth is that of White (2016), whose publication frames classroom research of lower school learners with concepts from Bakhtin. Like White's work, Skidmore and Murakami paint at once in broad strokes and miniature: on the one hand, the collection situates dialogical pedagogy into its historical context, interweaving the work of early Russian theorists; at the same time, it offers granular studies of classroom dialogue. Since Skidmore authors or co-authors seven of the 13 chapters, the collection somewhat serves as a project of singular intent, one that raises a persistent question as to whether the methodologies in the studies presented in the second half of the work, focused on Conversational Analysis (CA) and the Discourse Analysis (DA), cohere to the ambitions of dialogical pedagogy offered in the first. In the end, the promise that CA affords greater magnification of classroom moments does not overcome what may be a limitation of the methodology to unearth dialogic pedagogy.

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Skidmore and Murakami's 2016 book *New perspectives on language and education: Vol. 51. Dialogic Pedagogy: The importance of dialogue in teaching and learning* is a collection of essays that takes on a dual theoretical and empirical project: first, to define and advocate for dialogical classroom pedagogy; and second, to unearth such practice through microstudies of classroom dialogue. This project divides itself neatly in half: the first six chapters trace the theory of dialogic pedagogy, including the history of discourse, coding, and practices, while the remaining seven are devoted to empirical studies marked by a careful microanalysis of dialogue.

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Theoretical Framing of the Dialogical Pedagogy

The first half of the work offers a coherent, theoretical frame for dialogic pedagogy in both history and educational research. After a brief introduction to the collection in the first chapter, chapter 2 focuses on the early counterforces by Russian linguistics against Saussure's structuralism. Chapter 2 author Skidmore skillfully reviews the formative influence of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, notably sourcing dialogism to Yakubinsky, who charges that each speaker brings an "apperceptive mass" (p.17) of past locutions and thoughts that may resemble or differ from the mass of another. Skidmore here marks the "linguistic turn"¹ at the start of the 20th century with Yakubinsky's proposition that language is a function of the socio-cultural contexts of speech and not, as structuralists might assert, the maker of the world (Saussure, 1959)². In chapter 3, author Daniels (2016) elaborates this social-cultural proposition in a contributing work on Vygotsky, which provides a theoretical base as to how the conceptions of dialogic theory laid the groundwork early for research in the post-structuralist years of the late 20th century.

In chapter 4, Brinn (2016) offers a welcome addition by outlining conceptions of dialogue by Bohm (1996) and Buber (1947). She writes that Bohm proposed that, in an ideal exchange, participants suspend their opinions as they consider those of others. But such a practice, she warns, can lead to epistemological relativity, as if every position in the classroom is valid, even those that may be non-factual or in opposition

¹ According to Hacker (2013), "The expression 'the linguistic turn' was introduced by Gustav Bergmann in his review of Peter Strawson's *Individuals* in 1960."

² Saussure (1959) makes the following claim: "Without language thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no preexisting ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language" (p.112).

to each other. In her review of Buber (1947), Brinn stresses the space *between* rather than *within* conversants, underscoring the covenant of genuine dialogue when each participant is fully conscious and will "turn towards" the other (p.74). Introducing Bohm and Buber into the conversation about discourse, Brinn fills a critical theoretical gap often disregarded by other works.

While the first chapters of Skidmore and Murakami's collection carefully diagram a history of discourse, their review is by no means exhaustive. The authors neglect to mention the important contributions of Habermas (1984), among others, in the lineage of thought from Russia to Buber to Bohm. Like Bohm, Habermas expressed a view that dialogue was consensus-building. In contrast to the divergent, simultaneous voices of Bakhtin, Habermas (1984) suggested that people engaged in dialogue aim to resolve varied opinions in the room: "[t]he concept of communicative action presupposes the use of language as a medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise valid claims that can be accepted or contested" (p. 99). If one aim of the first half of the collection was to introduce a theoretical frame for dialogic pedagogy, then the editors might have contextualized the full history of work in the 20th century rather than offer the curated focus of chapters 2, 3, and 4. A recent brief article (Peters & Bisley, 2019) ably traces the lineage between the theorists mentioned in the collection (Bakhtin, Freire, Buber, and Bohm) and those left unmentioned (Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Gadamer, Apel, Hegel, Oakshott, and Rorty). Still, even without the integration of a more comprehensive history of dialogue, the initial chapters provide considerations for the second half of empirical micro-studies.

