

Building a community in a primary drama-based language classroom: A membership categorization analysis of identity work in classroom interaction

Won Kim

The use of educational drama in language/literacy classrooms has been recognized for its potential contribution to building a learning community where the dynamic construction and interaction of identities take place while developing language and literacy (Belliveau, 2009; Grady, 2000; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Wagner, 1999; Winston, 2004). However, there is little empirical evidence on how students' and teacher's identities are actually done in drama-based language/literacy classrooms. The present paper is an effort to make a contribution to a pedagogical/scholarly discussion on the topic by investigating a naturally-occurring classroom interaction in one primary drama-based language classroom in Canada to explore the question of whether, when, how and why identities are accomplished interactionally in the unfolding moment-to-moment classroom interaction.

To pursue this research inquiry, an ethnomethodological analytic approach named Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Baker, 2000; Hester & Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1972) was adopted. The detailed analysis of the interactive and categorical work exhibited in the transcript of one short segment of the video recorded interaction in this primary drama-based classroom demonstrates how interactants in this classroom interaction constructed, occasioned, recognized, and extended their knower-coinquirer identities under the category collection (i.e., MCD) of a collaborative reader community (rather than an omnirelevant conventional school MCD) in accomplishing a jointly-constructed intersubjective understanding of the lesson content such as vocabulary, narratives, and characters in a Shakespeare's play. This bottom-up analytic observation reveals how explicitly and implicitly the teacher's and students' identities were managed interactionally, how interaction was shaped in conjunction with identity and how actually the interactional accomplishment of a sense of community among the teacher and students doing established or emergent knower inquirer identity was locally done. Finally, the paper suggests how emic perspectives of an MCA approach can expand our understanding of the possibilities and implications of drama-based language/literacy education.