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Classroom Interaction and Pedagogic Practice: A Bernsteinian Analysis

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Classroom Interaction and Pedagogic Practice: A Bernsteinian Analysis

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Abstract

Language development through social interaction is a key element in early childhood pedagogy. Because children enter prekindergarten programs at an age in which language and social competencies are still developing, teachers of young children have a unique role in this key stage of development. However, the ways in which teachers socially construct their own roles as instructors and facilitators has a significant impact on the ways that they use language and interact with children in their classrooms. This subsequently affects the manner by which children learn to interact with each other. This is a Bernsteinian analysis of a dual case study of two low-income early childhood programs in Chicago. The pedagogies of the two programs require teachers to construct their roles differently, resulting in differences in language use and social interaction. This study evaluates resulting differences in child language use and how children learn to interact with each other differently in the two programs.

Keywords: early childhood education, pedagogy, Basil Bernstein, stratification, interaction

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Interacción en el Aula y Práctica Pedagógica: Un Análisis Bernsteiniano

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Resumen

El desarrollo del lenguaje a través de la interacción social es un elemento clave en pedagogía de infancia temprana. Debido a que los niños comienzan los programas de preescolar (Ed.Infantil-3 y 4) con una edad en la cual las competencias sociales y lingüísticas todavía se están desarrollando, los maestros de estos niños poseen un rol único en esta etapa clave del desarrollo. Sin embargo, la forma en que los maestros construyen su propio rol social como instructores y facilitadores tiene un impacto significativo en la forma en que usan el lenguaje e interaccionan con los niños en el aula. Esto posteriormente afecta la manera en que los niños aprenden a interaccionar entre sí. Este es un análisis Bernsteiniano de un estudio de caso dual sobre dos programas de infancia temprana de bajos recursos en Chicago. La pedagogía de ambos programas requiere que los maestros construyan sus roles de manera distinta, lo cual resulta en diferencias en uso del lenguaje e interacción social. El presente estudio evalúa las diferencias resultantes en el uso del lenguaje infantil, además de cómo los niños aprenden a interaccionar entre sí de manera distinta en los dos programas.

Palabras clave: educación infantil temprana, pedagogía, Basil Bernstein, estratificación, interacción

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Facilitating the development of language is a key component in any early childhood program. While children typically enter a prekindergarten program at age three or four, teachers guide children in the development of a language system that will be applicable in later academic contexts. American educational curriculum draws from the language codes of the middle class (Sadovnik, 1991). Therefore, for young children, who do not come from middle class families, learning language systems in prekindergarten becomes especially crucial for engagement in school later.

Language systems used in the home are often reflective of the families' socioeconomic status. Middle and upper middle class parents often use language that requires reflection, reciprocity, and connections outside of the current context (Hasan, 2001). Lower income families tend to use language that is grounded in the current context, requires little reflection, and instead requires quick information relays (Hasan, 2001; Wilgus, 2006; Williams, 2001). Thus, when children enter early childhood programs from disparate socioeconomic classes, they may use language differently.

While educational curricula uses codes of the middle class, many schools serving low-income children function differently than schools serving more affluent children (Lubeck, 1985; Haberman, 1991; Semel & Sadovnik, 2008). In addition to differences in socioeconomic status, the language codes in a classroom may also vary depending upon the teacher. A teacher's own language use will influence expectations of how children speak (Marinac, Ozanne, & Woodyatt, 2000). The ways in which the teacher socially constructs his or her role as "classroom teacher" will have an influence on language use in the classroom.

This is a study of two early childhood centers in Chicago. Both centers serve high-need, low-income populations. One center incorporates the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood that includes a focus on self-expression, the understanding of the child in the context of their relationships, relationship-building with the child, teachers, and families, and intentional teaching embedded in child-centered learning (Cadwell, 1997; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1996; Haigh, 1997). The other center uses a teacher-directed pedagogy without a concrete philosophy. As a result of this difference, the construction of the roles of the teachers and the resulting use of language in the classrooms is different. This study seeks to answer the

following question: How does classroom teachers' use of language influence the children's use of language?

Language Development

All children initially learn to use language the way that it is used in the home. Heath (1983) demonstrated this in Ways with Words. The low-income children in both the Black and White communities in Heath's study entered school with language patterns that matched those of their respective communities but that were different from the middle class community. The work of Hart and Risley (1995) demonstrated that there is a difference in language acquisition between affluent and low-income children at a foundational level. Low-income children have learned fewer words upon entering school. They also use fewer descriptive words than affluent children (Hart & Risley, 1968). Hart and Risley considered these language deficiencies to be very troubling and suggested explicit instruction to prompt children to use more varied vocabularies.

