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Prosody and Performance: Children
Talking the Text in Elementary School
presented by

James A. Erikson

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Ph.D. degree in Educational Psychology

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PROSODY AND PERFORMANCE: CHILDREN TALKING THE TEXT IN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By

James A. Erikson

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Department of Educational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

PROSODY AND PERFORMANCE: CHILDREN TALKING THE TEXT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By

James A. Erikson

This investigation was designed to explore learning and development of verbal performance in the elementary school. Oral reading is a kind of verbal performance, and one of the purposes of the study is to explore the implications of a theory of verbal performance for oral reading—an area of educational research that has languished. We currently have little knowledge about how children learn to verbally enact literary texts, despite continued pressure for achievement in reading such texts. The general oral language curriculum in US schools is neglected even more than oral reading, and another purpose of this study is to align an oral language curriculum with verbal traditions known in fields such as folklore and sociolinguistics. Those fields have elaborated a social theory of verbal performance, but the value of this theory for education remains mostly unexplored. I used performance theory in this study as a lens for designing and analyzing children's performances with storytelling, riddling, reading aloud, and other genres.

The primary method of the study was a variation of participant observation. The investigator co-taught in a second-grade classroom at an elementary school for a year, where an increased number and variety of verbal performance situations were arranged. Data were collected in field notes, audio tape, and video tape. The analysis involved using categories and constructs from performance theory to isolate events potentially illustrative of learning and development. These were then analyzed to yield discussion of how teaching, learning, and development work with verbal performance. The primary

theoretical construct for recognizing growth is Hymes' (1975) "breakthrough into performance." Participants showed by management of audience and by control of *prosody* (including pitch, loudness, and stress) that they "assumed responsibility to audiences for a display of communicative competence" (Bauman, 1977, p. 11).

Among findings was the idea that individuals' success at performance depended on availability of a wide variety of performance genres, texts, and social contexts. In particular a small peer group seemed essential for participants' development during the study. In addition to performance opportunities, I found direct talk about performance to be important as well. Students needed to learn to provide specific feedback oriented to texts and their performances. General talk about audienceship, performing, and prosody were somewhat helpful, but the best results came when these were connected to specific meanings in specific texts. When we helped students make this connection, we asked them to (a) put in their own words the meaning of emphatic prosody, and (b) to decide what prosody would be appropriate to create a certain meaning. Methods of teaching and learning these skills are a unique contribution to the study and teaching of oral language, and I suggest their usefulness for teaching. Implications are discussed for educational practice, theory of educational psychology, and future research. NOTE: mp3 sound files are embedded as figures, and must be accessed on an accompanying CD ROM.

Works cited:

Bauman, R. (1977). *Verbal art as performance*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Hymes, D. (1975). Breakthrough into performance. In D. Ben-Amos & K.

Goldstein (Eds.), *Folklore: Performance and communication* (pp. 11-74). The Hague:

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DEDICATION

To Nancy, Isabela, and Alma Erikson.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express thanks to members of my dissertation committee for their interest in and patience with this work. I appreciated the atmosphere of collegiality and academic freedom engendered by each of the committee members. I was not required to pursue an agenda developed by someone else, but was helped to develop interests that brought me to doctoral school in the first place.

Eliot Singer's interest in my early observations on language on the playground was the impetus for the study below. His constant attention to the development of the theory, methods, and the actual text of this dissertation was invaluable. His knowledge of fields of folklore, cultural anthropology, literature, and sociolinguistics were a godsend. His scholarship embodied many of the reasons I embarked on doctoral studies. The greater part of this study was drafted verbally while hiking the groves just north of Lake Lansing. These walks, sometimes academic sometimes not, remain greatly missed.

P. David Pearson's interest in my research was vital. His ability to talk across theoretical and methodological schools was always refreshing and engaging. He directed me toward fundamental works that laid the groundwork for a study involving fluency in reading. Because I was broaching a somewhat obscure question, Dr. Pearson's acumen at remembering any relevant research in reading was a wonder.

I thank James R. Gavelek for directing the study in its early stages, and providing numerous opportunities and excuses to present my work in public. Laura J. Apol, Susan Florio-Ruane, Diane Brunner, and Carol Sue Englert all provided needed personal and public forums for me to develop the ideas in the dissertation.

I greatly appreciate the faculty of the Educational Psychology Department at Michigan State University who went out on a limb by inviting me from undergraduate work in one field to a doctoral program in theirs.

Thank you to E.P. Dutton publishers and the estate of A.A. Milne for permission to print the full text of the poem "Forgiven" from *Now We Are Six*.

I also acknowledge the men and women who provided Macintosh freeware and beta software I used for data analysis. For capturing sound clips from audio and videotapes, I used Jenny Bernhard's Sound Recorder, version 1.0, freeware license. Her e-mail address is: Bernhard.Jenny@epfl.ch. For editing sound clips and creating sonograms and spectrograms I used Dale Veeneman's Sound Handle, version 1.0.3 freeware license. His e-mail address is: dveeneman@gte.net. Early in the study I compressed sound files into mp3 format using beta versions of the now commercial Mpegger software (formerly and more irreverently titled "Mpecker"), authored by Rafael W. Luebbert and now produced by Proteron, Inc. Information is available at this Web address: <http://www.proteron.com/mpegger>. Later in the study I used Johan Lindvall's mp3 Encoder, version 0.12. His e-mail is d2linjo@dtek.chalmers.se. Finally, I used Petteri Kamppuri's BladeEnc port for the Mac (original BladEnc by Tord Jansson), version 1.2., with GNU Lesser General Public License. Find information at <http://www.helsinki.fi/~pkamppur/> or <http://bladenc.cjb.net>.

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February 19, 2001

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KEY TO SYMBOLS USED

To represent stressed syllables a long symbol such as a dash or slash is used. To represent unstressed syllables a dot is used. The symbols are shown at various heights to represent the pitch of the syllable, i.e., a high dash represents a high-pitched stressed syllable or a low dot represents a low-pitched unstressed syllable. A slash represents a stressed syllable falling from high to low pitch, and so on. This notation system is used on pages 40, and 65-66.

Stressed syllable symbols	Unstressed syllable symbols
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INTRODUCTION

The Performative Aspect of Literacy and Oral Language

On his first day in prison the young man was led into the cafeteria by an old-timer, who offered to show him the ropes. At lunch things went smoothly enough until from nowhere someone shouted, "Eighteen!" The entire cafeteria burst into laughter. The old-timer sensed the newcomer's confusion and explained, "We've all been in here so long and heard so many jokes we know them all by heart. So to save time each joke has a number. Now instead of telling the whole joke we just shout out the number." Every few minutes a joke would ring out. Four! Sixty-three! Twenty-one! It seemed so easy the young man thought he'd try one. He waited for a quiet moment and yelled out, "Fifteen!" Dead silence. Not a peep. He turned to the old timer. The man shrugged his shoulders, "Some folks know how to tell a joke and some just don't."

Knowing how to tell is the crux of language arts, the missing key to meaning in literacy. The way we say things and the way we hear things said is just as important as what we say and what we hear said. All texts, whether printed or verbal, imply performance. The enactment of words is what gives a string of speech its larger sense, and this sense is what leads to real effects of words in the world. A firm grasp of the significance of how things are said is necessary for competence both at enacting and at receiving texts—for effective communication in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

If comprehension can be assumed as a primary goal in communication, then the common literacy terms "fluency" and "expression" are best characterized in terms of *prosody*, which refers to the musical aspect of language. We expect good readers to use pitch, rhythm, and loudness in such a way that they sound like "native" (Armstrong & Ward, 1931, p. 11) speakers of English (fluency) and such that they can indicate emotions and meanings not inherent in the words themselves (expression).

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But we do not by nature know how to engage texts as performances, whether as performers or as audiences. We must learn and develop competence at communicating by performing. Each culture develops its own genres of performance. Each kind of performance is unique and must be learned by young people and newcomers. Where young Southeast Asian children may not understand the American knock-knock joke at first, so American children do not understand the mechanics of an invented play language of the adolescent Hmong. Competent interaction around performance is something children must be taught (both by experience and by teaching), yet despite recent and periodic interest in oral language in education, it remains a weakly represented aspect of the literacy and language arts curriculum.

This dissertation describes and analyzes a year-long study in which I worked with second graders on the significance of how things are said. By increasing the number and variety of opportunities to perform, we hoped to find students “breaking through into performance” (Hymes, 1975). Those students we found ‘breaking through’ early in the study were followed more closely across various performance contexts (i.e., different social contexts, different texts, different genres) to see how they might develop in terms of their ability and willingness to take responsibility for displays of text.

In framing the research questions for the study it is important to understand that there is a dearth of theoretical constructs available for looking at how performers grow and develop. Performance theorists, however, have not wholly neglected this issue and they offer a number of constructs and processes that serve as starting points for this study. The problem of theory is addressed more thoroughly in Chapter One, where I discuss the



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general neglect of performative aspects of literacy and language arts in the educational community. The primary questions addressed in the study are as follows:

- How do people gain communicative competence in performance in classrooms? How do we ‘invite’ competent verbal performance into a formal, institutional context?
- Under what kinds of circumstances will children gain communicative competence in performance?
- What role does prosody play in learning and development of communicative competence in performance?
- How can we directly and effectively give instruction on prosody and its connection to interpretation?
- What kinds of theoretical constructs and terms are necessary to appropriately discuss the development of communicative competence in verbal performance?

Literacy and language arts, when viewed with the lens of performance, are not so much accumulations of texts and material artifacts as they are part of a “communicative process” (Brunvand, 1976). As communicators, how do performers come to know the ways they should perform stories, riddles, jokes, songs, picture books, or poems?

Moreover, why does communicative competence in verbal performance matter to educators? One of the areas of sorest neglect in American education is oral language (Buckley, 1992). And in reading one of the sorest areas of neglect is oral reading fluency (Allington, 1983)—a performative aspect of reading. The current climate for educational research is highly focused on literacy, but we also understand that spoken and written language are interrelated. Looking outward from the perspective of communicative

competence in performance we may address issues in literacy and oral language concomitantly. This is how it should be.