Chapters 5 and 6, each written by Skidmore, shift from theory to a history of empirical studies of dialogue. Chapter 5 reviews essential research examining classroom discourse: from the studies of Sinclair and Coulthard's coding discourse (1979) to Mehan's "turn allocation apparatus" (1979) to the exploratory and final draft discourse of Barnes (1976), ending with Cazden's reconsideration of the initiation-response-follow-up sequence (IRF) and more community-centered discourse practices. One missing thread through this section is the teasing out of Cazden's (1988) extension of the evaluation, the "E," in the initiation-response-evaluation exchange (IRE), and how teachers subsequently recalibrate their replies to student commentary to move beyond approval or correction. Though unmentioned, Cazden's uptake question is a crucial component of what Skidmore deems the "spontaneous improvisation in the performance of a lesson" (p.96). Still, Skidmore reminds the reader that it was Cazden who first likened the teacher to the jazz musician, a comparison used so often that many neglect the source. With its history of discourse coding, this chapter lays the groundwork for the Skidmore's methodological move toward discourse microstudies in the classroom.

The chapter that follows, chapter 6, traces essential research of classroom dialogue by Wells (1989), Nystrand (1997), and Alexander (2001), and their respective work with dialogic instruction, dialogic inquiry, and dialogic teaching to clarify each study's primary focus of research. For instance, Nystrand's work on what he deemed dialogic instruction considers an instructor's authentic questioning, that is, questions with no prescribed answer. Skidmore first reviews Nystrand's study of 400 lessons in 25 high schools revealing that dialogical instruction was "superior" to recitation. While Nystrand's work examines the relative openness of the teacher's line of questioning, Wells's study shifts the focus of research to the teacher's response in the 'follow-up' of Mehan's IRF "turn-taking apparatus" (1979) and Bereiter's "progressive discourse"(1994), where students extend, qualify, and amend each other's arguments. In fact, the respective nomenclature of "turn-taking apparatus," which implies a mechanistic, industrialized propulsion in dialogue, and the organic, evolutionary implications of "progressive discourse" traces a shift from structuralist to post-structuralist conceptions in research. Perhaps the grandest work is that of

Alexander, whose broad, intercontinental study picks up the generalized mantle of “dialogic teaching,” defined by a list of 61 indicators, some of which are contextual, such as quick lesson transitions, while the remainder falls into seven categories of exchange, including variations of interaction, questioning, monitoring, and feedback between the teacher and student and among students. While this summation is a helpful review of significant studies undertaken in the past decades of research, it reminds scholars of the stakeholding claim oft-cited research has and the need for additional study.

This collection aims to add to this arc of research, as editors Skidmore and Murakami present seven chapters of empirical studies, each differing in context and age-level. Chapter 7, for instance, focuses on dialogue in middle school writing conferences, while chapter 9 examines primary school responses to a story; still, another chapter, chapter 12, studies exchange in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Are these chapters no more than a loose patchwork of varied sites of study and diverse learners? Would the collection have benefitted from studies limited to one age group or mode of study, such as EFL? As diverse as these sites of study are, the work is united by a shift in methodology, in which the editors argue the benefits of Conversational Analysis (CA) over Discourse Analysis (DA) in exploring dialogical spaces of classroom events. Whether the methodology effectively delivers on the promise of theory is one consideration I would like to address here.