However, Hart and Risley's recommendations are not universally accepted among teachers. Teachers working with children from working-class minority families in a study by Wilgus (2006) worried that parents were "suppressing" children by setting verbal limits and using stern commands. The teachers, who were of the same community as their students, were concerned about the children's language acquisition, but resisted using only explicit instruction of vocabulary or mirroring the patterns of the community. Instead, they combined both of these, along with the progressive models of their early childhood degree programs, to promote language acquisition (Wilgus, 2006). Thus, teachers were able to maintain a culturally responsive program while also teaching children language codes that are needed for future schooling.

Early childhood classroom teachers have become increasing crucial to language development as greater numbers of children attend prekindergarten programs. Because school language can differ so greatly from home language, children gain a great deal of new knowledge about language development from their teachers (Marinac et al., 2000). Teachers' use of language support based practices can facilitate both conversations between teachers and children and between children and children (Bourchard et al.,

2010). Thus, teachers must be aware of the importance of their role in early childhood language acquisition and of the language that they themselves are modeling.

Basil Bernstein

Bernstein (1981) expressed the "code" as a regulator of the relation between contexts. The code should generate principles that permit distinction between contexts and principles that lead to the production of text appropriate to each context. In defining the nature of the context, Bernstein uses the term "classification." Classification deals with the boundary maintenance between concepts (Bernstein, 1971). The structure of the message system is the "framing." Framing is the manner by which knowledge is transmitted and received, creating specific pedagogical relationships between the teacher and the taught (Bernstein, 1971). It is a social relationship of cultural reproduction between the transmitter and the acquirer.

Framing includes rules for hierarchy, sequencing, and pacing (Bernstein, 1975). Hierarchy is the social relationship that establishes rules of conduct. Sequencing regulates the progression of transmission, while pacing regulates the rate of acquisition.

A visible pedagogy is one in which hierarchy, sequencing, and pacing are all explicit, and thus framing strong (Bernstein, 1975). This usually requires strong classification. An invisible pedagogy is one in which hierarchy, sequencing, and criteria are all implicit, and thus framing weak (Bernstein, 1975). This usually requires weak classification. However, framing does not refer to content (Bernstein, 1971). While classification and framing are related, it is possible for one to be strong while the other is weak.

While classification and framing can be tools used to describe classroom curriculum and pedagogy, the concepts are not limited to classroom application. Classification refers to boundaries between any concepts. In conversation, this may refer to boundaries between topics. Participants must recognize what the boundaries are so that they may reproduce the topic through an acceptable response. Likewise, framing refers to rules for hierarchy, sequencing, and pacing outside of classroom contexts. Parents and children establish hierarchies—visible or invisible. Children may not be

fully aware of an internalized hierarchical relationship between themselves and a parent.

Applications of Bernsteinian Theory

Bernstein's work provided a foundation for the work of later Bernsteinian linguists and sociologists to explore dissimilar interactions among children and familiar adults (parents, teachers, and other caregivers) across socioeconomic classes. Hasan's (1996, 2001) research examining mother/child dyads has built upon Bernstein's work while adding Hasan's own structures of sociolinguistics. Hasan's work showed that dyads from different socioeconomic groups (defined by Hasan as being in "high autonomy professions" (HAP) or "low autonomy professions" (LAP) clustered semantic features differently. Among HAP families, semantic features were structured in the manner used by dominating families in which the child is shown as an individual. Among LAP families, semantic features were structured in the manner used by dominated families in which the child is seen as an extension of the parent.

Williams's (1999, 2001) research in sociolinguistic development in young children followed the work of Hasan. Williams also examined interaction in mother/child dyads, though the interaction was focused around shared book readings. His study also included families across varying socioeconomic classes, again defining them as HAP or LAP. Williams's analysis showed that children in HAP families had a higher degree of interaction with their parent. There was also a greater variety of interactions. These children were more likely to be asked to provide their own expectations and more "text-to-life" connections. All HAP families interpreted the story's text beyond immediate context, whereas none of the LAP families did. Williams (2001) stated that these results along with other findings from the study suggest that social institutional status appears to influence how each participant constructs the role of "mother."

The children in the current study were all from LAP families, and they were all poor to working class. All of the children were enrolled in early childhood programs that served low-income children. It was expected, given the socioeconomic status of the children and the characteristics of families of this socioeconomic class, that most of the children were unlikely to be part

of interactions with parents who had weak classification and framing. It was also expected that most of the children were read to at home, that they had a variety of interactions with family members, that they were prompted to speak with regularity, and that they had the ability to express themselves through language. Their interactions with parents were not reflective of a deficit model. Interactions were likely to simply be structured differently than they would be in middle class families.

Setting

This case study[1] examined two early childhood centers on the South Side of Chicago. Both centers were Head Start programs, a federal early childhood program for low-income children. The first, Loris Malaguzzi Family Center (Malaguzzi)[2], was part of a large social service agency (Starling House) in the city with foundations in an early twentieth century settlement house. Starling House has continued to focus services on high-need immigrant communities and has become a delegate agency for Head Start. Malaguzzi has served as one of four Starling House Head Start programs. In the early 1990s, the educational director of Starling House visited a Reggio Emilia program in Italy. Upon the director's return, the educational staff at agency and site levels chose to explore the fundamentals of Reggio Emilia in their programs.