The term performance does not refer only to formal performances with stage, curtain, and director. If it did, the only relevance for schooling would be the occasional ambitious holiday performance. Performance is more pervasive than this. It involves everyday situations where verbal text is put on display (Bauman, 1992). This means reading aloud is a kind of performance. So are storytelling, riddling, reciting verse, singing, and telling jokes. Even though reading aloud involves a medium different from that of the purely verbal arts, those who read aloud still have an obligation to provide a kind of verbal interpretation of the text that makes it comprehensible and engaging.

Examining the processes of acquiring and learning communicative competence should yield pleasing results for both oral language and literacy. If we understand more about how competence works in verbal performances we may be able to establish more appropriate standards for assessing oral language in the regular curriculum, and at the same time learn important things about reading and writing processes. Buckley (1995) has argued that oral language will never play a strong overt role in the regular curriculum until there are sufficient ways to assess oral language in the everyday classroom¹.

Without a system of accountability educators can continue to assume children should come to school already sufficiently competent in oral language. Without appropriate descriptive categories, which this dissertation undertakes to deliver, assessment is unlikely to progress.

¹ "Speech" and oral language in American schools are terms used mostly in pathological contexts. Teachers involved with oral language in most schools are only responsible for remediating those who come to school with inadequate English language experience or with physical impediments. Farcical curricular program titles like "Daily Oral Language" have little to do with oral language competence.

Oral language is acknowledged in current holistic models of language and literacy education. But in practical terms the general nod to oral language has had little impact on the field. In a review of the online searchable catalog for Heinemann publishers, a company highly involved with the work of whole language researchers and practitioners, I found little work focused on oral language. When I searched for the terms “oral” and “verbal” the top ten returns (returned in order of relevance) involved mostly titles from the company’s literature division, not the textbook division. I had to infer from the description of one title that the book might help educators develop part of an oral language curriculum. This was the only one. By contrast, when I searched with the terms “reading” and “literacy” every one of the top ten returns under each term was a literacy education textbook on reading or writing, with these terms in the titles. Literacy is popular, oral language is not. The bias to printed language is pervasive in education, despite our unequivocal understanding that printed language and oral language are related (Olson, 1994).

While the educational focus on literacy inadvertently pulls emphasis away from oral language, the performative perspective allows us to look at both literacy and oral language under the same lens. Both are media used for performative communication. Because performance is about *communication*, this perspective demands that we view both printed and verbal performances in social terms—i.e., performance is the act of putting a text on display *for an audience*. The nature of the medium (whether print or voice box) is not the only way of defining communication because there is structure to text and to social context as well. Because the performative perspective is a

literary/artistic perspective, it also admits of different kinds. Some kinds of verbal performance may involve print, and others not.

While the medium of language (whether the mouth or the eyes) partially defines verbal arts and literacy, it is easy to make too much of differences between print and oral traditions. I made a common mistake years ago in a school assignment by separating modes of communication along lines of *reception* and *production* (see Table 1):

| Medium →
Method
↓ | Printed language | Verbal language |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Receive
information | Reading | Listening |
| Produce
information | Writing | Speaking |

Table 1: An inappropriately compartmentalized view of the differences between printed and verbal media.

This model is inadequate for figuring out what processes really guide reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Researchers in reading now see it as a matter of producing language (with print as a prompt), not merely receiving visual “transmissions” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Raphael & Englert, 1990). The performative lens helps blur lines that distinguish speaking from listening, and reading from writing, and gives us a sense that communication is the overarching purpose of language.

Since we cannot turn off our ears when we speak, each act of speech is a dual act of authorship and audienceship. Each time a new person reads a book, with their own performative idiom, they re-write it (Scholes, 1989). By the same token, the ability to empathetically position oneself as an audience is a key piece of understanding both reading and writing processes. Consider, for example, the impact of Iser’s (1972)

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24. The twenty-fourth

25. The twenty-fifth

concepts of the “implied reader” and the “implied author” for both reading and writing, or Anne Haas Dyson’s (1993) understanding of writing processes as “social work.” An appropriate psychological model of reading and writing involves dynamic partnership between reception and production at every level.

The outmoded model in Table 1 fails not only because of the separation of reception and production, but because it keeps printed language separate from oral language. The two share an intricate relationship. Olson (1994), and Scribner and Cole (1980) have studied the reciprocal influence written and spoken language have on each other in literate cultures—i.e., in some situations people speak like written language and in others they write like their everyday speech. The differences in medium between spoken and written language are obvious. But when a society uses *both* media to communicate, the material aspect of language itself changes to reflect the dual technology—the voice box *and* the pen are media for communication (Scribner & Cole, 1980). Communicators in literate culture cannot be expected to keep the registers of printed and spoken language completely separate.

Oral reading is a fascinating performative crossroads because it involves both media. Competent oral readers must be able to manage two seemingly different ways of communicating. Competent oral readers read with fluency and expression (characteristic of verbal arts), but at the same time attend to print as a primary source for the script (characteristic of literacy). Competent oral readers also attend to the meaning of the text (characteristic of competence in both verbal and printed arts). Less proficient oral readers may lack experience or knowledge in any one of these three areas.

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Literacy researchers and psychologists have been studying children's use of printed cues for the better part of a century. This study does not pursue that avenue of inquiry. Little has been done to study the performative aspects of reading and still less to foster an interactive approach between oral and printed language when studying comprehension. Performers must control prosody fluently and expressively for audiences to comprehend texts. But we still know little about how people learn and develop an understanding of prosody, and even less about how it may be taught.

Prosody is performative. It is the "way" we say something. It is the music of language. It points to intentions and motivation in language—and thus toward meaning. The musical patterns of English prosody organize syntax—i.e., they make groups of words into sensible phrases. We also rely on prosody to disambiguate when words may mean several things. For example, a professor of mine laughed when recalling the number of letters of recommendation he has read with the ambiguous line, "I can't recommend this person too highly." The writer of such a line assumes the reader knows which prosodic emphasis to supply to make the words either a recommendation or a rejection. Control of prosody is as necessary for good oral reading as it is for storytelling, joke-telling, riddling, and singing.

Ultimately we do not want our schools filled with minimally competent, resentful readers. We want readers who read fluently and willingly. Competence with various skills such as recognizing words is not enough to ensure successful communication. In addition, approaches to reading that do not account for its verbal-artistic aspect will too often overestimate the importance of the printed cue. Helping readers experience communicative competence in their reading means they must be able to *hear* themselves

read in ways that satisfy real audiences, including themselves. Because oral readers can hear their own performance, they may be their own most important audience. And their judgments of self-competence will depend on the quality of their voice—i.e., their control of prosody.

In review, the performative perspective will allow us to think simultaneously about two abiding problems in language education: the neglect of oral language, and the neglect of the oral/performative aspects of reading. Prosody is the fundamental element of language common to both problems, and is thus one of the central technical constructs used to organize this study. It thus makes sense to define performance and to demonstrate prosody from the performative perspective.

Performance as a Social Aspect of Literature

What is performance? Bauman (1977b) followed traditions in the disciplines of cultural anthropology and folklore when he defined performance as “the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence” (p. 11). In performance we make language an object to put on display. When telling a joke, for example, the text of the joke itself is an object put on display. Audiences react to speech as they would react to any other concrete object or event. Speech can elicit emotion, induce thought, and provoke action.

When competent joke-tellers switch from other communication (such as conversation) to joke-telling, they guide their audience by marking the change. Hymes (1975) called this moment of change “breaking through into performance.” Breaking through into performance involves social signals that we have accepted responsibility for

the competence of the speech display. This is accomplished by contrast (Couper-Kuhlen, 1988). Joke-tellers might use the words of a typical joke introduction (discourse markers like “That reminds me of a joke” or “There was this guy...”) to separate the performance from other speech going on. They might mark the change by using words and syntax that match the lightheartedness of the joke. Or they might mark the change by speaking in a different voice, such as a character voice, an ethnic accent, or simply a voice with different pitch and rhythm than the surrounding conversation. Those who speak multiple languages may tell jokes and otherwise speak informally in their familiar tongue, while using an ‘official’ language for formal, public communication. Competent performers must at least change their speech enough to call an audience’s attention to the *display* of language, making it separate from other kinds of communication.

The relationship between performer, audience, and text is a relationship of rights and responsibilities. For example, since written language often assumes authors will be absent when readers read, authors expect readers to act as proxies—to responsibly embody words in their absence². While authors have the right to expect responsible readers, the author’s responsibility is to leave sufficient cues on paper for readers so they may successfully fulfill their role as proxy. Authors’ and readers’ understandings of rights and responsibilities in communication systematically influence their competence. They must understand their roles to understand what they must supply when enacting text.

² One of the primary contributions of reader response theory is the notion that authors psychologically construct a representation of an “implied reader.” The implied reader figuratively represents the author’s sense for how her written language will be enacted once delivered to the idealized reader. Many writers (such as the writer of a phone message) do not have to assume the distance of a published author and can often dispense with conventions (e.g., we rarely expect phone messages to be typed, but we would see it as a breach of convention to open a novel and find the words scrawled in pencil).

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Assuming responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence is the basic definition of performance that guides the work in this study. But how can we observe something as ethereal as assuming responsibility? There must be behavioral signs that can guide researchers and educators in recognizing when performers have “broken through into performance” (Hymes, 1975) from other kinds of communication. Prosody is among the most observable signs speakers can give that they are involved in keeping a contract of rights and responsibilities to audiences. In fact, prosody is a way for speakers to show audiences how they want speech to be understood. Control of prosody is part and parcel of responsible, competent communication. This is true for any kind of speech (storytelling, conversation, reading aloud, giving instructions, making requests, etc.). Good writers have to learn how prosodic patterns may effect the meaning of a text. Good readers have to learn how to give natural sounding prosodic patterns to written texts (part of the process of inference). And good performers of verbal arts have to lead audiences toward interpretation and interest by the way they use their voice.

