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Oral Communication Skills and Pedagogy

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Abstract

Conversation is the very heart of schooling and pedagogy. In early education, oral language development is particularly significant for interactions, social relationships, and friendships, and for building a sense of belonging. Educators help children develop oral language skills both directly through linguistic interaction with them and indirectly by creating an environment, which is rich in learning stimuli. This chapter aims to establish how educators manage oral language in preschool classrooms and how the implementation of specific approaches has more positive results than that of others. References are made to theoretical approaches of sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication. In this research, kindergarten teachers engage pupils in discussions on the topic of 'Tolerance'. The activities were recorded and the content analyzed according to the qualitative content analysis of speech and communication. The analysis identified constructive interventions with positive results, along with less effective ones, which proved discouraging for children. We suggest that children in early childhood construct meaning and learn in accordance with the ways in which adults manage orality.

Keywords: oral communication, teachers' competencies, communication models, preschool curriculum

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that conversation in the learning process is the very heart of schooling and pedagogy. Children, in their efforts to discover and understand the world around them, continuously ask questions. Oral skills are a crucial factor for teacher-child interactions and children's development of oral language. In early education, oral language development is particularly significant for interactions, social relationships, and friendship, and for building a sense of belonging. Educators help children develop good oral language skills both directly through their language interaction with them and indirectly by creating an environment rich

in learning stimuli. Teachers' oral communication skills are capable of actively supporting curriculum implementation and meeting its goals.

This chapter aims to establish how educators manage oral discourse in preschool classrooms and how the implementation of specific approaches has more positive results than that of others. References are made to the theoretical approaches of sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication, as well as to Fairclough, Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, Mercer, Edwards, Maclure, Maybin, Volosinov, etc. The significance of active listening is analyzed as a primary skill for the language development. In addition, references are made to communication models such as the transmission model of communication and the model of interactive communication.

Early education provides many speaking opportunities. Educators develop various activities aimed at language development, such as circle time discussions, teacher-learner routine interactions, reading and narrating stories, developing topics, giving directions, describing pictures, setting rules, and reading public signs.

In this research, kindergarten educators engage students in discussions on the topic of 'Tolerance'. Children are invited to observe, describe, and narrate the story based on related images. In this effort, they are motivated and supported by their teachers. The main goals of the teachers' interventions are children's active participation, staying on topic, and responding to *who, what, where, when, and how* questions. The activities were recorded and the content was analyzed according to the qualitative content analysis of speech and communication. The research focuses on two questions:

- Which specific strategies result in children being more productive in oral language?
- Which communication model is implemented by educators?

The main body of this work comprises of three parts. Part I considers theoretical concepts associated with linguistic power and the function of the official language taught in schools as a medium for imposing state power. Emphasis is placed on oral discourse and communication in the school context. References are made to the transmission model and the dialogic model of communication. Part II consists of two sections. The first section considers the issue of orality management in the kindergarten and presents the key principles and objectives of the Greek kindergarten curriculum. The second section analyzes the importance of supporting oral communication in early childhood and the critical role of kindergarten educators to this end. The section also presents the methodology applied for curriculum implementation. Part III presents recordings of classroom discussions on 'Tolerance'. The recordings come from two kindergarten classrooms; they were transcribed and analyzed accordingly by the means of communication content analysis.

The analysis found that each educator develops their own educational strategy that stems from their own personal theory and oral competencies. Constructive interventions with positive results were identified, along with less effective ones, which proved discouraging for children. Features of the more constructive interventions were: the implementation of the interactive communication model, the initiation-reaction-feedback (IRF) rule, a child-centered approach, credit time for children, a positive classroom climate, and the zone of proximal development perceived as an attribute of pedagogical phenomena.

This research attempted to identify how children learn to construct an understanding of the world around them. We suggest that in early childhood, children construct meaning and learn in accordance with the ways in which adults manage orality. It is the authors' opinion that this statement extends the scope of the communication theory of learning in order to highlight the value of genuine dialog in the learning process.

