

Communication And Learning Revisited: Making Meaning Through Talk

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Learning, identity and classroom dialogue

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Abstract

The classroom can be understood as the site of various forms of dialogical interaction. Taken together, engagement in such dialogues results in experiences for students that can impact positively or negatively on their personal and social identities. While the research literature acknowledges this in various ways, there is potential for a research programme more explicitly focused on how different learners respond differentially to classroom situations in terms of their developing identities in the broadest sense. Such a programme could complement life history-based approaches to understanding educational and career trajectories and evaluations of effective teaching based on narrow measures of performativity, by providing micro-level data in the context of a conceptual framework drawn from developmental and/or discursive psychology.

Keywords: research, identity, dialogue, teaching-and-learning

Learning, identity and classroom dialogue

In this paper I explore the relationship between learning through classroom dialogue and identity development, as a move towards a re-evaluation of effective classroom teaching that associates deep learning with positive identity development, while acknowledging dialogism in all its dimensions. My aim is to encourage research that focuses on the role of classroom interaction, as it is variously defined, in identity development. Such research has the potential both to critique and to complement views of effective teaching as defined performatively, in terms of output measures such as test results. Several commentators have made the case for such a counter-move (such as Blake et al 1998; Pollard 1999).

The key question to be explored is, 'How can classroom learning, via the forms of dialogue possible in classrooms, impact on identity development?' This

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