Prosody Helps Speakers Create Meaning in Performance

Prosody is a physical way of demonstrating meaning beyond the word level. In reading this originally came to my attention because of children’s speech play. I found in an earlier study (Erekson, unpublished) that children spoke with characteristically fluent and meaning-laden voices on the playground and in other free spaces and times at school, but not necessarily so in the classroom. I knew one fourth-grade boy in particular whose jokes, quips, conversational asides, and personal stories were extraordinary because he

showed a virtuoso command of voice and meaning. But when Sean read aloud the difference was equally remarkable. He read deliberately and laboriously, sounding out and calling each word as if it were its own sentence. In one session, he diligently applied all his word recognition strategies and decoded several pages of a novel as I listened. But he understood nothing, not even who were the principal characters in the passage. Where his oral language was characterized by confident fluency his oral reading was marked by halting uncertainty.

Sean's difficulties with reading are not the main concern of this study, but the extreme polarity between his use of verbal arts and printed language raises important issues about performance and prosody in school. Obviously Sean had not learned to use an appropriate *range* of word recognition strategies. But in the meantime he had also spent several years of school learning and repeatedly practicing a slow, halting voice he believed counted as 'reading.' We can almost hear voices coaching him in successive pull-out remediation programs: "Slow down." "Sound it out." "Look at each word." Intensive coaching in single-word recognition strategies leaves us with terrible models of fluency.

Sean had learned to separate print communication from verbal communication. The two seemed to have nothing to do with one another. At the same time, he learned to leave his 'playground voice' on the playground, and to use strange instructional voices for school tasks.

Sean *had* the knowledge of how to control prosody. He showed this daily in his informal verbal art. Why was he so competent in one area of communication and so awkward in another? In simple psychological terms, it is an issue of transfer. Knowledge

from one domain does not automatically transfer intact to another. In more literary terms, this is about *genre*. That is, competence at performing one kind of verbal art does not automatically transfer to others. Sean became so sure that print requires a prosody different from his ‘natural,’ verbal performing voice that he did not believe or ‘know’ that his natural voice was appropriate for reading. He *could not* read with a natural sounding prosody, not because he did not possess knowledge but because he was not socially supported in bringing his everyday voice to bear on school tasks.

Sean’s reading demonstrated two of the most common voices we hear from dysfluent readers: word-calling and sounding out. We so frequently hear word calling in educational settings that we may not have an adequate sense for why readers who word call use this choppy prosody. When readers call words, they pronounce each word with the kind of stress we expect at the beginning of a phrase or sentence (listen to sound clip in Figure 1). In everyday English speech this voice does not sound right. Competent readers/speakers need to have a sense for the peculiar rhythms of English³. English speech is not strictly metered as the Romance languages are (Raffel, 1992), but the rhythm depends on the group of words and their intent⁴. Thus speakers have to monitor intent, syntax, and diction to appropriately pace the number of unstressed syllables between stressed syllables. Word-calling entirely ignores the system of prosody and focuses all attention on the single word. The result is incompetent-sounding speech.

³ This sense of rhythm is part of what changes with regional changes in the quality of English. That is, the unique rhythms of English in India, California, and Southern Louisiana would make different demands on speakers.

⁴ Consider for example the everyday way of saying the words “I am going to go to the store.” A person saying this rapidly in everyday American speech would sound more like “Imna go t’the store.” The only two words that get a stress are “go” and “store.” This is enough information to get the message that the speaker intends to travel to the store. If, however, the proposal to go has been challenged, a person might say defensively, “I’m GOING to go to the store.” The rhythm is slowed down and paced by the speaker’s intent to *insist* that she will go.

Figure 1: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A reader word-calling as he reads a passage from a social studies text. wordcall.mp3.

Sounding out words is a terrible strategy if our goal is to help readers become fluent because the strategy depends on conscious stopping and slowing down for isolation of phonetic units. As such, it is laborious. But, like word calling, we hear it so frequently from so many readers we may have neglected to define the voice of sounding out in technical terms. When we sound out words we tend to give each phonetic unit (whether this be an individual letter or a phonogram) a vocal stress. This is reminiscent of the old sketch on the children's show "Sesame Street." A two-headed monster watches as the onset and rime of a simple word approach from opposite sides of the screen. The face on the left speaks the onset. The head on the right speaks the rime. They pronounce these repeatedly in order, with the onset graph and rime graph written on the screen coming gradually together until the word was complete.

In this sketch, each of the speakers had to treat the individual sounds prosodically as if they were separate words by giving them a stress they would normally not have in fluent speech (listen to sound clip in Figure 2). Up until the moment when the final whole word is spoken by the two heads in unison, what viewers have heard repeatedly is a model of dysfluent reading⁵. We also hear dysfluent models every time adults coach

⁵ A more appropriate example of this same exercise was given on the television program "Electric Company," where silhouetted faces on opposite sides of the screen pronounced the onset and rime only once separately, and then quickly pronounced the full word. Where the Sesame Street sketch focused on a single word, the Electric Company sketch demonstrated onset and rime for about ten words during one sketch. With neither of these programs was the sketch intended to demonstrate prosody, but the Electric Company sketch nonetheless demonstrated a much quicker jump to fluency, while the Sesame Street sketch demonstrated onset/rime segmenting as a laborious process.

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children to attend to onset phonograms by saying phonemes: “B-b-b,” “K-k-k.” Coaching children in sounding out is like coaching them to stutter.

Figure 2: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A reader sounding out words, along with word calling, and self-correcting to a fluent phrase. matt1.mp3.

I do not often hear readers read with only one prosodic pattern. When I have heard sounding out it is usually mixed with some automatic word calling. Often word-calling and sounding out are found in conjunction with more fluent stretches of reading. The sound clip in Figure 2, for example, involves a reader who does all three while reading aloud a passage from a Durrell comprehension measure. For Sean, however, I heard *only* sounding out. There are extreme cases like Sean’s that are indicative of our ignorance of the voices with which we read and with which we teach children to read. Prosodic patterns in reading are indicative of an overall neglect of prosody and performance in language arts and literacy.

Both sounding out and word calling are prosodic patterns we often hear from readers. But we would rather not hear them. Paris (1999) found that word callers did not comprehend text as well as fluent readers. We expect good readers to read with a performative voice. We do not want word calling or sounding-out to lead the prosodic repertoire. We want people to read with flow and style—with expression (Allington, 1983; Harris, 1946). We want people who sound like they are speaking English (Armstrong & Ward, 1931). In Figure 3, the sound clip demonstrates a reader reading fluently, but without a distinct emphasis or style. The reading sounds like English.

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Figure 3: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A child reading with emphatic prosody, intermittent with non-emphatic fluent tunes and self correction. reademph.mp3.

To demonstrate the need for prosody in education in reading and speaking, however, it is important to do more than simply describe the facts of English prosody and common dysfluencies. It is also important to describe what we *want* to hear.

During the course of this study I identified pieces of literature that demonstrated what we wanted to hear—a connection between prosody and meaning. Prosody affects meaning well beyond the word. It is entwined with meaning at the phrase, sentence, and whole text levels. We can identify certain texts for which prosody is a primary signal of larger units of meaning. For example, in Arnold Lobel's (1970) story "Spring" in *Frog and Toad are Friends*, Frog wants his friend Toad to break off his winter sleep and come out to play. When Toad sends Frog away and goes back to sleep, Frog stops at the calendar before leaving:

The November page was still on top.
Frog tore off the November page.
He tore off the December page.
And the January page,
the February page,
and the March page.
He came to the April page.
Frog tore off the April page, too.

This passage leaves readers to infer that Frog has played a joke on Toad by pulling off one more page than he should have. By reading with appropriate prosody, a performer can demonstrate the inference without spelling it out in words. Rhythm is the primary prosodic feature that makes the difference here. The quickened pace of ripping off pages from December to April would be juxtaposed by a pregnant pause before the last line is

read. This last line, if read with a kind of whispered voice, can imply that Frog was not supposed to tear off the April page.

Audiences to such a performance gain access to meaning at the text level. Frog's trick is the central point of the story, yet the trick is not given to readers on a platter. Even reading with emphatic prosody does not explicitly *tell* readers that a trick has been played, but with emphatic prosody the audience is told the words are not to be accepted at face value. The juxtaposition of heightened pace, pregnant pause, and whisper is enough direction for audiences to begin making inferences.

Sometimes, as in the passage above, if we don't pay attention to prosody we may *lose* access to meaning. Without emphatic prosody, audiences to the Frog and Toad story must independently make the connection to references earlier in the text. With emphatic prosody, young audiences are guided to make this connection. Prosody points to the interpretation of the text. Special texts such as these are important for modeling and teaching the connection between prosody and meaning. Three such texts will be examined at length in chapter six.

Speakers Use Prosody to Interpret Texts

Interpretation is more than merely adding up words and syntax. Building up from phonemes to words then to phrases and sentences cannot ensure an appropriate performance—one in which the audience receives cues to help them generate a unified meaning, divining the 'point' of the text. Emphatic prosody and correct syntactical prosody are necessary to create textual meaning.

The prosody of word calling and sounding out shows an overemphasis on the phonetic and lexical aspects of language. However, when we attend to prosody we can give attention to meaning on the syntactic level and the text level. Many more pleasures of literature are available in responding to and interpreting text than are available in the recognition of single words. Nodelman (1996) listed over twenty of the pleasures people experience when participating in literature. Expressive, syntactically correct performances make these pleasures possible.

- The pleasure of words themselves—the patterns their sounds can make, the interesting ways in which they combine with each other, their ability to express revealing, frightening, or beautiful pictures or ideas.
- The pleasure of having our emotions evoked: laughing at a comic situation, being made to feel the pain or joy a character experiences.
- The pleasure of making use of our repertoire of knowledge and our strategies of comprehension—of experiencing our mastery.
- The pleasure of recognizing gaps in our repertoire and learning the information or strategy we need to fill them, thereby developing further mastery.
- The pleasure of story—the organized patterns of emotional involvement and detachment, the delays of suspense, the climaxes and solutions, the intricate patterns of chance and coincidence that make up a plot.