2. Symbolic language and communication in the school context

Oral discourse is the child's earliest medium for knowledge acquisition and exploration of the world. It is the sphere in which knowledge and understanding are developed. Upon entering the school institution, the child assumes the role of student. Although learning to write takes great discipline, learning to speak is a less stressful process. According to Ong [1], writing is learned through concentration or study; rarely does it occur as spontaneously or smoothly as speaking. Through the practice of orality and the educator's mediation, the child assumes the role of subject-student.

The educational system tends to devalue popular modes of expression and impose the recognition of one legitimate language. The systematic learning of the standard language is the first coercion that occurs in the school context. According to Bloomfield [2], the official language imposes itself on all subjects on the territory of a political unit as the only legitimate language, especially in formal situations. As Bourdieu [3] notes, "the official language is bound up with the state... It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market dominated by the official language. Obligatory on official occasions and in official places (schools, public administrations, political institutions etc.), this state language becomes the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured". As the state's enforcement body for linguistic use, educators have the authority to subject the performance of speaking subjects to examinations and to officially sanction the outcomes.

The form of oral discourse most commonly encountered in educational practice is dialog. The relationship between interlocutors in this process is asymmetrical. The dominant interlocutor has longer turns and is in control of interruptions and corrections, thus putting at stake the subordinate interlocutor's freedom of speech. The register is not necessarily formal but rules of linguistic politeness are generally observed. "Within this context, educators and learners participate in a system of relationships of symbolic power" [3].

The analysis of oral communication in the school context aims to establish the types of conversation, which most promote students' understanding of curriculum content. Most research focuses on teacher-learner dialogs [4–7], whereas learner-to-learner conversation has been addressed by a rather limited number of researchers. Research findings indicate that although students learn from their teachers, they learn better from their peers. The *orality movement* emphasized the importance of oral discourse in the school context. Maclure attempted to specify the concept of orality and its types and to determine which of these types are promoted by the educational system. The four types of orality she identified are: orality for personal development, orality for cultural transformation, orality for learning, and orality for functional linguistic ability [8].

Regarding the systematic research of talk, two models of communication have been proposed. The *Transmission Model of Communication* views oral discourse as a medium for the transmission of information between a sender and a receiver. Although this model is held in high regard in educational practice, it fails to penetrate the complexity of oral discourse [9]. The second model, the *Dialogic Model* [10] draws on Piaget and Vygotsky and their constructive process of discourse. According to the *Dialogic Model*, understanding between interlocutors is constructed through dialog and is shaped by the social and cultural context. Hence, talk is a complete system of cooperative understanding.

The dialogic model is connected to Volosinov and Bakhtin, according to whom utterances and responses constitute a chain of interlinked verbal events [9]. "Bakhtin suggests that dialogues are set up within utterances by our taking on and reproducing other people's voices either directly through speaking their words as if they were our own, or through the use of reported speech". Notwithstanding this appropriation of other people's voices, subjects retain responsibility for their choices [11]. Miller identifies nonlinguistic knowledge, as opposed to linguistic rules, as the main medium for understanding utterances. Furthermore, for effective communication to occur, it is vital that interlocutors wish to be understood. Understanding another person's utterances is a problem-solving process. Lack of cooperation in identifying and solving problems would render language a worthless communication tool [12].

According to Volosinov, words are ideological signs that emerge from the social contact between individual consciousnesses. They are the purest and the most sensitive means of social contact. Their main property is that, despite their interindividual nature, they are produced with the means possessed by the individual organism. Therefore, words constitute the semiotic content of individual consciousness. At the same time, words cannot be isolated from the specific social conditions in which they developed; in other words, they cannot exist as pure natural constructs.

By the same standards, comprehension is viewed as the result of interaction between a speaker and a listener. The nature of true understanding is dialogic. Meaning does not belong to a word itself, nor does it reside in either the speaker's or the listener's psyche. Rather, it is the result of a speaker-listener interaction produced through the content of a particular complex of phones. Like an electric spark, which can only be generated when two opposite poles come into contact, the electricity of verbal contact provides the word with the light of meaning [13]. For Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Volosinov, language is socially and culturally shaped, and its use bears particular value judgments and commitments.