A Brief History of Conversational Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA)

Since the work aims to consider the benefits and limits of both Conversational Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA), it may be helpful to review the history of each here. Proposed and formalized by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), CA introduced a system to examine conversation as a turn-taking system, a system they likened to other ordered “moves”: formal activities, such as meetings or debates; sociological engagements, such as the order of maneuvers in games or traffic; and everyday social interactions, such as customer service or informal conversation. Their work provides a transcription protocol for conversation to notate sequencing (overlapping, latching, or lapses between units of exchange), the intonation, volume, pitch, explosive aspiration, and other forms of audio production, such as whispering, laughter, or coughing. While the notation protocols have expanded since its introduction, scholars admitted that CA was not intended to be a replacement for the nuance of recorded data (Atkinson & Heritage, 1985). Even so, researchers maintained the scientific nature of recording and its transcription through CA, stressing that the “repeated and detailed examination of particular events in interaction . . . greatly enhances the range and precision of the observations that can be made” (Atkinson & Heritage, 1985, p. 4). In sum, by extending speech act theory’s examination of the semantic unit (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) to the turn-taking unit or sequence of linked exchanges, CA expanded the gathering of data in both range and precision.

Contemporaneous with the research of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) was the theoretical and sociological work on everyday discourse by Goffman (1981). In one remarkable passage, Goffman compares conversational exchange to a dance between partners, with the physical embodiment, of gesture, joint, stance, footing, frame, and play:

And with that, the dance of talk might finally be available to us. Without diffidence, we could attend fully to what it means to be *in play*, and we could gain appreciation of the considerable resources available to a speaker each time he *holds the floor* . . . His responses themselves he can *present* with hedges of various sorts, with routine reservations, so that he can *withdraw from the standpoint*, and thence the self . . . Part-way through his turn he can *break frame* and introduce an

aside, alluding to extraneous matters, or reflexivity to the effort at communication in progress—his own—in either case temporarily presenting himself to his listeners *on a changed footing*” (p.73, emphasis my own).

Goffman’s metaphor disabuses the notion that orality is bodiless. Though not as permanent as writing, orality, nonetheless, is as physical as the movement in space between partners. His comparison lends substance and physicality to daily conversation, allowing us to envision the starts, hesitations, “holds,” reflexive adjustments, and quick shifts in “footing” in what seems at once both rehearsed and responsive. To Goffman’s linguistic-poetic tract, Sacks, Schelgloff, and Jefferson (1974) provided what they coin as a “systematic” that bases CA on decisive, coded movements and sequences examined granularly. In this way, CA is linked historically and epistemologically to the structuralist position of viewing the text as an object of study, independent of the social context into which it is situated.

Discourse Analysis

Academic terminology is often redefined or refined by scholars, which can lead to semantic conflation. “Discourse” is an apt example. When Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) first introduced their research, titled “Toward an Analysis of Discourse,” it came as no surprise that the method came to be known as “Discourse Analysis.” But when theorists redefined “discourse” (Foucault, 1972), an understandable point of confusion occurred. Initially, discourse denoted language used in oratory or writing, but this definition soon became energetically redefined by Foucault, who situated discourse within the socio-cultural and historical context that produced it. For Foucault, discourse engendered “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 54). Language was no longer a closed system of structural signs and signifiers, guided by rules, but rather an interpenetrating exchange between culture, knowledge, and power.

As an extension of this theory into a method, Discourse Analysis (DA) contended with the contextual and socio-historical, and hence, the linguistic confusion of DA continued, even as it yielded branched methods, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodack & Mayer, 2009). According to Fairclough (1992), who viewed language as an implement of power, Discourse enfolds three dimensions: the text (speech, writing, or image), the discursive practice of analysis within the text, and the social practices and structures bound to notions of power and knowledge. Years later, Gee (1999) offered a toolkit for researchers using DA, all the while admitting that he does “not want to suggest that there is any ‘lock step’ method to be followed in doing a discourse analysis” (p.119). Still, Gee’s DA of working-class and upper-middle-class teens provided a window into the “lifeworlds” (Habermas, 1984) of each. By carefully examining the “I-statements,” that is, utterances in which the subject is “I,” and dividing these statements categorically, Gee concluded that “[t]he upper-middle-class teenagers are focused on knowledge claims, assessment, evaluation, their movement through achievement space, and the relationship between the present and the future. The working-class teens are focused on social, physical, and dialogic interactions” (1999, p. 129). Gee’s work rests alongside Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which affords the researcher a “reflection on issues of mediation between language and social structure ... absent from other linguistic approaches, for example from conversational analysis” (Wodak & Mayer, 2009, p.21). Here, both DA and CDA function as a linguistic gateway to the *exterior* lifeworlds of power and knowledge.