(Nodelman, 1996, p. 22)

In order to have something to talk about when we ‘talk about text’ we have to have had an *experience* to talk about (Dewey, 1963). Something meaningful has to have happened

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in the performance of the text. Meaning is constructed in the performance of the text (talking the text) as well as in the discussions that act as context (talk about text).

The ability or willingness to create this kind of meaningful experience with text is not born with us. Competence in performing is learned and developed in the social world. It can be taught, too. This study is about these processes of learning, development, and teaching.

Control of Prosody in Performance can be Learned and Developed

For this study the theoretical model for oral language competence is performance: i.e., assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. We want to know how people gain awareness of and control over prosody and other performative aspects of language, and how they learn to communicate through performance. Because communication is social, the performative lens on language demands a social model of learning and development. This model is best articulated by drawing from both the study of performance and the study of social cognition.

Hymes (1975), a performance theorist, suggests the difference between merely *knowing* a verbal tradition and *presenting* it represents one of the most salient developmental shifts in performance—i.e., the difference “between knowing what and knowing how” (p. 18). Competent audiences know a tradition, but competent performers must know how to put texts on display within that tradition.

People’s development as performers involves management of two roles—audience and performer—and degrees of sophistication within each of those roles. For example, in the audience role it takes more sophistication to talk about a story with

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reference to other stories (to *report* on it) than it does to merely recognize when a story is being told (to *interpret* it). In the performer's role it takes more sophistication to understand and control a presentation of text than it does to merely mimic or memorize.

The most competent performer knows what a verbal tradition is, can talk *about* it from experience, and can also perform within it. What one can talk about (i.e., what is "reportable") is less than what one may find intelligible ("interpretable"); and what one can perform (i.e., what is "repeatable") is arguably less than what is interpretable and reportable (Hymes, 1975, p. 16). The competent performer should operate at a more sophisticated level of understanding than the mere audience should.

Competence in the performer's role depends on experience in the audience role, because management of prosody and other communicative structures is directed at audiences. Where a competent audience member need not consider overtly what it takes to perform, a competent performer *must* monitor audiences and think about how to adjust performances with audience in mind⁶. In fact, when competent performers supply emphatic prosody they intuit what effect their voice might have on an audience. The performer learns to inhabit both roles at once, using audience-based knowledge while exercising control over language and self as a performer.

What we hope to gain from this study is an understanding of how young people learn to manage both roles while growing in sophistication. This process of growth may be clearer when we cross Hymes' scheme for understanding development in performance with Harré's (1986) digestion of Vygotsky's social theory of internalization. Harré's

⁶ In Reader Response theory in literary criticism, this phenomenon has been discussed in terms of writers writing for an "implied reader" (Iser, 1972). The implied reader is an author's psychological projection of a potential reader. In verbal performance, where the audience is actually present, this process happens in actual social interaction, not merely in the author's mind.

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“Vygotsky Space” diagram is a useful heuristic for helping us see how the individual’s development as a performer is a function of social involvement (see Figure 4 below).

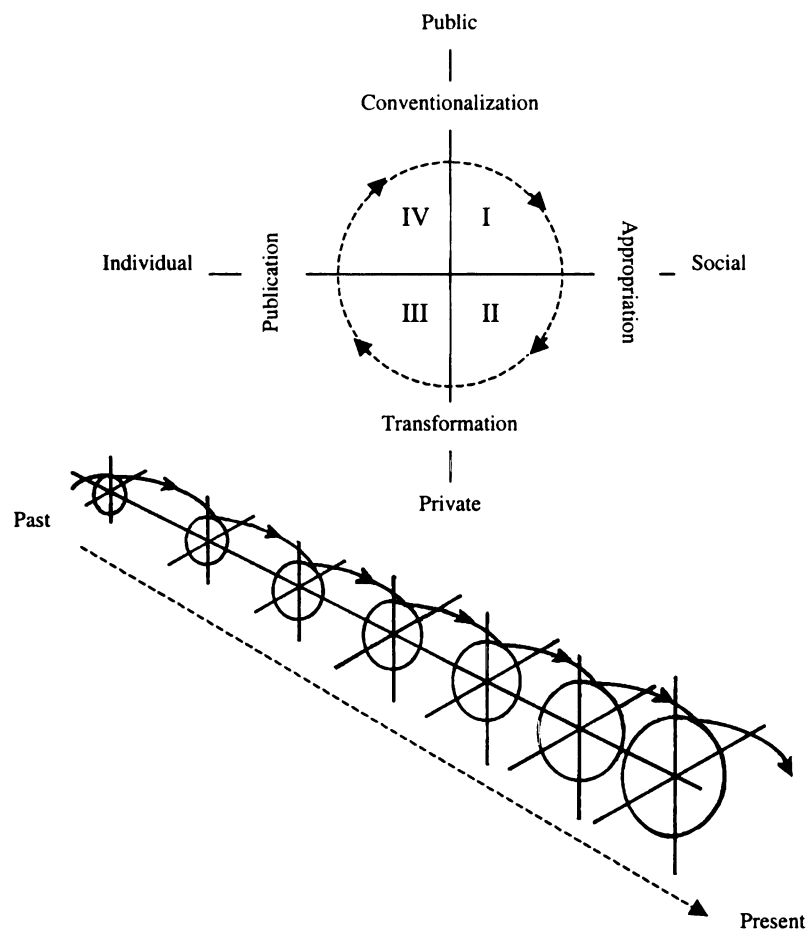


Figure 4: Vygotsky Space (Gover and Gavelek, 1997). A diagram following Harré’s conception of social categories in the process of developing cognition.

“The Vygotsky Space is formed by the overlaying of two bipolar dimensions, one private \longleftrightarrow public (referring to where a state, condition, or process is realized), and the other social \longleftrightarrow individual (referring to where it is given a conventional definition) (Harré, 1985). Together these dimensions describe a space consisting of four quadrants:

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I. public-social, II. public-individual, III. private-individual, and IV. private-social.

Following Vygotsky, Harré proposes that in the course of their development, individuals often “move sequentially and dialectically through these quadrants” (Gover & Gavelek, 1997).

When we insert verbal performance as the content for development in the Vygotsky Space we can visualize how a young person might progress from being introduced to a performance genre toward being competent at performing. Growth toward competent performance roles—both of audience and performer—depends on participants shuttling through private/individual and public/social spheres.

When we encounter a new performance genre for the first time as an audience we do so in a public space. At the same time, definitions and norms for appropriate behavior in this performance genre exist in social space. A public encounter in an environment of social norms is visualized as “Quadrant I” of the Vygotsky Space. Once a performance is encountered, however, we must decide what salient aspects are worth thinking about privately (Quadrant II). If we were to value some aspects of performance, or if a performance resonates with emotions, we might transform these aspects to co-exist with structures that already constitute the individual mind⁷. This process is individual and private (Quadrant III).

As audiences, often our understanding need not move beyond the private/individual quadrant (III) of the diagram. We can participate passively as unsophisticated audiences—understanding a genre, finding it intelligible and recognizable, but without active participation. A more complete and sophisticated

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understanding of a performance genre comes through continually making knowledge public—talking *about* the performance, or even trying to act it out, or some combination of both. To perform and to talk about performance we must move personal knowledge into public space, where it may be subject to social conventions (fitting with convention, getting rejected, or exerting an influence to define convention). An increase in sophistication for both roles—performer and audience—involves moving knowledge out of the individual/private space and into public space, where others can encounter the knowledge in the public/social world.

But just because performance is public and social, this does not mean it is *automatically* more sophisticated than audienceship. For example, a child who encounters joke-telling for the first time might mimic jokes without understanding how they work. Young people frequently do this with knock-knock jokes, memorizing texts and repeating them without understanding the pun. Such mimicry would inhabit primarily the social/public space (I), because the knowledge necessary for competent performance has not been appropriated or transformed.

For a would-be knock-knock joke teller, the publication process might remain somewhat ‘empty’ until he or she begins to improvise new jokes or learn how the jokes work. Mimics do not need to leave “quadrant I” to perform. But to become composed, controlled performers they must begin to coordinate their displays with a sense of audienceship and thus must move between public and private space, and between social and individual space. They must simultaneously manage their sense of audience and performance.

⁷ Transforming existing knowledge to make room for new concepts is a difficult process, and according to Piaget is less likely to occur than is finding ways to accommodate new concepts—leaving existing

Audienceship and performance involve degrees of sophistication and responsibility. In a verbal tradition, the passive audience is less responsible than the active, and mimicry in performance is less responsible than expressive prosody.

| | Audience Role | Performer Role |
|---|--|---|
| Less Sophisticated/
Less Responsible | Finding texts interpretable. Listening. Recognizing genres. Responding. | Mimicking performances. Memorizing. |
| More Sophisticated/
More Responsible | Reporting. Talking about performances. Describing or explaining. Evaluating. Criticism and analysis. | Supplying emphatic prosody. Performing in a personal idiom. Adjusting text based on audience response. Managing audience. |

Figure 5: Degrees of sophistication across performance roles. The performer must have understanding that blends audienceship and performance. The performer's knowledge of audienceship will be qualitatively different than that of those who inhabit only the audience role, but the kinds of activities that show degrees of sophistication should remain similar.

Development as a performer is thus a much more complicated maneuver than development of audienceship alone, because development in performance *must* involve development of audience knowledge but development in audienceship does not require performance. One might be a relatively sophisticated audience and not understand how to perform. An adaptation of Harre's Vygotsky Space diagram can illustrate the notion that a competent performer must simultaneously manage thoughts, strategies, and skills that pertain to both roles (see Figure 6).