Malaguzzi was located in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of Chicago's South Side. The neighborhood had very high rates of child poverty. The physical space was designed to both protect children from the neighborhood (using glass bricks rather than glass to allow for light while keeping the structure secure) and to create a welcoming and nurturing environment. The classrooms were supplied with numerous natural materials, supplies for art, and "real" materials (e.g., oil paints, clay, stoneware plates). The center served primarily children of Mexican American immigrant families (first and second generation), though the center also had several African American children and children from other immigrant communities.

The researcher observed two prekindergarten classrooms in this center (children from ages three to five). Each classroom had 20 children and three teachers (40 children and six teachers in total). The classroom teachers

included a head teacher (holding either a master's or bachelor's degree in education and a state certification), an assistant teacher (holding an associate's degree), and a teacher aide (holding a Child Development Associate credential). Of the six teachers, five were Mexican American and fluent Spanish speakers (though they spoke English in the classroom, using Spanish only when speaking to parents or comforting a Spanish-speaking child). The sixth teacher did not speak Spanish but was learning during the course of data collection. All six teachers were trained in Reggio Emilia and vocal about their dedication to the philosophy.

The second center, Woodlawn Head Start (Woodlawn) was also part of a social service agency with foundations in the settlement house movement (Duncan House). The Duncan House served an important role in creating kindergartens for low-income children in the early twentieth century. The agency's focus on early childhood education has continued to be an important part of its service. Like Starling House, Duncan House was a Head Start delegate. Woodlawn was one of several Duncan House Head Start sites in the city.

Woodlawn was located in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago's South Side. The neighborhood was one of the poorest in the city with high rates of child poverty. The Head Start center was located in a Duncan House community center with Woodlawn Head Start, using about half of the building. The building had been repurposed several times, and as a result, the two classrooms observed at this center were of odd sizes (one very large and one very small). The furnishings and supplies were standard preschool equipment (e.g., toy dishes, clay, tempera paints, plastic toys).

The two classrooms observed at this site included 35 children (15 in the small classroom and 20 in the large) and six teachers, three in each classroom. All 35 children in these classrooms were African American, as were children in other classrooms at the same center. All were native English speakers. Similar to Malaguzzi, the classroom teachers at Woodlawn included a head teacher (holding either a master's or bachelor's degree in education and a state certification), an assistant teacher (holding an associate's degree), and a teacher aide. At Woodlawn, the teacher aides did not have Child Development Associate credentials; they were instead part-time university students. Woodlawn did not have pedagogic-specific training aside from standard professional development offered by both Head Start

and state prekindergarten. All six teachers were African American.

Methods

This study was part of a doctoral dissertation examining differing effects of dissimilar pedagogic methods in early childhood programs. The two schools were chosen because of their very different pedagogies and philosophies of education, though the school populations were socioeconomically comparable. The researcher observed two classrooms at each center (four classrooms total) over a 5-month period (65 observational hours in each classroom). Observations recorded teacher-child interaction, child-child interaction, child engagement, child academic and social growth, and adherence to state, federal, and curriculum standards. Observational notes were transcribed and all recorded speech (teachers and children) was coded by type and frequency of interactions and also for classification, framing, and elaborated and restricted code use as outlined by Bernstein (1971, 1975, 1990/2007). All children were also pre- and post-tested using the Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement.

Observational notes were then open coded in NVivo 10 for types of language used by teacher and children. Codes that emerged in language used by children included asking for help, self-speak or private speak, arguments between children, conversations between children, dramatic conversations (conversations held while taking on a role other than themselves such as in dramatic play) between children, enforcement of rules by children, mimicking teachers, encouragement, complaints, questions to teachers, and telling stories. Language used by teachers included addressing behavior, discussing books, prompting a child or children's thinking, comfort, instruction, whole group discussion, and informal conversations with children. This study did not include any teacher language not directed to children (i.e., conversation between classroom teachers, teacher self-speak, or comments directed to the observer).

The researcher also interviewed all six Malaguzzi teachers and five of six Woodlawn teachers. Interviews focused on the teachers' beliefs about early childhood and early education and how they viewed their own pedagogic process in the context of the school population. These were open coded to compare similar and differing beliefs between the teachers at the

two schools regarding what makes an effective program, what is an ideal classroom, what are the beliefs about early childhood learning, and how lessons are chosen.

Previous work with the data collected as part of the dissertation had shown that all children included in the study displayed significant academic growth over the 5-month data collection period as measured by the Woodcock Johnson III and researcher and teacher observations (Smith, 2011). However, the children at Malaguzzi were more likely to look for unknown answers without asking for teacher help, more likely to self-direct learning, and less likely to refuse to solve problems (academic or social) themselves. The children at Malaguzzi were also more likely to self-monitor their behavior, to redirect the behavior of other children, and to solve conflicts between themselves without teacher intervention.