Conversation is the principal day-to-day linguistic behavior. The *conversation analysis* method was developed in 1970 in order to explore how ordinary daily behavior is perceived. Recognizing the fluid nature of conversation, conversation analysts study the way in which interlocutors perceive structure and coordinate their behavior so that effective verbal exchange can exist.

The key concepts of *conversation analysis* are coordination and collaboration. The operation of these concepts resembles that of nonverbal communication. For example, when one person wishes to give an object to another person, the outcome of the action is dependent on the two persons' collaboration. Participants in verbal communication behave in a similar way. Their behavior is familiar and predictable in its structure so that a communicatively successful outcome can be achieved.

3. Orality in the preschool curriculum

3.1. Key principles and objectives

Primary education curricula on language explicitly acknowledge that effective verbal communication can be stimulated by implementing appropriate strategies. The main objective is to enable students to use situation-appropriate language and to build critical awareness of linguistic uses and functions. The key principles of the cross-thematic curriculum are child-centeredness, active learning, exploratory learning, group work involving action and talk, and the teacher's role as co-explorer or mentor.

The Greek kindergarten curriculum on language focuses on the gradual acquisition of language and knowledge by encouraging the exchange of messages. Communication permeates all the learning domains of the curriculum, facilitating an interactive and multi-sensory learning process. A holistic approach to language is adopted which views language as an integrated whole comprising of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This approach is based on *continuity* theories, according to which oral and written speech exist on a continuum [14]. Curriculum designers examined language curricula from other European countries and took into account research findings [15–17]. According to these, kindergarten can play a crucial role in preventing school failure, which, for young learners, is mainly associated with unfamiliarity with linguistic aspects of written discourse, as is often the case with children from unprivileged educational and social backgrounds. Furthermore, the curriculum drew on the Nuffield Science and Humanities Curriculum projects implemented by the British Schools Council in the 1960s and 1970s [8].

Admission to kindergarten inevitably means that new demands are made on the verbal communication the child has developed within the family and the wider social context. At this stage, family literacy plays a decisive role. According to the Greek Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework [18], diverse communicative situations are created in the kindergarten classroom to encourage children to talk in order to:

- Narrate
- Describe
- Explain and interpret
- Participate in discussions and implement basic reasoning
- Improve and enrich their verbal communication
- Acquire phonological awareness.

Verbal communication in kindergarten does not exhaust itself in intentional pre-planned activities. Rather, it is a universal, unscheduled process of child-to-teacher and child-to-child interaction, which occurs during all curricular activities. Through oral communication, children learn to adhere to adult conventions [19]. They are taught to participate in discussions, taking turns as speakers and listeners. They learn to listen without interrupting their interlocutors and to speak at the right moment taking into account what has been said. Listening refers to the child's ability to follow spoken stimuli. It is an active, systematic, and productive

activity. According to Stasinou [20], active listening is regarded as critical to the development of all linguistic skills.

A major skill which should be developed is *active listening*, which constitutes a complex parameter of communication rather than a natural effortless hearing process. According to the Speech Communication Association, *listening* is the process of receiving and assimilating ideas and information from spoken messages. Effective listening encompasses both the literal and the critical understanding of information and ideas, which are conveyed through oral communication [21]. Listening is an active process. It is a conscious choice and it can be learnt. *Listening culture* can improve through memory improvement exercises, knowledge acquisition, and deliberate listening actions. At the same time, the listening process can be hindered by the listening subjects themselves. This is often the case with listeners who do not really listen but pretend to do so, selective listeners, and self-centered listeners who consider themselves the center of each and every transaction or activity [21]. Preschool children fall into the last category: their mode of thinking is typically self-centered [22], and pedagogues are called upon to handle this tendency.

Listening is probably the most important dimension of effective verbal communication. Its pedagogical value lies in the fact that in the early stages of learning, children tend to understand more easily by listening than by reading. Through listening, learners are exposed to a broad spectrum of experiences, which help them develop their linguistic potential. Active listening skills promote information collection, evaluation of situations, empathy, acceptance of persons and ideas. In addition, listening can provide pleasure. Nonetheless, despite its key role in communication, listening remains the least taught of all basic skills.