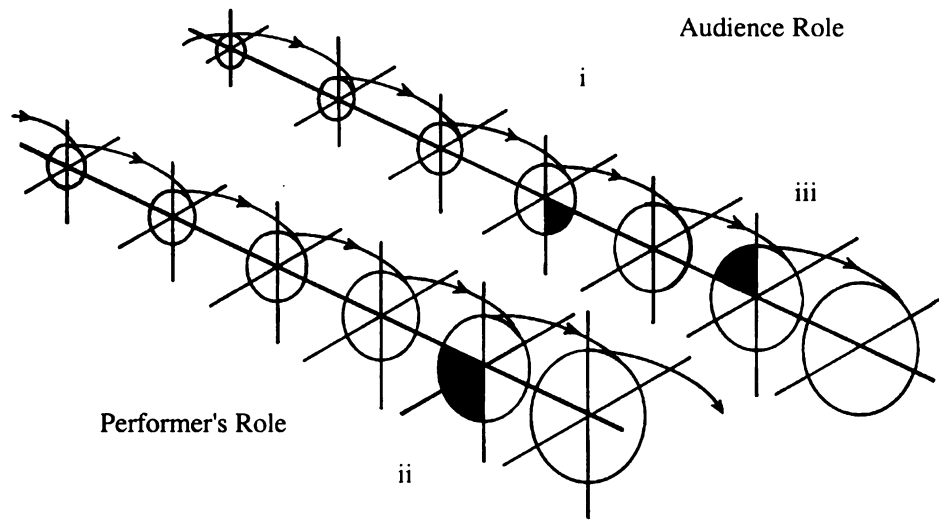


Figure 6: A Visual Conception of Performers' Development. Performers' development may run parallel to their development of audience knowledge (i.e., never progressing alone unless performance is ignorant mimicry). The relationship is dynamic and interactive, and the performer's role is informed by knowledge of audienceship.

For each role to increase in sophistication, the cycle must be complete—moving knowledge from individual/private space back into public/social space. Competent performers must use their understanding of audienceship to adjust the text they make public. Thus the arrows moving between roles in Figure 6 show (a) performers' private consideration of something that has happened in social space (II), (b) their transformation of text based on audience responses in private/individual space (III), and (c) actual adjustments made to the performance for publication in public/individual space (IV). The published adjustment would then be subject to social scrutiny (back to quadrant I).

With this dynamic model of roles in mind we can ask two questions about performers to assess their development: Do they seem to understand audienceship? What level of responsibility does the performer show to audiences when displaying text? When we suppose performers have gained competence we need evidence that shows they are

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responsible to audiences. That is, we need evidence they can adjust a text to help audiences make meaning.

When analyzing the data I turned to Hymes' understanding that competent performance involves a developmental leap from audienceship toward performance. I believed I needed to create multiple and varied opportunities for children in the study to be *audiences*, because audience knowledge lies at the heart of competence. At the same time, the children were the central performers in the classroom so they also had to have opportunities to grow as performers. The two roles had room to grow simultaneously.

The Organization of the Dissertation

The presentation of the data in this study follows a logical pattern. This introductory chapter presents the research questions of the study. Chapter one is a literature review where I examine performance theory and its relevance for literacy and language arts. In that chapter I outline the significance of performance theory for oral reading and oral language, giving special attention to defining terms from performance theory. "Breakthrough into performance" is one of the most salient constructs for the study, defining the moment when performers show assumption of responsibility for a display of text. At the same time, the review helps us orient ourselves toward texts as 'displays' in the dynamic control of performers rather than static objects.

In chapter two I outline the methods for the study, which involve a manipulation of participant observation methodology called "arranged natural context" (Singer, unpublished-a). Arranged natural context is an adaptation of folklore research where verbal traditions could not be observed without researchers' instigation. We "arranged" a

situation for this study in which performance contexts could ‘naturally’ emerge. In that chapter I also describe participants and the site.

The third through fifth chapters involve presentation and analysis of data from the study. The logic behind the progression of these chapters begins with the playground. Knowing that children often speak with fluency and competence in various situations outside of the classroom, the task we faced was to try to invite children to bring a kind of ‘playground’ voice to their classroom performances.

Michelle McWilliams, in whose classroom the study was conducted, did much in her everyday curriculum to invite children to perform verbally. Not only did she offer a curriculum strong in performance, she also created a personal environment characterized by respect for children’s talk. In her classroom it was not difficult to invite children to speak freely. She fostered a feeling that children could take verbal risks in her room. The data in chapter three help me describe the environment Mrs. McWilliams negotiated with the children, beginning with routines established in the first week of school.

In chapter four the data come from the intervention of the study. In an environment rich in performance and where children felt safe making their voices heard we introduced a situation for small group performance not already existing in Mrs. McWilliams’ curriculum. We also increased the number and variety of opportunities to make variations on the theme of performance.

The small group performances were a kind of “third space” (Gutierrez, 1994) between the classroom and the playground, where children were invited to bring their knowledge of verbal performance to a highly informal setting, which was nonetheless still in a classroom context. In this context we often heard the children use voices we

recognized from the playground and other informal situations. One of the problems of verbal competence on the playground is that children's involvement is casual and sporadic—the sophisticated knowledge they use in playground performance has no room to grow and develop into something valued in the academic world, and the number of children who become competent performers is left up to chance.

The small group performance situation was like an 'enhanced playground' because it involved some of the freedom and informality of the playground setting, but was given official sanction as classroom activity—it counted as school. The small group 'enhanced playground' situation helped us create a situation where the primary mechanism in learning and development was not one of chance, but of design. The data in chapter four describe how children developed in this context.

'Enhanced playground' is a transitional concept in curriculum—a bridge between completely casual, informal contexts and the formal classroom. In chapter five the data describe the development of one performer, Henry, as he made a transition from performance in the enhanced playground to performance in a highly organized formal presentation. The data on Henry are remarkable because they show how he transformed what he brought to the classroom—a willingness to tell stories in the small group—into an ability and willingness to take control of his audience and his voice (prosody) in a formal performance context for an unfamiliar large group. Chapter five is a kind of capstone to the idea that we can (a) organize a classroom to support verbal performance, (b) invite children to use their playground competence in less formal classroom contexts, and (c) help them move toward competence at highly formal school performances.

The intervention of the study did not only include performance opportunities. One of the central problems we faced was how to best help the participants develop *explicit* knowledge about verbal performance. If we only created opportunities to perform, only those who were ready for opportunities would have shown growth. We wanted to give children chances to make learn the connections between prosody and the meaning of performance. In chapter six the data focuses on instructional methods used for modeling and practicing the use of prosody to create meaning.

In the seventh chapter I review the findings of the study and then discuss the implications of these for theory, research, and for curriculum and instruction.

Because this study focuses on the *way* things are said, instead of only on *what* is said, I have been able to keep in view the dynamic relationship between performer, text, and audience. An examination of the way things are said—the prosody, the gesture, the performer’s orientation to audience—offers educators a fresh perspective on comprehension across both oral language and literacy.

The performative aspects of language are not mere extras “tacked on” to give *added* meaning to a text⁸, but are a fundamental aspect of making meaning and action with language at all. Most importantly, the performative aspect of language was something the children in the study could grasp—both implicitly (as they performed and reacted as audiences to performance) and explicitly (as they discussed, interpreted, and explained the voices and their meanings).

⁸ Structural linguists have used the term “suprasegmentals” to describe prosodic features of language. The implication of the prefix “supra” is that prosody is laid on words like icing on a cake. This implies that speakers make word choices and grammatical choices before they determine their intent and affect. Intent and affective direction could just as reasonably govern word choice and syntax. We do not want to fall into the trap of favoring words and grammar over prosody.

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CHAPTER 1

The Way Things are Said: Turning a Performative Lens on Language and Literacy

Prosody is evidence that literacy acts are social performances—directed toward an audience. There is no reason to choose one cadence over another, to stress one word and unstress the following five, or to assume a character voice unless we are trying to help an audience understand our speech. When we let audiences hear an appropriate ‘voice’ during reading we show we have assumed responsibility for delivering a comprehensible text. In turn, audiences can use prosody to figure out how speakers want to be understood. Prosody is entwined with comprehension.

A small number of researchers in literacy have examined the relationship between prosody and comprehension (e.g., Schreiber, 1987; Allington, 1983). But prosody cannot be treated as another component to add to the busy schedule of literacy teachers, or another factor to add to the researcher’s cluttered ANOVA. Prosody and performance are integral parts of the larger social perspective on literacy and cognition. We are now in the third decade since Scribner and Cole’s (1980) study launched a ‘social revolution’ in literacy studies, yet we still have difficulty finding ways to reconcile the cognitive with the social. Performance theory demands we do so.

The term ‘communicative competence’ is central to performance theory and embodies the reconciliation: ‘Competence’ implies that speakers supply organized knowledge, skills, and strategies (cognition), while ‘communication’ denotes social motives that organize knowledge. Competent performers must draw on organized

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knowledge about language structure, content, and discourse. While accidental competence may have pleasant short-term results, the art of performance lies in purposeful knowledge. This knowledge is organized for entertaining and informing audiences and for the performer's acquisition of status in a speech community. Still, performance studies have gone by and large unnoticed in literacy. This *should* be surprising to educators, especially in light of high-power calls for us to find new "organizing metaphors" to help better study educational phenomena (Bruner, 1990).

It is, of course, difficult for literacy researchers to divorce their work from achievement measures, policy, and other practical concerns of the educational enterprise. Yet unless we are able to find new metaphors in relevant academic scholarship then issues such as prosody and fluency will continue to be marginalized. Word recognition has dominated a century's worth of research and practice in reading. Comprehension, so obviously important to communication, was neglected in literacy research for the greater part of this century (Venezky, 1984; Pearson, 1990) while research and instruction in word recognition flourished. It took the major philosophical shift of the 'cognitive revolution' to enable thorough study of comprehension at all and even longer to develop research-based instruction. In this historical light, it is not surprising that we understand prosody poorly. It is an aspect of comprehension.

Moreover, we have to contend with the bias toward printed language in modern society (see Olson, 1994). Nowhere is this bias more evident than in American education, where there is virtually no oral language curriculum (Corson, 1984; Buckley, 1995). Because we are so focused on print as a modern technology, it has always been difficult

to study the ‘invisible’ aspects of literacy. Prosody, gesture, and other embodied aspects of language are conspicuously absent from printed language.