Constructing the Role of the Teacher

Malaguzzi and Woodlawn were very different schools that happened to serve similar populations. It cannot be assumed that the teachers at the two schools constructed their roles in the same ways. As in Williams's (1999) work with mother/child dyads, the construction of the role affects subsequent actions and interactions.

In interviews, teachers at both schools stated they believed that effective early childhood programs required committed teachers. Malaguzzi teachers cited space, participation of all parties (teachers, children, and families), and plenty of supplies (especially for art) as elements of an effective program. Their ideal classroom would have natural materials that could be changed frequently, a lot of space, and parent volunteers. Interviews with Woodlawn teachers demonstrated that accreditation, communication between teachers and parents, and safety were also important elements. The teachers' ideal classroom would have basic materials with toys and puzzles, ample space, and a positive working environment between teachers.

The teachers' beliefs about early childhood learning differed more. Malaguzzi teachers stated that they believed children learn through play (this was cited by five of the six Malaguzzi teachers) and learn better when teachers followed the children's interests. The teachers cited hands-on learning, intentional teaching, and teacher encouragement and support as

necessary for child learning. Teachers at Woodlawn also believed that children learn through play and modeling, learn things in multiple ways, learn better when learning through play, when material follows their interest, and learn best when secure. Woodlawn teachers did not elaborate on pedagogic methods that promote learning through play or through child interest as Malaguzzi teachers did.

The two groups of teachers greatly in the discussions of classroom planning. At Malaguzzi, the three teachers in each classroom (head teacher, teacher assistant, and teacher aide) planned together. As a program funded by both state prekindergarten and Head Start, they were required to align with standards set by those agencies. However, while meeting these standards, they planned lessons and activities entirely on children's interests and individual needs. Teachers met together every other week to discuss the emerging interests and needs of the children in their classrooms and how they could be met most effectively. Observations of the two Malaguzzi classrooms showed that many of the lessons were based on projects constructed around the children's interests such as building, castles, theater, and dance. Basic skills were embedded within these lessons.

> We sit as our team, and we plan by what we have been observing during the week with the children, what their interests are.
>
> Assistant Teacher, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi

> We have a team meeting and we talk about areas we feel we need to work on—like with different children. We do individualization and it tends to be 4 children at the most, but sometimes it can be 2 children, 3 or 4. We also go based off of their interests; what we see catches their interest more.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

> We chose [lessons] based on [the children's] needs and on their interests.
>
> Teacher Aide, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

At Woodlawn the head teachers in the two classrooms did the majority of the planning alone. As at Malaguzzi, the teachers followed requirements set by state prekindergarten and Head Start. Unlike Malaguzzi teachers, they drew from educational websites, previously used activities, ideas from each

other and other teachers in the building, teacher resource books, and to a small extent, the interests of the children. Observations of the two Woodlawn classrooms showed that many of the lessons provided focus on basic skills such as letter, number, color, and shape recognition, basic addition and subtraction, and basic phonics. While the teachers had expressed an interest in following the interests of the children, their lesson planning did not do so.

> I like Carl's Corner. They have really great activities for the kids with letters, you know when you're learning the letters and numbers and things like that. I also like Starfall and I get a lot of stuff from Teacher Stuff.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

> [The head teacher] actually does all the planning.
>
> Assistant Teacher, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

> I'm not the head teacher. The head teacher would already have the lesson prepared.
>
> Teacher Aide, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

The teachers at Woodlawn spent a great deal of time planning and implementing lessons they believed would be of benefit to the children. But, unlike at Malaguzzi, lessons were for a generalized group of young children rather than specifically for the children at Woodlawn. This is not to say that their planning was bad or ineffective; it was different. While they, like the teachers at Malaguzzi, believed that children need space, committed teachers, appropriate materials, and time to learn through play, they did see their own role differently. As a teacher, their role was to provide lessons that have been proven to be effective and to focus on material that would prepare children for elementary school. They saw a strongly framed hierarchy between their role and that of the children. They were the instructors, and the children were acquirers.

> Actually what I do is, I know because I was teaching in kindergarten, I know what is expected, so I'm trying to help them with the letters so when they get there, they'll know it, and writing these, counting. One of the things I want them to learn to

> do is count individual objects, like people. We go in the circle, count your head, how many people, 1, 2, 3. How many boys? I did that with my kindergarten class, too. I just want to help them get prepared with those things—the letters, the sounds, the numbers and things like that.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

> I get [assessment] data back and I get to use that for my lesson plans, just to see what they need to work on before kindergarten.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

Lessons planned by teachers at Malaguzzi usually became part of an overarching classroom exploration or project that would take most of the school year. Because the lessons followed the children's interests and the exploration or project, it was not possible for the Malaguzzi teachers to use lessons that had been created by someone else and used elsewhere effectively. The teachers constructed their role in a much weaker hierarchy than did the Woodlawn teachers. They worked together with the children as both instructors and acquirers—intentionally teaching needed skills while learning about a classroom project with the children.