Skidmore and Murakami’s collection employs neither the post-structuralist knowledge of exterior lifeworlds of either Fairclough and Gee’s DA or CDA. Instead, the chapters present Sinclair and Coulthard’s

structuralist analysis of discourse as “DA,”³ setting this against Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson’s CA (1974). Thus, the underlying project of the collection, one with emerging clarity as one moves through the empirical studies, is the case that CA provides a more subtle measure of the classroom event than “DA.” Nevertheless, this examination prompts one to question whether either method of analysis adequately fulfills the task to describe and analyze dialogism. Consequently, a pressing question persists: can structuralist-based methodologies, such as CA, reveal the complexity of dialogism? Skidmore and Murakami’s collection adheres to such structuralist methods, but there are other practitioners, which I will address later, who adopt post-modern, mixed-method approaches that may provide another solution (Fecho, 2005; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2014; Skaftun, 2019).

Is Methodology a Gateway or Stumbling Block to the Dialogism?

Whether this shift to discourse methodology can unearth the realities of dialogical space in the classroom is something worth considering. Unlike previous studies of duration, scope, and territories, these studies zoom in on the granular nature of classroom exchange, examining the subtle exchanges within the teacher-student dyad. In effect, these chapters advance the micro-research of prosody analysis in surprising ways. Even primary school students, for instance, can be inspired by authentic questions that make them ponder. Further, a teacher’s gesture and intonation in the classroom may engage in a form of communication in concert with utterance; and small group, student-to-student exchanges can lead a community of learners to affect real change through dialogical discourse. Although not all classrooms may adhere to such ideals, some of the research presented provides some vision of the future of classroom discourse.

In select chapters, however, the research only confirms that dialogical pedagogy is more often theory than practice. Chapters 8, 11, and 12, for instance, reveal the disappointing persistence of dominant monological and recitation practices. For instance, chapter 8, authored by Kremer (2016), focuses on a novice teacher of three classes in Luxenberg who relies on recitation practices to conduct the lesson. In his analysis, Kremer makes a bold claim that classroom discourse has “expanded” into the dialogic space. Yet each example remains locked within the teacher-student dyad, showcasing one student’s abstracted response to a teacher’s prompt that does not represent the complexity of dialogism. Although the study admirably presents a meticulous analysis of teaching turns, discourse, and cognitive activity, this work admits the absence of dialogic practice. In his conclusion, Kremer notes the difficulty of dialogic pedagogy, conceding “that the study has revealed that creating a multi-voice classroom is a problematic undertaking” and the need for a “grid of descriptors of good practice . . . to optimize classroom discourse” (p.151). Studies like these, which confirm what has for years been documented, passively bear witness to the lack of dialogical stances in the classroom. Given the careful charting of the history of discourse analysis and dialogical research in the early chapters of the collection, are new dialogical approaches needed to enact some shift in practice?

Another chapter at odds with dialogical discourse is chapter 11, in which co-authors Skidmore and Murakami offer a granular microanalysis of teacher talk using prosody and CA. Inspired by Goffman’s ideas of the shifting footing of speech acts, this chapter adds nuance to the analysis of inflection in the follow-up, e.g., the “F” in the IRF, yet still gathers no effective research into dialogic pedagogy. Similar to the last chapter, the researchers contribute little to the overall aim of the collection; Instead, they propose a method of examining the music of speech in discourse. In the end, this research focuses on the triad of recitation

³ To clarify the confusion around Discourse Analysis, I hereafter employ “DA” in reference to the analysis of discourse proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974); In distinction to this, DA will refer to Discourse Analysis, as proposed, post-Foucault, by Fairclough (1992) and Gee (1999).

rather than the multiplicity of voices within the dialogical discourse. While not explicit, the inclusion of the chapter hints at the possible transferability of examining prosody onto dialogical space, as it would be of interest to examine a student's change of footing with CA in the intersubjectivity of dialogue.