Yet prosody is a basic construct for students of verbal performance outside education. Tedlock (1983), for example, believes that ethnographers who write up folk texts collected in the field are obliged to do more than merely print words. Nuances of meaning are carried in the way a text is spoken—whether it be a riddle, a proverb, or a tale. Tedlock (1992) developed a practice of using elaborate notation systems to represent a number of performative features. These included changes in pitch, pace, and loudness as well as changes in register, discourse markers, syntactic patterns, and other poetic structures not visible in typical prose renderings.

The point of these notation systems (unwieldy though they are) is to help the interested reader reproduce the words of a verbal artist *and* to approximate the way the text was originally spoken in context. Notation systems are a part of what Tedlock has called *ethno-poetics*, because the systems allow scholars to represent something of the ethnicity of the people who performed the text. Where blank prose had suggested the mere existence of a generic folk text, the notation system was supposed to suggest the embodied performer in a real speech context.

Folklorists, cultural anthropologists, and language philosophers have all contributed to the performative perspective on verbal arts. But the early work on development and learning languished in the latter two decades of the twentieth century. There was a spate of interest in children’s development of communicative competence in the mid- to late 1970s. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Mary Sanches (1976) studied children’s speech play based on linguists’ interest in language development. Sutton-

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Smith (1970; 1971; 1975; 1976; 1981) also studied children's development of communicative competence in speech play based on his interest in the ludic (play-based) model of cultural and psychological development (see Huizinga, 1950).

Bauman (1977a) and his students (McDowell, 1979; Brady, 1984) also approached development from a tradition of performance theory in folklore. But this excellent work is limited in scope and effect because (a) folklore has declined in importance as an area of research and the field has shifted attention away from performances in traditional contexts, (b) folklorists and anthropologists usually look at children's development in typical folklore genres (stories, riddles, jokes) without considering implications for school contexts—although Bauman (1982) called for scholars to do so.

When folklorists and linguists *have* talked about the implications of oral competence for school, it has been without strong consideration of development (e.g., Gilmore & Smith, 1982; Labov, 1973). Researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that children's *existing* competence with language is not often valued at school, but do not demonstrate how children might gain this competence or how it might be taught. Singer (personal communication) has argued that

Educators have been largely unwilling to take children's folklore seriously, even when folklorists have come their direction. Whatever pretence there may sometimes be to taking children serious, education is an adult-centric enterprise, and educators historically avoid places where children develop competence without strong adult control (such as the playground). Also what children do on their own doesn't fit into the 'culture of niceness' so pervasive in education.

It is difficult to get two fields of research to come together. Educators have overlooked the potential contribution of performance studies, and students of

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performance have either been forced to lay aside the educational question or have had no reason to pursue it.

In the review of literature that follows, I will discuss those areas of literacy research that come closest to addressing the performative aspects of literacy. This review is less for the conventional purpose of arriving at a hypothesis than it is for illustrating why it is so difficult for literacy researchers to address prosody. I will then examine more thoroughly the literature on the performative perspective, including the handful of studies that examine learning and development of communicative competence in performance.

Literacy Research Involving the Performative Perspective is Limited

The transition to a social/cognitive perspective on literacy has been a difficult one. We learned so much about reading from research in both the behaviorist and cognitive traditions that a 'quick switch' made little sense. The risk in adopting a new perspective wholesale is that we may abandon concepts and constructs still valid and vital to understanding literacy—throwing the baby out with the bath water. Nonetheless, literacy researchers have been trying for the last two decades to reconcile the cognitive with the social. In the process, a number have touched on performance theory. The trouble is that we have to piece things together from a study here and an article there. Performance theory has not been an "organizing metaphor" in much literacy research. Still each piece represents a concerted effort to get the 'big picture' on the social and cognitive aspects of literacy.

Tierney (1980) drew on the work of language philosopher Grice to discuss the “rights and responsibilities of readers and writers⁹.” Systems of rights and responsibilities are most commonly described in fields of cultural anthropology and folklore as a method of illustrating cultural structures that simultaneously enable and constrain people’s action. Tierney used the ‘contract’ as a metaphor for the social use of written language: “Written language is not primarily a means of expressing one’s own thoughts, but of directing others to construct similar thoughts from their own prior knowledge” (p. 607). Olson (1994) wrote in a similar vein when he declared that print is not a model of language, but a model *for* language—i.e., writing is the act of creating a script for future performances, and reading is the act of putting on the performance.

There are differences and similarities in the kinds of social ‘contracts’ we find for printed and spoken language. Because the cueing system in print is static it suggests to readers a responsibility for faithfully and precisely rendering the words as given on the page. In verbal arts, the concept of precision is slightly different but not absent, despite the ephemeral nature of speech. Lord (1960) for example, wrote of traditional Slavic bards who had immense responsibility for representing conservative epic poems accurately. They used conventional poetic meters and stock phrases as cueing systems for re-composing elaborate and lengthy texts (sometimes lasting eight hours or more).

We may too often operate under the fallacy that in face-to-face speech verbal artists are under less of a responsibility for precision. This may be true of conversation, where face-to-face communication allows for ‘repair’ and ‘expansion’ (see Cazden, 1988). But the give and take of conversation is not necessarily a primary feature of

⁹ Because Tierney’s (1980) article was published the same year as Scribner and Cole’s *Psychology of Literacy* we can get the sense that researchers were exploring social models for literacy before the

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performance. Because verbal arts are highly conservative, performers hold much the same responsibility to be faithful ‘proxies’ as readers do. With both printed and verbal arts performers might use available cueing system(s) to create an interpretation of a conservative text.

In traditional verbal arts the ‘author’ of *The Three Bears* is no more present than is Dostoevsky when we read *Crime and Punishment*. The ability to repair and revise is always more available in face-to-face speech than in print. But the more verbal performers adjust their text the more they try the patience of their audience. Children’s author E.L. Konigsburg (1971) recognized this in a story:

We pushed back all the furniture in the den and laid out the sleeping bags. Now was the time for ghost stories, but the truth is that no one could tell a ghost story and tell it right. They were full of *uh*’s and *and*’s and they never told them in order (p. 9).

When someone ‘breaks through into performance,’ audiences hope the display will be one of competence, not full of halts and errors. Performers should use all the cues they can to create a ‘faithful’ rendering of a text.

But mere renderings are not entirely acceptable. Word calling and ‘speech voice’ are accurate renderings but do not *demand* comprehension. As readers of printed texts and as audiences for the verbal arts we expect a kind of art to the performance. We want *good* performance—communicative competence—and this entails comprehension and interpretation. Dyson (1994) drew on Bauman’s (1977) conception of communicative competence to talk about the development of competence in young writers. She appears to be a fairly unique educator in her use of terms directly from performance studies, and

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her adoption of the terms shows that communicative competence as a concept is not foreign to literacy researchers—especially those interested in sociolinguistics.

Rasinski (1989) also seems to have a framework for literacy that implicitly includes communicative competence. He called for literacy researchers and practitioners to perpetually question their notion of what counts as ‘good reading.’ He wrote that we need to think about the social and communicative habits of people who are readers—not just people who can read, but people who *do* read. Good readers, he insists, read for the basic communicative purposes of getting pleasure and information (p. 85). He implies that those people who willingly and actively pursue literacy are those who have first hand experience with competent print communication. While Rasinski does not explicitly draw on performance theory, the question ‘what counts as a good reader’ is a common-sense way of talking about communicative competence in performance. In addition, Rasinski believes a communicative definition of good reading can help us avoid specious educational goals—in particular, treating skills and achievement measures as the primary outcomes of reading instruction.

Each of the students of literacy above has touched on the organizing principles of performance theory. To reiterate Bauman’s (1977) basic definition, “Performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence” (p. 11). The above review should illustrate that some literacy researchers have touched on performance theory (both purposefully and inadvertently) in their effort to reconcile the social with the cognitive. Tierney’s work involved a social conception of responsibility. Dyson’s (1993) and Rasinski’s (1989) work involved a conception of communicative competence.

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Performance theory is a social framework, yet individual cognition is fundamental to the concept of communicative competence. In terms of a unified theory available for literacy research, the basic 'pieces' of performance theory have not yet settled in one place.

Oral Reading Fluency from the Performative Perspective

We currently know too little about learning and development of performance with oral language to make much comment on reading alone. Thus in this study we must consider performance broadly as a phenomenon of oral language. Research on reading fluency suggests we need to learn more about the quality of oral readings (Lipson & Lang, 1991). But findings and recommendations in this area are scattered, and researchers unfortunately appear to be divided into two 'camps': a word recognition camp and a prosody camp.

Fluency is an old common sense term for identifying competent readers (Harris, 1946; Allington, 1983; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) and competent speakers of English (Armstrong & Ward, 1931). It has been used for decades on reading report cards and in foreign language textbooks. Educators generally know that fluency is a desired outcome of instruction and practice, but have defined it from non-performative perspectives. To be precise, oral reading fluency has been primarily defined in terms of word recognition (Lipson & Wixson, 1997). Those who have studied the prosodic aspect of fluency have limited their study to syntactic structure (Schreiber, 1987) at the expense of text-level and pragmatic structure.

It is still entirely unclear whether fluency is a sign that follows competence or a cause that precedes it (Lipson & Lang, 1991). So the role of fluency in literacy research

and practice is uncertain. We know fluency is desired, but we do not know exactly when or how to deal with it.

Psychologists have narrowly defined fluency as “rapid, accurate word recognition” (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991). Oral reading fluency is thus measured “crudely” in terms of words per minute (Stayter & Allington, 1991, p. 144). Yet some scholars have described fluency in terms of prosody (Allington, 1983; Schreiber, 1991; Dowhower, 1991). Over half a century ago, Harris (1946) made the following observation on fluent oral reading:

Good oral reading proceeds smoothly and rhythmically. The words are *grouped in phrases, and meaningful thought units are indicated by appropriate pauses and inflections of the voice. Jerkiness, hesitations, and repetitions are other defects in fluency* that are easily detected. In some children these are simply indications of nervousness or self-consciousness. In many cases, however, hesitations and repetitions are accompaniments of slowness in word recognition and are employed to gain more time to decipher the next word. (p. 104, emphasis added)

Prosody rounds out the picture of communicative competence in fluency. Rapid, accurate word recognition is part of the system of rights and responsibilities of readers and writers (Tierney, 1980), but “the artful, esthetic quality of an utterance resides in the way...language is used in the construction of a textual item” (Bauman, 1977, p. 8).