> They are just naturally inquisitive. They and to know why things are done the way they do; why they work the way they do. So I think that if we let them guide us as to what is their interest, it will be a lot easier to fulfill whatever requirements we have.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi

> If we follow the children's interests, we can also teach them how to learn, because we're learning through them, so I believe that children learn when their exploring and when they're doing their own things by themselves without us encouraging them to do it.
>
> Teacher Assistant, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

Teacher language use

The differences in the roles of the teachers manifested in language use as well as in lesson planning. Coding of teacher language directed to children indicates that teachers spoke to children to address behavior, discuss books,

converse, prompt, comfort, encourage, instruct, and lead whole group discussions. The frequency of each of these interactions in the four classrooms over the data collection period is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Frequency types of teacher language use

	Malaguzzi		**Woodlawn**	
	Classroom 1	**Classroom 2**	**Classroom 3**	**Classroom 4**
Teacher addressing behavior	31.5%	37.8%	58.1%	53.0%
Teacher-child book discussion	2.4%	8.1%	6.5%	4.5%
Teacher-child conversation	15.2%	14.6%	3.2%	11.4%
Teacher-child prompting	21.3%	20.0%	10.8%	14.4%
Teacher comforting	1.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Teacher encouragement	10.4%	3.2%	1.6%	6.8%
Teacher instruction	4.9%	4.9%	5.9%	1.5%
Whole group discussion	13.4%	10.8%	14.0%	8.3%
n=	**164**	**185**	**186**	**132**

In all four classrooms, the most frequently used type of teacher language was to address or redirect behavior. However, this was a larger percentage in both Woodlawn classrooms (more than half), and the nature of the interaction differed as the following examples demonstrate:

Malaguzzi

> Teacher: Boys in the kitchen, I see food on the floor. We can't have food on the floor because then we step on it and then we

break it. What should we do?

Head Teacher, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi

Teacher: Miguel, if you cannot keep your hands to yourself, you will have to sit with me. (Miguel continues to hit neighboring child.) Miguel, come sit with me. You have to keep your hands to yourself. You might get hurt or hurt someone.

Assistant Teacher, Classroom1, Malaguzzi

Teacher: Adam, can you leave Waffles (stuffed toy) in your cubbie? He can't go to the gross motor room.
Adam, Can I leave him here? (Puts toy on a shelf.)
Teacher: Sure

Head Teacher, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

(Laura sits in her cubbie, refusing to join story time.)
Teacher: Laura, do you want to come hear the story?
Laura: No, I'm sad.
Teacher (to class): This story is Feeling Sad.
Laura: That's how I'm feeling!
Teacher: Then come hear my story.
(Laura joins story time.)

Teacher Aide, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi
Laura, 4-years-old

Woodlawn

Teacher: Louis is going to be sitting in the gym. Louis, do you want me to use my mean voice?

Head Teacher, Classroom 3, Woodlawn
Louis, 4-years-old

Teacher: Carlos, you may have to sit in the gym if you don't clean up.
(Carlos cries.)

Assistant Teacher, Classroom3, Woodlawn

Carlos, 4-years-old

> Teacher: Maybe we won't do anymore fun games if you all can't get yourselves together.
>
> Head Teacher, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

> Teacher: You all are not listening. I will have to write your names on the list.
>
> Teacher Aide, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

Previous work in these four classrooms has demonstrated that the teachers at Malaguzzi used weaker hierarchical framing than the teachers at Woodlawn (Smith, 2011). Framing in at Malaguzzi was found to be 81% weak in Classroom 1 and 77% weak in Classroom 2. Framing at Woodlawn was found to be 29% weak in Classroom 3 and 37% weak in Classroom 4. This is evident in these dialogue samples. While the teachers at Malaguzzi and Woodlawn both used language to correct behavior frequently, the nature of these corrections was different. In the Malaguzzi classrooms, the teacher acted as a facilitator, prompting children to reason out their own behavioral choices and allowing for discussion (expect when another child was being hurt). The pedagogy was invisible—present but not apparent to the children. At Woodlawn, the behavioral control showed a strong hierarchical framing with the teacher giving explicit behavioral instructions that were to be followed rather than reasoned or discussed. In both Woodlawn classrooms, the pedagogy was visible. It was clear to the children what the teacher was trying to accomplish.

The second most frequent use of language by teachers at Malaguzzi was child prompting. This was over 20% in both Malaguzzi classrooms. It was also the second most frequent language use at Woodlawn in Classroom 4 and third most frequent in Classroom 3. Again, while overall frequency of the code was somewhat similar, the language use in context was different as illustrated below:

Malaguzzi

> Tyler (showing block representation of his home): This is my papa's sofa. This is me.

Teacher: I like how you used the columns. Do you have columns at your house?

Head Teacher, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi
Tyler, 5-years-old

(Teacher asks Anthony about his picture.)
Anthony: It's a transformer.
Teacher: Did you see the movie?
(Anthony nods.)
Teacher: What happened in the movie?
Anthony: They're mean robots. They want to kill somebody. He dragon robots. He bigger, bigger. He east a lot of stuff.