Preschool education and care provides ample opportunity for children to develop oral communication. Various activities are implemented to this end, such as:

- Free announcements and discussions during circle time.
- Routine teacher-student interactions.
- Reading and narrating stories.
- Elaborating on various topics.
- Instructions and rules.
- Describing pictures and posters.
- Describing objects and events.
- Describing fictional or real portraits, for example, Ms. Owl; Maria's grandmother.
- Role-play.
- Interviews.
- Reciting poems.

The aim of the language curriculum is twofold. On the one hand, the curriculum focuses on the development of language as a distinct learning domain. On the other, it views language as a

tool for approaching the other school subjects. Humanities and educational visits to cultural sites provide opportunities for children to understand the world around them. According to Wyse et al., there is factual evidence that historical understanding develops as a direct result of speaking, through immediate discussion and observation. In order to build a class which includes a variety of speaking and listening activities related to different kinds of discourse, one must admit that there are different kinds of knowledge, teaching, and learning [23].

3.2. The educator's role in curriculum implementation

Children's avid interest in knowing the world around them is a major incentive to learn in early childhood. Learning presupposes the existence of: (a) a safe environment, which is rich in stimuli, and in which children become active, explore, develop ideas, and construct knowledge and (b) forms of interaction with peers and adults (scaffolding), which influence children's linguistic and mental abilities.

International education bodies stress that priority must be given to active, experiential, and collaborative learning. Teaching language differs significantly from teaching other subjects. Nevertheless, since language is directly related to human thought, it permeates all learning domains. For this reason, the implementation of the communicative methodology for teaching language can help produce positive learning outcomes. The two axes that constitute language, vocabulary (concepts-meanings-words), and the organization of vocabulary into meaningful combinations by means of grammatical and syntactic structures, should be taught communicatively.

The influence of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics on teaching methodology has led to the connection of language as a school subject with the concepts of *communication* and *communication situation*. The linguistic system is part of a socio-cultural theory, which defines the parameters that affect linguistic use on different occasions: participants, social context, topic, and function [24]. The sociolinguistic background of each learner in the classroom plays a crucial role in the learning process. Language variation is associated with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and it is identified, analyzed, interpreted, and exploited [25]. The *communicative method* is adopted in language teaching. According to it, all parameters of language teaching start with learners using the language and are aimed at improving linguistic competence. Children should be able to gain an insight into the mechanism of linguistic function and to practice its diversified use so that they can achieve the desired communicative outcome in each communication situation [26]. According to the communicative approach, superior or inferior linguistic forms do not exist. Indeed, linguistic superiority is a fallacy, which is not based on scientific findings. It is also a misconception, which can have pedagogically disastrous effects by promoting linguistic and social inequality in the school context.

Language is the main tool in the learning process. Especially for preschool children, verbal communication and play are the chief modes of expression and the tools that help them learn and develop. During play, children talk to themselves and their peers. Language becomes a means of making friends and sharing the imaginary worlds that children create. Play itself is enriched through language. Its scope extends, making it more complex, and diverse. Nonnative

children try to speak their friends' language so that play can occur. On the whole, during play, children build their linguistic skills [27].

The adoption of specific *teaching practices* is an important issue, given that pedagogues, both as former students and as teachers, come from a text-centered system of developing and teaching language. According to research, classroom time occupied by students' oral discourse is extremely little. Classroom observation and analysis leads to Flanders' [28] law of 2/3, according to which 2/3 of school time are occupied by someone speaking, 2/3 of this time is occupied by teachers speaking, 2/3 of this speaking is a monolog, etc. Educators are role models for oral communication behavior both as listeners and speakers. It does not follow, however, that the teacher's discourse should be the dominant voice in the school classroom.

According to Montessori, a good kindergarten teacher remains silent, giving children ample time in order to develop their own thinking and talk. A good teacher knows how to stand in the wings, allowing students to develop their verbal communication with them, and most importantly, with their peers. He or she provides *scaffolding* to promote learning, gradually passing power, knowledge, and autonomy from themselves to the students [29]. The purpose is to encourage children to build a community and develop communication relationships, rather than participate in teacher-learner communication based on question-response sequences. Educators and other adults in the school environment can serve a significant role in students developing orality.