Prosody is a primary means for giving speech a ‘way’ of being performed. We are probably most apt to recognize fluency when it is lacking (as with students who consistently word-call and sound out words). But even dysfluency has been described in prosodic terms:

One of the common defects in fluency is word-by-word reading. The word-caller plods along slowly, tending to make a noticeable pause after each word. When he does attempt to *phrase* his reading, he may group the wrong words together and may disregard or misinterpret punctuation marks” (Harris, 1946, p. 104, emphasis added).

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By grouping the *right* words together in phrases, readers signal syntactical meaning instead of merely lexical meaning. Word calling involves a physical, verbal focus on the lexical aspect of language¹⁰. Both Dowhower (1991) and Schreiber (1991) concur that the prosodic *phrase chunk* is a desirable feature of fluent reading.

Phrases must be grouped together by a prosodic “tune” (Armstrong & Ward, 1931) to create groups of words that make sense together. Pitch and rhythm figure most prominently in defining the tune of a phrase, not punctuation. “[Grouping] has nothing to do with punctuation but rests solely on the meaning” (Hazen, in Stayter & Allington, 1991, p. 144). It makes good sense that fluency involves “appropriate phrasing or chunking in accordance with the syntactic structure of the material being read” (Schreiber, 1991, p. 158).

But syntax is not the only structure involved in putting words into meaningful groups. A speaker’s *intent* in uttering a particular phrase can change entirely the way the phrase is grouped. For example, the difference in emphasis between “I *can*’t eat too many chicken wings” and “I can’t *eat* too many chicken wings” yields an exactly opposite sense (see notation below, and also listen to the sound clip in Figure 7).

| I can't eat too many chicken wings. | I can't eat too many chicken wings. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| — . — . — . — . — | . . — . — . — . — |

Figure 7: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Comparison of the prosody of two performances of the phrase “I can’t eat too many chicken wings,” each with a different intent. chwing.mp3.

¹⁰ Word-callers *can* comprehend texts. I have seen numerous word-callers perform well on comprehension measures such as the Durrell passages at primary levels. So word-calling is not exclusively about lexical meaning. But word-callers spend a preponderant amount of capacity at the word level, and I have found that longer texts invariably frustrate them.

The change in meaning is determined by making a few variations on the normal pattern of pitch, stress, and juncture. The example on the left follows a normal tune—"tune 1" according to Armstrong and Ward (1931)—in which the first stressed syllable in a group receives the highest pitch and succeeding stressed syllables fall (relative to the first). The example on the right may be scanned two different ways. In one, the word "I" would be stressed, and the word "eat" would match it in pitch; in the other, we would collapse both words "I can't" into a quick unstress putting the first stress and highest pitch on "eat" to emphasize it. This change in prosody and meaning depends on the intent of a speaker.

Outright irony as well as subtle nuance can be expressed in prosody. This leads us to the textual and pragmatic structure to speech. Discovering the intent of an utterance is to discover the meaning at the text level. Meaning resides in the interaction between structures: phonology, lexicon, syntax, semantics, text structure, and pragmatics. Study of fluency in reading has lingered at the level of lexical (rapid, accurate word recognition) and syntactic (prosodic 'chunks') structure. But among the most powerful functions of prosody is to illustrate meaning at the higher levels.

Phrases may be grouped into native-sounding tunes¹¹ without any emphasis. But *emphatic* prosody is strongly linked to textual and even to pragmatic meaning. Numerous undergraduate students have reported to me the phenomenon of focusing so strongly on maintaining 'good flow' in their oral reading during one class or the other that they do not know what they have read. This suggests they were involved in providing tunes that sounded normal, not on providing meaning. But to provide appropriate *emphatic* prosody, readers must know the intent of the text being spoken.

Stayter and Allington (1991) exhumed Hazen's 1895 textbook on reading to demonstrate that emphatic prosody was once an integral part of reading instruction. These were the days of good old-fashioned oratory.

There was a substantial emphasis on 'elocution'—the oral performance of a text provided an interpretive rendition, allowing the listener to understand the writer's argument and message. After the turn of the century there was a great shift in instructional emphasis from oral to silent reading. Silent reading performance became the predominant desired outcome of reading instruction, and the emphasis on [oral] fluency became restricted to the primary grades" (Stayter & Allington, 1991, p. 144).

Venezky (1984) cites scholars who believed "[t]he social needs of former days required the teaching of expressive oral reading...the social needs of the present require the teaching of effective rapid silent reading" (p. 21).

But silent and oral reading need not be mutually exclusive. It would make better sense for us to consider how the two relate to each other, especially considering the special ways we use prosody—a verbal act—to create meaning with printed and spoken words. Since current reading practice accepts comprehension in silent reading as a main outcome, reconciling oral and silent reading involves appropriately *reintroducing expressive oral reading as comprehension* and not mere oratory. The old oratorical focus can become a goal unto itself. Rather we need a way of bringing together aspects of silent and oral reading that lead to communicative competence.

A 1991 issue of *Theory into Practice* was dedicated to studies of oral reading fluency. The studies were interesting individually, but collectively were disappointing. There was little common ground between the parties interested in oral reading fluency and little effort to build bridges between perspectives. Lipson & Lang (1991) wrote an

¹¹ According to Armstrong & Ward (1931) this is "Tune 1" and is described as a group of syllables in which the initial stressed syllable is of the highest pitch, and all other stressed syllables fall.

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anchor summary, and noted the lack of unity may have stemmed from “varied definitions and etiologies” of oral fluency, and that this disparity “result[s], at least in part, from varying views of the relationship between fluency and skilled reading. Some authors talk about fluency as a ‘goal,’ others call it an ‘ingredient,’ and still others call it a ‘prerequisite’” (p. 219). They continue, “It is also possible that fluency is simply a by-product of wide reading.” There is little agreement, but there are common trends. One is to favor word recognition (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991). Another is to approach fluency via prosody (Stayter & Allington, 1991; Schreiber, 1991; Dowhower, 1991).

Fluency has been so neglected in reading research (Allington, 1983) it would be ludicrous to do anything to solidify the dichotomous relationship between the word recognition orientation and the prosody orientation. When we consider communicative competence in performance, *both* word recognition and prosody are obviously important for competent oral reading. For example, Rasinski and Zutell (1990) found that fifth graders’ correct attention to syntactic groupings helped them recognize words more efficiently. Lexical and syntactic knowledge interact. It makes sense that text level knowledge and pragmatic knowledge would also interact with other levels of structure.

Teaching Fluency and Prosody

Only a small number of instructional practices have been consistently used for improving fluency. Repeated readings, high volume reading, oral modeling, and phrase segmenting are among the most cited methods. Repeated reading (Blum & Koskinen, 1991; Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1991) and high volume reading (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991) are based on common sense psychology: Practice leads to fluency. Oral modeling

(Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1991) is also common sense. If we want students to use a particular kind of voice when they read, we need to explicitly model that voice for them. Prosodic phrasing and ‘expressive’ reading need to be demonstrated (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 2000), and students need to know the point of the demonstration. Because of the bias toward word recognition in so much reading instruction, children are likely to view reading as ‘getting the words right’ (Rasinski, 1989) instead of communication.

Phrase segmenting (Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1980) is a less widely suggested practice, but one that has met with some success. Segmenting entails either marking an existing text to show prosodic phrases, or re-writing a text in poetic lines (Schreiber, 1991, p. 162). Dowhower (1991) cites a 1976 study where increased students’ reading fluency by coupling phrase segmenting with repeated reading. Nathan and Stanovich (1991) also suggest a range of activities where children are prompted to see printed words as ‘scripts’ for performance, such as reader’s theater. Such dramatic practices, like prosodic chunking, play on the communicative and performative aspects of language.

Thus, while the research seems to be divided by disparate definitions, etiologies, and approaches to fluency, there is tacit agreement as to what helps children read more fluently and expressively. However, all these strategies are about *improving* fluency. We tend to think of it only when it is a deficit, and so instructional methods are oriented toward remediation—not regular teaching. If we set communicative competence as a goal, we must teach fluency to *all* children. To prepare instruction we must carefully describe communicative competence in performance, and also describe key moments in development of communicative competence.

“Breaking Through into Performance”: The Constructs Offered by Performance Theory

Because few anthropologists, folklorists, and philosophers have an obligation to consider the educational aspect of speech and verbal arts, it is not strange that learning, development, and teaching processes are not well represented in these fields. Even in educational research the developmental or ‘genetic’ question is often ignored (Gavelek, 1986). For many years our understanding of reading processes was framed in terms of expert reading, ignoring the source of expertise (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). The ‘expert’ approach to reading cognition told us little about the process of becoming a reader. For example, Gough’s (1985) model of visual information processing—as astute as it may be—only articulates how it is possible for *good* readers to rapidly process printed information into meaning. The model does not show how readers become able to do this.

In this same light we can find numerous thorough field projects by folklorists and cultural anthropologists involving virtuoso performers (see Briggs, 1988; Hymes, 1975; Tedlock, 1983), and this study employs a variety of constructs and processes developed by these students of performance. But there is not much documentation of how novice verbal performers move towards competence.

Lord (1960) documented a developmental process based on meetings between his mentor, Milman Parry, and novice bards in the former Yugoslavia. He articulated how young bards gained access to performative opportunities. Yet when Lord analyzed performances, he turned from the growing performer to recordings of the expert. In fact, the bulk of the data he and his mentor collected were recordings of virtuoso performers. We have to keep in mind that the point of their research was to test a theory on the

origins of Homer's epics. By the same token, folklorists who collect tales, poetry, and riddles in traditional contexts usually have non-educational research questions in mind.

But in education we cannot afford to let expert-based research govern models for instruction. Studies of expert knowledge presume what they should explain: that cognitive development implies qualitative changes in action (Vygotsky, 1986). So we are left with two questions: (a) what are the most important concepts and methods from performance studies for an educational model of communicative competence in performance, and (b) what do we already know about how a sense of communicative competence is learned, developed, and taught?