In chapter 12, authors Zhao, Skidmore, and Murakami (2016) argue that one may move beyond the limitations of the triadic structure in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in China using CA. They advocate for "conversational prosody" (p. 204), or the orientation of speakers to each other's speech acts. They notate duration, rate, rhythm, and pause to analyze how teachers indicate shifts in footing and activity. Further, the researchers coined the term "prosaic chopping" (p. 212), which refers to the up-and-down hand gesture used in the classroom for emphasis or as a non-verbal indicator that the teacher is addressing the whole and not an individual. Yet while the application of CA and conversational prosody provides greater insight into working across languages in an EFL classroom, this examination of IRE does little to move dialogical classroom studies forward. As such, the chapter, while perhaps a legitimate offering in another journal, seems at odds with the overall dialogical project of the work.

The slow course toward research on dialogic pedagogy is more at work in the studies of chapters 7, 9, and 13, as varied in scope and age as they are. In chapter 7's micro-study of a writing group of three students, Esiyok (2016) notes shifts in thought positions, reconsiderations of previous stances, and the mindful engagement of not only the instructor but also peers who exhibit "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981). Establishing the codes of discourse conduct bolstered by research, Esiyok presents her research of 12 students ages 7 and 8 in a European school who have written a comparison essay of two mosques the class had visited. Though the writing group comprised of three students and a teacher is deemed "dialogical," the line of questioning is less informed by "authentic" questioning as it is by correcting misconceptions among peers. Still, when the small group workshops a poem, the teacher guides students through the process of identifying a better word for "stunning" to describe music, this research offers an example of Skidmore's proposition that dialogic pedagogy is transferable to creative acts and thinking. In this exchange, the teacher stays silent to allow the voices of the children to come forward, and, by doing so, materializes what she notes as Mercer's "interthinking" (2000). The innovation of this study is that it tracks thought, dialogue, and revision in the form of rewriting. In this way, one may trace the effect of dialogical pedagogy on reflective thinking and how that translates into the production of work.

Such dialogic patterns are seen as well in the gentle moves of primary school students in chapter 9 and the more complex and nuanced poetic interpretations of secondary school students in chapter 13. In chapter 9, for instance, Skidmore (2016) carefully examined two exchanges in lower school classrooms of five students tested for reading comprehension. In the first, Skidmore observes what he deems a "monological" exchange in which the discourse is a variation of IRE, with the teacher questioning for the "correct" comprehension question of a test question. Skidmore then posits more dialogical approaches to explore what might be deemed student "errors," thereby envisioning various interventions and corrections as "critical turning points" to provide alternative departure routes for both student and teacher out of the limitations of monological discourse (p.170). The second exchange begins with an "authentic" or open-ended question as to which character was most to blame in "Blue Riding Hood." This exchange offers something approaching dialogism, with a "responsive-collaborative" script akin to that identified by Guitierrez (1994) and collective engagement in a "problem solving" discourse. Skidmore writes how joint discussions invite a Bakhtinian community of literacy practices in dialogue:

[B]y pooling their thinking and making it public, they were also encouraged to make it more explicit, and to open it up to modification through considering other points of view, with the result that

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they attained a richer understanding of the story collectively than they would be likely to have achieved individually (p.164).

Skidmore's juxtaposition of similar literacy groups weighs pedagogical dialogue, which he deems a "monological conception of truth" (p.37) against dialogic pedagogy, one characterized by continuous, recursive modifications amid varied external discourses subsequently internalized. He concludes that the practice of discourse emerges from the instructor's line of questioning, though this may suggest a predetermined sense of the meaning of any given text. In light of Bakhtin's work with literature, Skidmore underscores that literary texts invite a "non-algorithmic form of knowledge" (p.166). To reduce such complexity to a gathering of plot points is mere transmission-based pedagogy. Instead, one may introduce a more cognitively weighted practice within any text by questioning, categorizing, ranking, and debating. To do so is to enter into the post-structural messiness of literature, where students, even at young ages, may construct with others intellectual identities through the intersubjective engagement. The question, however, remains as to whether "DA" can clarify the dialogicity in the classroom discourse.