In this respect, teacher effectiveness is associated with the teacher's use of language. In addition, it is related to the educator planning discussions, respecting students' language, and helping them to realize the value of conversation. For any student to express themselves, it is imperative that the school invite them to a learning community through diverse communicative situations. The existence of scenarios is instrumental in engaging students in conversation. In order to express themselves, preschool children must have something to say; they must feel welcome to participate in conversation and be adequately supported by the teacher.

Being a role model for students, the educator plays a crucial part in the process of communication and dialog. As Friedrich notes, educators can obstruct dialog with their actions. This usually occurs when the educator commands, threatens, preaches, criticizes, makes negative comments, advises too much, swears, ridicules, insults, or forbids. In contrast, the teacher can promote dialog when he knows how to listen and observe, identify and understand emotions, make clear, comprehensible and reasoned announcements, conduct symmetrical dialog with students, and when he or she is genuine in the communication process [30]. According to Fairclough, "the development of children's language capabilities should proceed through bringing together their existing abilities and experiences, their growing critical awareness of language, and their growing capacity to engage in purposeful discourse" [31].

4. Classroom discourse analysis

This section analyzes two classroom discussions in which kindergarten educators intervene with specific strategies in order to promote oral communication and support children's attempts at self-expression. The discussions come from a research conducted in six randomly

selected kindergarten classrooms in Athens, Greece. Due to the size of the sample, the results cannot be extrapolated. The analysis focuses on two questions:

- Which specific strategies result in children being more productive in oral discourse?
- Which communication models are implemented by educators?

The teaching aid used was the 1995 UNESCO poster entitled *the United Nations Year for Tolerance* (see Appendix A). Selected to introduce children to the concept of diversity and engage them in discussion, the poster is a conceptual representation of tolerance and appreciation of social and cultural diversity. Persons and their facial characteristics are represented by colored shapes, elements which preschool learners are already familiar with. Building on this pre-existing knowledge, the educator aims to communicate the central idea: that, besides differences, there are also similarities between people, and that the latter carry greater significance and are related to universal values. With their teacher's assistance, students are asked to observe, think about and present their ideas on the topic. The analysis of the recorded discussions is presented below, highlighting the communication strategies employed by teachers in order to meet curricular goals (For transcripts of the discussions see Appendix B).

The first educational practice involves the educator presenting the poster and asking the students to observe it. Clear short questions and exclamatory utterances are used to encourage students to actively participate in the learning process: "Which ones are round? Come and show us", "Ah! What's this round thing here?", "Wow! That's a little round nose". The prompt "Come and show us too" results in children's involvement and active participation in the learning process. Children respond, observe, and express themselves, while the teacher reconstructs their responses, communicating the intended meaning: "Although different, they're all little mouths, aren't they?", "So, kids, we can see that all these little people are different but they're all little people, aren't they? The same way that children are different, as we said, but they're all children". This is an effective educational practice in that learners become actively involved in the process, express themselves, and become acquainted with the concept of respecting diversity.

The second educational practice involves a different educational event. The teacher makes a rather abrupt introduction, which fails to offer additional input and create a positive learning setting. The educator asks: "What can you see in this poster?". The students respond each in turn and often repeat each other's response. **S1:** "I can see funny faces", **S2:** "I can see funny faces", **S3:** "I can see funny masks", **S4:** "I can see funny masks". The teacher goes on by asking: "Who can tell me how this masks are made, what do these funny faces have, what do these faces have, and can you imagine how they're made?" This is a long, complex question with ambiguous subjects and multiple desiderata. As a result, children respond hesitantly, uttering one-word responses and copying one another. The teacher's next question contradicts a previous statement: "...to begin with, have we all agreed they're faces?" This causes uncertainty and perplexes students, who do not respond at all. The teacher continues to perplex children by posing an unclear, rather vague question: "What makes you think these are faces and not something else?" Then, she proceeds from the description of the shapes to that of real children, in an unclear manner, further confusing her students: "Kids, guys, REAL kids" and once again she resorts to a double question: "Real kids, what do they have in common and what don't they?". The students fail to respond. Evidently, subjecting preschool children to

unclear, complex, or long questions is not an effective practice. Such questions do not facilitate learners' thinking or expression.