Teacher Aide, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi
Anthony, 3-years-old

Mickey: There's a castle right down the block!
Teacher: How do you know it's a castle?
Mickey: I don't know. 'Cause I saw it in a movie.
Teacher: Who do you think lives there?
Mickey: A knight, a king, a queen, and a baby and that's it. Oh, and the wicked witch.

Head Teacher, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi
Mickey, 4-years-old

Teacher (pointing to pictures of small, medium, and large objects): Which piece of cake would you want if you're not that hungry? Which plane would hold the most people?

Teacher Aide, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

Woodlawn

Teacher (holds up hand):How many fingers do I have?

Head Teacher, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

Teacher (deflating a balloon): What happened? What came out?

Teacher Assistant, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

Teacher (shows class a picture of a pumpkin): What color is it?

Head Teacher, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

> Teacher: Can you cut that in half for me? It will be two pieces that are the same.
>
> Teacher Assistant, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

While the teachers in all classrooms prompted children to expand their thinking, the teachers at Malaguzzi facilitated deeper connections between the children's work or observations and life, similar to the "text-to-life" connections the children will be required to make in elementary grades. The pedagogy was again invisible, though perhaps to a lesser extent than in the previous example. The teachers were clearly teaching, but their manner of doing so was conversational.

The teachers at Woodlawn were using prompts to teach skills and awareness, but without the deeper connections that Malaguzzi teachers were making. This is similar to the difference between HAP and LAP parent prompting in Williams's (2001) study. The pedagogy used by the Woodlawn teachers was visible, but again to a lesser extent than in the previous example. There was an attempt at a conversational style but the interactions between the teachers and the children were clearly that of instructors and acquirers. Like the LAP parents, Woodlawn teachers maintained stronger classification and framing than Malaguzzi teachers.

Similar differences existed in other aspects of teacher language uses. Whole group discussions in the two Malaguzzi classrooms required more child interaction, deeper connections, and more reciprocity between teachers and children, even though the frequency of the type of language use was similar between Malaguzzi and Woodlawn. Instructional statements at Malaguzzi similarly made deeper connections across disciplines and connected life, while instructional statements at Woodlawn remained focused on transmission of specific and immediate ideas and skills.

Child language use

Differences in teacher language use were reflected in the ways in which the children in the four classrooms used language to speak to teachers and to each other. Coding of child language use shows that children used language with teachers to ask for help, mimic, complain, ask questions, and tell stories. Children used language with each other to converse, converse while in dramatic roles, argue, enforce classroom rules, and encourage. Children

also used language for self-speak. The frequency of the children's language use is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Frequency of types of child language use

	Malaguzzi		**Woodlawn**	
	Classroom 1	**Classroom 2**	**Classroom 3**	**Classroom 4**
Child asks for permission or help	0.6%	3.6%	2.3%	3.7%
Child-child argument	1.7%	0.5%	8.6%	7.5%
Child-child conversation	8.9%	15.4%	10.2%	17.8%
Child-child dramatic conversation	11.7%	11.8%	7.0%	13.1%
Child comment that enforces rules	13.5%	10.3%	9.4%	7.5%
Child comment that mimics teacher	1.7%	1.5%	0.8%	1.9%
Child complaints	5.0%	9.2%	14.1%	5.6%
Child encouragement of others	0.6%	2.1%	0.0%	1.9%
Self-speak	31.7%	32.3%	29.7%	39.3%
Child questions teacher	0.6%	5.6%	3.1%	0.9%
Child story/storytelling	24.4%	7.7%	14.8%	0.9%
n=	**180**	**195**	**128**	**107**

Self-speak was the most frequent use of language by children in all four classrooms. Developmentally, this was not unexpected. Children of preschool age (three to five) often use audible language as a means of developing internal language (Copple, 2003). This private self-speak eventually becomes internalized thought. This language use differed little between the two schools.

> Tyler (drawing a picture of Santa): He needs a beard. And a big fat belly.
>
> 5-years-old, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi

> Anna (drawing): I'm making the sky black. It's Halloween in this picture.
>
> 4-years-old, Classroom 2, Malaguzzi

> Louis (in dramatic play area): I'm gonna put this in the microwave.
>
> 4-years-old, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

> Kia (building with blocks): I'm making a princess house.
>
> 4-years-old, Classroom 4, Woodlawn

Most of the recorded self-speak was simply the child narrating what he or she was doing or commenting on something happing in the classroom. Sometimes this speech was vaguely directed to a teacher or another child, but an answer was not expected. Usually, it was directed at no one in particular.

Observations on Mondays were always in Classrooms 1 and 3. This allowed the observation of child storytelling of weekend events. For this reason, child stories were the second most frequent language type recorded as used by children in Classrooms 1 and 3. It is likely that stories were told as frequently in Classrooms 2 and 4. However, it was not possible to observe in those classrooms on Mondays, so any storytelling of weekend events could not be recorded. Thus, while storytelling appears to be less frequent in Classrooms 2 and 4, this was likely not the case.