Some scholars have debated whether Skidmore's "DA" method itself is deterministic, a false front of dialogism that is instead "a preset didactic strategy aimed to arrive at certain present curricular endpoints" (Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, Kullenberg, & Curtis, 2019, p. E59). The claim by these researchers is that those practicing "DA," though often reflexively skeptical, still maintain a strict researcher-subject relation. Rarely are research subjects invited to construct meaning in the process of research itself. Still, this chapter aims toward a break in the "inertia" of authoritative discourse, arguing that there can emerge "micro-economies" of dialogism (p.167).

While the pedagogy in chapter 9 argues for a line of authentic questioning to induce, however incompletely, a dialogism, chapter 13 uses both CA and "DA" as a method of comparative analysis to reveal the dialogicity in the classroom. In this chapter, authors Skidmore and Murakami examine the transcript of a whole classroom discussion of a poem with both "DA" and CA to assess the value and limitations of each. According to the authors, the "DA" framework constricts rather than reveals the complexity of exchange in an inquiry-based classroom. For instance, the "DA" method allows the researcher to classify only four kinds of actions by students: the bid, reply, reaction, and elicitation. Some responses, they argue, belie such categorization.

In contrast, the use of CA with the same exchanges affords greater interpretative subtlety than "DA." With CA, researchers have magnified proximity to the nuanced exchange in which the gaps, pauses, markers of disagreement (well, for example) can be marked and coded. In this chapter, the authors' highlight their commitment to micro-analysis, in which the "fine-grained analysis of the prosody of teacher-student dialogue . . . reveal[s] aspects of the dynamic flux of classroom interaction which previous research in this area has left untouched" (p.199). Though the authors conclude that the polyphonic arrangement of voices revealed by CA "do not completely mesh" into dialogism, the researchers still maintain that CA offers "a higher power of magnification" (p. 233, 235).

Still, "magnification" is mired in the positivist notion that truth may be found under the microscope—that videotaping classrooms represents all that transpires, and coding practices, like those in CA, will bring the researcher closer to a dialogic pedagogy. A post-structuralist practitioner of DA (Gee, 1999) or CDA (Wodack & Mayer, 2009) may rightly question such an epistemological and ontological stance: one that seeks to render the complexities of the dialogism into a scientific process of magnification. Latour (2014) warned of the lure of the zoom lens:

It is incorrect, moreover, to think that maps, for instance, prove the reality of the zoom effect: when one shifts from a map on a scale of 1 cm. to 1 km. to one on 1 cm. to 10 km., the latter does not contain the same information as the former: it contains other information that might (or might not) coincide with what appears in the former. In spite of appearances, the optical and cartographic metaphors do not overlap. It might even be said that the former has become so parasitical on the latter that it has rendered the very concept of cartography almost incomprehensible. Optics has distorted cartography entirely. (p. 121)

What we may now deem the Google Maps effect has become so commonplace that the postmodern mind has come to view the zoom as some verification of reality and the view from afar, a vague generalization of detail. Is, then, the zooming in on the details of linguistic discourse through CA and or the patterns and structures of turns in “DA” a false conception of truth? For Latour, the microscope can mislead, and perhaps the same may be true of such methods in the classroom.

A Dialogical Method for the Dialogical Classroom?

What then is a methodology for the study of dialogic pedagogy? Are these structuralist-based practices the most illuminating means to reveal the complexity of discourse? Does the microstudy inhibit dialogism? Consider how the studies of this collection, so finely limited in size and scope, compare to the work of Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, and Heintz (2014). These researchers brought dialogical theory to its practical application for the working educator, recalling that dialogical work is a form of *cumulation* (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2014, citing Alexander & Mercer) since the educator-in-practice must consider work throughout the year and not merely for one lesson.