During this educational practice, the teacher rejects the "yes, but..." strategy, which promotes child activation. Instead, she implements negative discouraging strategies. By repeatedly using expressions such as "Of course not", "No", etc., she interferes with any attempt made by the students to think and express themselves. Another discouraging strategy is asking preschoolers 'how do you feel' questions. Children at this age rarely use words to express their emotions; it is much easier for them to do so with actions. By observing child behavior, we came to realize that children cannot describe how they feel. It is also highly inappropriate to draw attention to one student's diversity. The reasoning behind respecting diversity dictates that we handle it as if it did not exist, rather than stressing its existence ["How do you feel about Nakis having difficulty, little Nakis is different...", "Nakis is different from you"]. As a general rule, children do not respond to such questions. When one of the students responds "I feel good", the teacher says: "Good. Why do you feel good about Nakis being in our class?". The students do not respond. The teacher goes on: "Does it make things hard for us, does it make us feel good, what, what do we feel?", resulting in students responding "We feel bad". Evidently, the personalization of diversity is pedagogically inappropriate. In this example, such an approach leads to a negative conclusion. In such cases, discussion proves ineffective both in terms of process and in terms of cognitive goals.

5. Conclusion

This chapter considered strategies, which promote the development of oral communication skills in preschool education. Part I considered theoretical and conceptual issues, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, and the Neo-Vygotskian approach to child learning. Part II presented language development issues in relation to kindergarten curricula. Finally, in Part III, two classroom discussions in the kindergarten were presented on the topic of diversity.

The analysis of the educational practices implemented was aimed at establishing how kindergarten educators manage oral discourse in the classroom and to what extent the application of specific educational interventions produce positive outcomes. Data analysis led to significant findings on the strategies, which promote orality in the kindergarten classroom and established the crucial role of orality development in the preschool learning process. The key role of communication in the kindergarten is reinforced by the learners' age group. At the preschool stage, children attempt to discover and understand the world around them, a process mediated by the teacher's oral discourse. Teaching is a predominantly interpersonal profession and communication skills are inherent to it. For this reason, the authors believe that kindergarten educators must receive both initial and further training in communication skills.

The analysis found that each educator develops their educational strategy based on their personal theory and oral competencies. Constructive facilitations with positive outcomes were established (classroom discussion I), along with less constructive ones, which proved to have a discouraging impact on learners (classroom discussion II). Furthermore, the teacher's weak

verbal communication skills in discussion II meant that the cognitive objective of the activity was not achieved.

Constructive interventions include implementation of the interactive communication model, the initiation–response–feedback (IRF) rule, a child-centered approach, credit time for children and a positive classroom climate. In addition, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is perceived as a pedagogical phenomenon and not as an individual quality of learners.

The discouraging interventions in discussion II include the following characteristics:

- The transmission model of communication is implemented.
- The zone of proximal development is perceived as an individual property of children.
- The educator mainly introduces ideas without successfully applying initiation–response–feedback.
- Teacher-centered traits are found in the development of oral discourse.
- The educator’s authority is more evident.
- Communication among students occurs as a means of emotional support and solidarity within a negative pedagogical climate.
- Negative comments cause children’s self-correction.
- The teacher fails to transfer ability to students.

The constructive interventions in discussion I have the following characteristics:

- The dialogic model of communication is implemented.
- The zone of proximal development is perceived as a property of the pedagogical event.
- The initiation–response–feedback pattern of discussion is applied.
- Child-centered traits are evident in the development of discourse.
- Delegation of authority, and therefore, delegation of ability is applied from the school to children.
- Strategies for attracting and keeping students’ attention are used.
- Credit time is provided for students to think and express themselves.
- The educator applies “Yes, but...” reasoning.
- The educator poses clear, short open-ended, and closed-ended questions.
- The educator recognizes, confirms, and reconstructs the students’ words.
- A positive pedagogical climate is promoted.
- Ability, and thus, learning, is transferred to students.