Unlike self-speak, weekend storytelling in Classrooms 1 and 3 did show some differences, as illustrated below by one of the most verbal children in each of the two classrooms:

> Jillian: Yesterday, I go to my friend Lily. We went to McDonalds and when we were done, we went to a store. We went to a restaurant. You get money and you put it in the water and there's fish in there. I had chocolate and Lily had chocolate too.
>
> 4-years-old, Classroom 1, Malaguzzi

> Silvia: While I was getting my hair done, I was playing on the computer.
>
> 5-years-old, Classroom 3, Woodlawn

Jillian's story is indicative of stories told by other children of similar age and language development in Classroom 1. Children in Classroom 1 tended to elaborate on their weekend stories, sometimes at length and often with a sequence of events. Teachers listened and prompted for additional information. Silvia's story is indicative of children in Classroom 3 of similar age and language development. It is important to stress here that Jillian and Silvia showed similar levels in language development in other data gathered for the dissertation study (i.e., Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement, researcher observations, and teacher observations). Silvia should have been capable of elaborating on a story as Jillian did. But it was not typical for children in Classroom 3 to do so when telling stories of their weekends. More often these stories were very short, only a few words or a sentence. Teachers moved through the children's stories quickly, so they did not prompt for more information. Silvia's abbreviated story met the expectations of her teachers.

There were also differences in conversations that children had with each other in both Malaguzzi classrooms versus both Woodlawn classrooms. The following two conversations show children creating rules at the start of an imaginative game.

> Jack: We're playing bad guys.
> Sam: No we're not.
> Adam: You're playing good guys?
> Jack: No.
> Sam: Let's play super heroes.
> Adam: I'm Spiderman.
> Jack: I'm Venom.
> Sam: I'm Harry.
> Jack: Who's Harry?
> Sam: Spiderman's friend.
>
> Classroom 2, Malaguzzi
> Sam and Jack, 5-years-old
> Adam, 4-years-old

Tyler ties an apron on Nigel.
Tyler: I'm going to take you swimming.
Nigel: This is for dancing.
Tyler: No, this is for swimming.

Classroom 3, Woodlawn
Tyler and Nigel, 4-years-old

In Classroom 2, Jack and Sam had similar ideas about what they wanted to do, but could not agree on whether or not they were playing "good guys" or "bad guys." They reached a compromise by playing "super heroes," allowing Jack to be a bad guy (Venom) and Sam and Adam to play good guys (Spiderman and his friend). Following this exchange, the three boys began their game and played together in these roles for an extended period. In Classroom 3, Tyler and Nigel could not agree upon whether the apron that Nigel was wearing was for swimming or for dancing. No agreement was reached. Following this exchange, Tyler and Nigel gave up on the game and played separately.

This was characteristic of many conversational exchanges in the two programs. At Malaguzzi, children set rules for play and followed them while compromising readily. This allowed for children at Malaguzzi to develop more complex dramatic games as the children were able to maintain play together without dissolving into arguments (Smith, 2012). At Woodlawn, children (with a few exceptions) had much more difficulty playing together for extended periods. Very often, children argued and separated or gave up on the possibility of compromise and separated.

Over each of the 65 hour observational periods, one clear argument was observed in Classroom 2 and three in Classroom 1 (0.5% and 1.7% of language uses respectively). Eight clear arguments were observed in Classroom 4 and 11 in Classroom 3 (17.8% and 10.2% of language uses respectively). Thus, Woodlawn classrooms had more than twice the number of arguments in total, and arguments comprised a much larger percentage of total language use. More significantly was the way arguments played out in the two programs as illustrated below.

Sam and Adam continue to argue.
Jack: Just stop arguing.
Paula: Everybody just calm down.

Classroom 2, Malaguzzi
Sam and Jack, 5-years-old
Adam and Paula, 4-years-old

Leila: "NO, you're not playing with me."
Kenny takes a shark.
Leila: "No, GIMMIE!"
Nate: "You're making my head hurt. You're tearing my head apart."

Classroom 3, Woodlawn
Leila and Kenny, 4-years-old
Nate, 5-years-old

In the first example, Sam and Adam were unable to reach a compromise with regard to a structure that they were building together out of blocks. Jack and Paula, who were playing in the same area, intervened to stop the argument. The teachers' observed this exchange, but did not move to stop the argument, instead allowing the children to solve the problem themselves. This was typical of teacher intervention at Malaguzzi. Of the four arguments observed, three were resolved by students and play continued. The fourth disagreement included an autistic child who had difficulty recognizing his role in the conflict and required teacher intervention.