Other researchers have adopted a more subjective, post-positivistic stances of inquiry to capture the dialogism. Qualitative, narrative methodologies may illuminate moments of wonder (Bibler, 2009) or wobble (Fecho, 2005), as researchers adopt a more self-consciously reflective practice in meaning-making (Sullivan, 2011). Some narrative researchers even invite their subject-participants into the co-construction of meaning. Resultingly, some suggest mixed-methodologies that enfold micro-analysis, dialogical work overtime, and intersubjective collaboration between researcher-teacher-student, which may come closer to the heart of what may be happening in dialogical spaces (Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, Kullenberg, & Curtis, 2019; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2014).

Dialogic Discourse Analysis

Given the limitations of structuralist-based methods to describe and analyze dialogism in the classroom in this work, I would like to recall a recent work published in this journal by Skaftun (2019), which introduces a methodology that may offer a glimpse into future practices. Introducing dialogical discourse analysis (DDA) as a toolkit for educational researchers, Skaftun stressed the “dialogizing background” of each utterance, situating it in a chain of utterances both within and between agents in the classroom. A striking component of Skaftun’s work is how he repositions himself as researcher with a post-modern skeptical self-awareness. In this way, his positionality is a correction to the hierarchies of past structuralist research methods. To his point, both CA and “DA” are steeped in social scientific methodologies, which, combined with the structuralism of linguistic studies, still presupposes some untroubled truth in the transcript of a classroom. The researcher is a “decoder” of the text, and, much like the modern literary critic, an exegetical interpreter of the event of the classroom. While the researchers in Skidmore and Murakami’s collection admit the limitations of the studies, they do not question the methodology itself. They hold their methodology as a pillar of scientific truth. Furthermore, though researchers bandy about the language of

dialogism, the work is not invested in a method that corresponds with the post-structuralist queries of dialogical research.

As a point of comparison, Skaftun positions himself in his project as an “alien researcher” (2019, p. A153), exterior to the history and habits of the classroom. As an outsider, he repeatedly discloses his subjectivity, which, though a limitation, is also a liberation. For instance, he admits to subjective interpretations of the first math classes he visited, noting that he used neither audio nor videotape. Still, his subjective, “alien” stance affords an interpretative latitude of perception. He marks subversive forces at play in the discourse of a classroom, one to which teachers may have been tone-deaf. But rather than impose his “alien” research stance, he notes the “gap” between the teachers understanding and his own—an invitation for continued discourse and research, in full recognition that researcher, teacher, and students are engaged in a “field of discursive struggle” (p. A153). My point here is that some methodological needle has been moved from what I would deem as a structuralist-based methodology of CA to the bricolage of methods thereafter.

What Skaftun (2019) offers the field of discourse studies is an introduction to and affirmation of DDA as a method, one in which both students, teachers, and researchers are authors and subjects in an interdependent construction of pedagogy. In doing so, Skaftun wrests the researcher from “scientific” linguistic analysis and the event of the classroom as artifact. In its place, he considers the classroom itself as an *unfinalizable* text, co-authored by students and teachers and “read,” however subjectively, by the reflective practitioner. With Skaftun’s work, DDA, in the very least, is theorized, if not fully materialized, as a practice. One might envision what it could mean to engage with and return to a classroom over time, working dialogically with teachers and students. The great benefit of empirical studies, even those that admit a deficit of findings, is that they help conceptualize studies to come. As a recursive practice of constructing meaning, scholarship, in offering itself to the discipline for reflection and critique, invites practices, pedagogies, and methodologies for the future.

As a point of distinction, Skidmore and Murakami’s collection theorizes about dialogism while adopting the structuralized methodologies formulated in the early 70s and 80s. This disjunction between the theory of dialogism and a method to reveal it cannot go unremarked. If, as I have pointed out in this review, many of the researchers in this collection concede to the lack of dialogism in the classroom, who is to say that the method of study itself or its duration are not to blame? Given the reliance on micro- rather than long-term study and on DA and CA, might there be dialogism in the gaps, margins, and days unobserved that went unnoticed and unmarked? There may be dialogism in the classroom, but are researchers ready and able to research, record, and write about it?

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