To sum up, this work attempted to establish how children learn to construct an understanding of the world around them. It was suggested that, in their effort to construct meaning and learn,

preschool children are directly influenced by the way in which educators manage orality. The authors believe that this statement extends the scope of the communication theory of learning in order to highlight the value of genuine dialog in the learning process.

A. Appendix

1995 UNESCO poster entitled *the United Nations Year for Tolerance*.



B. Appendix

The transcripts use the following markup conventions: simultaneous utterances are marked by slashes // and long pauses by dashes — — — — —. Emphatic speech is represented by UPPER-CASE. Unclear utterances are indicated by (...). Omitted parts are marked by [...]. Additional contextual information appears in *italic* type. 'Ed.' stands for 'Educator' while children's names are given in full. 'Students' signifies that more than two children are speaking simultaneously. For students whose names are unknown, S1, S2, etc. are used.

Classroom discussion I.

Ed.: Let's see what I've brought you today kids, what's this. Let's put it, where, here.

Let's look at it for a while without talking. — — — So, now, let's talk. I'd like us to

talk about this poster, what do we see, what's there?

S1: Masks // **S2:** Circles // **S3:** Squares

S4: Triangles.

S5: Round things.

S6: Squares and triangles.

Ed.: Which ones are round, come and show us.

S6: (*shows*)

Ed.: Ah! what's this round thing here?

S6: A tongue

Ed.: His little mouth, are the other mouths round too?

S6: No.

Ed.: What are the other mouths like, can you show me?

Students: Squares // Triangles

Ed.: Is there anything else round anywhere except the mouth?

S1: Oh! a round nose too.

S2: And one more little nose.

S3: I — — —

Ed.: Come up and show us too.

S3: (*shows*).

Ed.: So, I now want us to think about something, first of all we look at the heads, are all the heads the same?

Students: Noooo.

Ed.: Well, what are they?

Students: Triangles // Squares // Circle // Round.

Ed.: These are also not the same, but are they all mouths?

S4: Different

Ed.: Little mouths, although different, all of them are little mouths, aren't they? Aren't you all little kids?

Students: Yeah

Ed.: Are you all the same?

Students: No

[.....].

Ed.: So, kids, we can see that all these little people are different, but they're all little people, aren't they, just like we said kids are different but they're all kids.

Classroom discussion II.

Ed.: What can you see in the poster?

S1: I can see funny faces. **S2:** I can see funny faces.

S3: I can see funny masks. **S5:** I can see (...) that are very very funny.

Ed.: Who can tell me how this masks are made? What do these funny faces have or these faces? What do these faces have and how do you think they're made?

S1: With shapes **S2:** With cardboard **S3:** With cardboard.

S4: With shape **S5:** With masks.

Ed.: You've seen these faces, have we all agreed they're faces in the first place?

[.....]

Ed.: What do these three children have in common and what's different about them?

Who wants to speak?

Students: - - - - -.

Ed.: Christina.

Christina: They have different hair.

Ed.: What do they have in common?

Christina: Same shapes.

Ed.: Kids, dear, REAL kids.

S4: Same mouth.

Ed.: What do real kids have in common and what don't they?

---.

S1: They have the same trousers.

Ed.: Of course not!

Students: -----.

Ed.: What do they have in common and what don't they?

S2: They have the same nose.

Ed.: No.

[.....]

Ed.: How do you feel about Nakis having difficulty that little Nakis is different from us and has difficulty in class?

Students: -----.

Ed.: How do you feel about Nakis being different?

Students: -----.

S1: He doesn't listen to the Misses.

S2: We scold him 'cause he's naughty.

Ed.: And how do you feel about Nakis being in our class?

Students: ----- Good.

Ed.: Good. Why do you feel good about Nakis being in our class?

Students: -----.

Ed.: Is Nakis different from you?

Students: -----.

Ed.: How do you feel about.

Stella: I feel, o ----- I feel -----.

Ed.: We are all different, nobody is the same as anybody else. How do you feel about each person, each kid being different from us?

Students: -----.

Ed.: Does it make things hard, does it make us feel good, how, how do we feel?

S1: We feel bad.

Ed.: Do you feel bad because Nakis is different from you?

S1: -----.

Ed.: Why's that?

S1: Because he annoys us.

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