In the second example, Leila and Kenny were arguing over a toy. Nate, who was playing in the same area, stated his exasperation with the situation, but made no move to mediate. In this case, the children (with or without Nate's help) were not able to solve the problem themselves. Teachers intervened to stop the argument. This was not unusual at Woodlawn. Of the 19 arguments observed, in only one case was the argument resolved both without teacher intervention and children continuing to play together. In all other instances, either a teacher arbitrated or the children gave up on the shared activity.

Children at Malaguzzi enforced classroom rules overall at a greater degree than children at Woodlawn. Additionally, this language used in both programs reflected the hierarchical framing used by their teachers.

> Monica: We have to brush our teeth now. We're going to get cavities, Alice.
>
> Classroom 1, Malaguzzi
> Monica, 4-years-old

> Turon: Put the book away!
>
> Classroom 4, Woodlawn
> Turon, 4-years-old

Monica and Turon were both directing a reluctant child to transition from play to a less fun but necessary activity (tooth brushing and cleanup). Monica reasoned with the other child, as her teachers did when directing behavior. She calmly asked Alice to join in the activity and gave consequences (cavities) if she did not. Like the teachers at Woodlawn, Turon gave explicit instructions with no space for reasoning. The other child was firmly (and loudly) instructed to put a book away with no discussion about the necessity of the action.

The language of Malaguzzi teachers directed at children required them to make connections and reason, whether they were prompting the child's cognitive thinking or self-regulation. This was reflected in the children's language use revealing that the children told more elaborate stories and reasoned through conflicts with each other. At Woodlawn, the language of the teachers directed at the children prompted thinking but with little depth and connections beyond the child's current work. Behavioral management was explicitly direct without the child being prompted to use reasoning to manage behavior. The children's language use reflected that of the teachers. As a result, the children were unlikely to elaborate when telling stories and appeared to be unable to reason through conflict.

Discussion

Malaguzzi teachers constructed their roles very differently than teachers at Woodlawn. While they were intentional in their teaching of skills and maintenance of classroom order, they did so through weak hierarchical framing. They treated their role as that of facilitators and guides to the children's learning rather than directors. They did not impose learning from

themselves but allowed children to problem solve and reason so that they might reach well thought-out conclusions. Language was clear, but required children to think through answers before they were given.

The language use between teachers and children at Malaguzzi allowed for more child autonomy. Children were asked to reason through behavioral choices rather than to simply follow classroom rules. They were asked to reason through cognitive choices rather than to simply repeat information back to the teacher. The process by which children reached an answer was more important than the answer itself. Children were able to make decisions and to solve conflicts without teacher intervention. They were able to make compromises that permitted for groups of children to play together peacefully for extended periods, allowing for further language development through child conversations.

The pedagogy at Malaguzzi was largely invisible. Teachers were more concerned with allowing children to reason out answers through interaction than pushing children to learn skills. Basic skills were taught, but through lessons tailored to the interests and abilities of the children. It was seldom explicitly apparent to the children what the teachers' goals were.

Woodlawn teachers had a clear construction of their roles as teachers in early childhood classrooms. While they believed that children needed time to play and that play was essential to learning, ultimately the children needed clear and direct guidance to learn effectively. It was important to the teachers that the children learn necessary skills for elementary school while learning obedience. Language directed at children was clear, direct, and required little analysis on behalf of the children before expected answers or behaviors resulted.

The language use between teachers and children at Woodlawn allowed for quick relays and strong hierarchical framing and permitted little autonomy among the children. The children were rarely asked to think deeply or reason out answers. Correct answers and behaviors were more important than the process of reaching them. The teachers' roles maintained order and delivered skills, but children showed little capability of using those skills without teacher instruction. The children at Woodlawn showed little reciprocity in conversations with each other and had difficulty solving conflicts between themselves. This limited their abilities to sustain play together, which would have in turn continued to build language.

The pedagogy at Woodlawn was largely visible. Hierarchies were very strong. Teachers were primarily concerned with children learning the skills that would be needed for elementary school and pushed skill-building. Basic skills were taught explicitly. The goals of the teachers were very apparent to the children.

Conclusion

Interviews of teachers in these four classrooms showed that the teachers socially construct their roles differently. The teachers at Malaguzzi were facilitators working with children, while the teachers at Woodlawn were instructors teaching to children. These roles were demonstrated in the different hierarchies within the two centers. These roles were also expressed in the different ways that teachers spoke to the children. Malaguzzi teachers focused language on building a depth of understanding, while Woodlawn teachers focused language on clear demonstrations of correct content and behavior.

The language used by the children reflected differences in the language used by the teachers. While the children's self-speak was similar between the two schools, their verbal interactions with each other differed. Malaguzzi children were better able to reason through problems (both academic and social) without teacher intervention. Woodlawn children had little experience and training in solving problems without help and were more dependent on teachers. This difference allowed Malaguzzi children to work together without adult assistance more effectively.

Notes

1 All data collection in this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Written consent was sought and obtained for all teachers, parents, and children included in this study.

2 Names of centers, agencies, teachers, and children have been changed to protect their identities.

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