The starting point is Bauman's (1977) clear identification of performance as a unique genre of human speech communication. "Performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (p. 11). Each aspect of this definition, when abstracted, shows us the basic things to look for when we analyze speech with a performative lens.

1. Performance is a display.

Bauman's (1992) wrote that "performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened form of communication, framed in a special way, and *put on display* for an audience" (p. 41, emphasis added). In social terms, we can imagine performance having the same kind of effect as a winter window display at a department store. The intent of putting up a display is to get people to briefly put utilitarian goals on hiatus and participate in a small pseudo-reality in the window. There are 'store windows' in speech—historically conventional and traditional forms that offer space for certain

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people to put up a display. Because they are partly governed by convention and tradition, these windows of opportunity reside in history and culture. Novice or aspiring verbal artists thus need apprenticeships to familiarize them with what ‘store windows’ are and what typically goes in them.

Lord (1960) found that the festival of Ramazan created a unique ‘apprenticeship’ opportunity for novice Muslim bards (see pp. 15-29). Male singers gathered at coffee houses all night every night during the month-long festival. Each house wanted to get a competent performer. But because there was no such thing as a full-time bard (virtuoso performers still had to keep farms and families the rest of the year) less competent performers often had opportunities to try their luck. Ramazan was like a set of pre-existing store windows where displays could be put up by invited persons—whether novice or virtuoso. The wedding festival was another such ‘store window’, and there were other social contexts for putting performance on display as well.

The ‘display’ metaphor demonstrates that performance really is a unique kind of communication. The store window is a more apt analogy than the stage because it shows performance is embedded in everyday life. Just as the pedestrian in the city stops to look at a store window while going about other business, so we may “break through” (Hymes, 1975) from other modes of everyday communication into performance. We may be involved in a conversation one moment and the next be audience to a personal narrative, joke, or diatribe—all performances we expect to hear embedded in everyday speech.

In educational terms this means we want to arrange for multiple and varied kinds of display opportunities. Cazden (1988) noted the forms of discourse in school

classrooms traditionally have little variety. It takes conscious effort on the part of language teachers to introduce variety in classroom discourse.

2. *Performers assume responsibility for a display.*

Switching to ‘display’ from other modes of communication—breaking through into performance—is such a small part of performing that it might easily go overlooked. But the moment of ‘breakthrough’ is the moment when a performer becomes answerable for the display. In this moment we demonstrate understanding of genre, social situation, and text. Because text is the object we put in the ‘store window,’ it is the qualities of the textual display that show whether a performer has assumed or abdicated responsibility. The moment of breakthrough will show whether a performer has developed enough skill and social awareness to assume responsibility.

Breakthrough may have been easier to study had the participants all uniformly spoken English as a second language at school. In that case, I might have noted effortlessly when children assumed personal responsibility for texts on display because I could have heard them switch between languages. Hymes (1975) reported this case with his Native American informants, who hesitated to assume the role of storyteller. They usually spoke with him in English. Nevertheless, Hymes found they would periodically switch into the original language in which myth stories were passed down. The first language was an indicator of personal responsibility for the display as opposed to mere reportage. But the results of this study should not be only for bilingual education. We should consider the ways children “code switch” *within* English.

Children at school speak in at least two distinct registers: the playground register and the school register. I heard children switch between these two codes when they went to recess, but also when they were engaging in conversational asides during class time. They often took time during transitions between activities, or whispered to the side of the school task at hand—making that time their own. In each case they had to depart from the official ‘school register.’ Because informal and official registers are spoken in English, the difference between them is shown largely in *style* (Hymes, 1975).

When children manage two styles of speech in school it is not unlike what anthropologists find in the field: When informants speak *for* the anthropologist it alters the quality of the text¹². Likewise, children speak with everyday play and home registers, but the unique discursive community of the classroom orients speech so that it is almost always partly *for the teacher* (see Cazden’s 1988 descriptions of the IRE sequence typical of classroom discourse). We are unlikely to hear the child’s everyday voices in the classroom unless they are invited. Hymes (1975) noted traditional storytellers often alter content and style to reflect the fact they are supplying stories for the ‘scientist’ (pp. 67-68). When confronted with this, one of Hymes’ informants immediately changed his ‘for the anthropologist’ style. “He responded, ‘Well, we’ll have to fix that up.’ Mr. Smith proceeded to tell a clear, well woven story with pleasure” (p. 28). The informant had to be willing to use his ‘playground’ register for the scientist. So it is with children, they must learn it is sometimes appropriate to use their playground voice in the classroom.

The main thing I have found about children’s playground language was that the voices were distinctly fluid and artistic by comparison to their voices in official

classroom situations—especially in literacy activities (Erekson, unpublished). What I hoped for in this study was to find a way to help children speak with meaningful everyday voices in classroom literacy contexts. In performance contexts I would look for the children's use of *emphatic prosody* as a signal of their responsibility for the display.

The two aspects of performance described thus far, 'display' and 'breakthrough into performance' both presume an audience. Because performers more or less ask audiences to put other communicative concerns to the side and attend to a special display, performers are always at risk that their audiences will return to 'real life.' Performers thus have an obligation to put on a *good* display—one an audience feels like listening to. This leads us to the next important construct: communicative competence.

3. Displays are audience-oriented, and audiences demand communicative competence.

Linguists with varying approaches to language have defined competence differently. Noam Chomsky (1965) defined *linguistic* competence as a thoroughgoing knowledge of and ability to use grammar in its many transformations.

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly, and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (p. 3)

Hymes interpreted this position on competence as follows:

[Descriptive] linguistic theory treats of competence in terms of the child's ability to produce, understand, and discriminate any and all of the grammatical sentences of a language.

¹² There is a frequently cited "Far Side" cartoon by Gary Larson in which a group of natives in a straw hut are hurriedly clearing the television and VCR out of their hut as one of them points to the river, yelling, "Anthropologists!"

What a task this definition would set for educators! We would have to teach children all the possible transformations of language in a controlled, homogeneous setting (a kind of utopia—or more likely a dystopia). We have to keep in mind, however, that Chomsky's plan in isolating an ideal language user was not to inform educators (or folklorists). His goal was to discover an innate grammatical structure common to humans. His 'ideal' speaker was a fictional representation of the *cumulative* outcome of an extended program of experiments involving huge samples. No *person* will ever demonstrate Chomsky's linguistic competence because there is no purely homogeneous speech community.

When descriptive linguistics was in its prime there was also immense growth in language education, and linguistic competence has informed many instructional programs. We still see people working under the assumption that if we give children sufficient linguistic 'tools' and show them how to manipulate these tools they will be able to apply them whenever and wherever needed¹³.

The concept of *communicative* competence (Briggs, 1988) is more earthbound and appropriate to education. Those who work with competence in communication do not hope for an idealized, controlled, experimental subject in a homogeneous speech community. We hope for people who can perform with language in specific traditions in specific social situations.

Communicative competence is not supposed to be generalizable; linguistic competence is. Communicative competence is bound to genres and social situations. We do not expect someone who reads aloud well to be able to do stand-up comedy. We do

¹³ I often twist the old proverb, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime." I picture an expert fly fisherman in the middle of the Gobi desert giving casting lessons to a group of Mongols. What good will their newly learned fishing skills do them in the desert?

not expect someone who can play the guitar and sing for his family to play in Albert Hall. It should be more manageable for educators to think about how to help children tell stories to a small group of peers about “a time I got injured” than it is to think about how to teach all children to tell *all* kinds of stories well¹⁴.

So where does competence begin? Hymes (1975) suggested development of competence in performance depends on competent audienceship. He adapted the work of the linguist Labov to arrive at three aspects of competence—a kind of developmental model for communicative competence. The three aspects are (a) interpretability, (b) reportability, and (c) repeatability. The three are given in order because when people become familiar with a kind of performance they generally understand (interpretability) more than what they are able to describe or explain (reportability). Of what they understand and can explain there is a “smaller portion which the average person can be expected to manifest by doing on demand” (repeatability) (Hymes, 1975, p. 18). The widest bandwidth of competence involves different ways of participating as audiences.

This makes good educational sense when we consider ‘apprenticeship’ models of cognitive development (Rogoff, 1990). Lave and Wenger (1991), for example, found before full participation in complex cognitive work was achieved, children benefited from a period of “legitimate peripheral participation.” Rogoff (1993) also elaborated the concept of “guided participation,” where adults helped children do things they could not do alone. Each of these models suggests a different kind of audienceship. The important thing is to be able to attend to an enactment of competent action and to get chances to

¹⁴ The current trend is to teach children the generalized concept of ‘beginning, middle, and end.’ This approach ignores the fact that different kinds of stories have different kinds of beginnings, middles, and ends. Some stories begin with a flashback. Some stories leave open endings. Some middles are extended, and others abbreviated.

appropriate knowledge. If our picture of audience is one of a passive group sitting in auditorium chairs, we miss the point. If we want audienceship to lead to communicative competence it should involve active participation. Active modes of audienceship will be of most use in educational inquiry on performance. We want to organize opportunities for students to be in various kinds of apprenticeships: apprenticeships of observation, of legitimate peripheral participation, and of guided participation.

When we discuss audience we must understand that breakthrough into performance is not a discrete skill to be imparted regardless of social context. Because competence begins in audienceship, those who eventually learn to perform must learn to manage interaction between knowledge and society. One may have the knowledge necessary to be an informed audience, but not be able to put on a competent display.

4. Performative competence is emergent, and depends on performers' understanding of audiences and various kinds of texts.

“The emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations” (Bauman, 1977, p. 38). In this interactive model it is the audience that drives performers to adjust their way of performing a text, thus exacting the greatest demand for competence.

Lord (1960) noticed when performers put on a display they ask for a special kind of communicative ‘turn’ that puts stress on audiences for attention. “The essential element of singing that influences the form of the poetry is the variability and instability of the audience” (p. 16). The audience’s inattentiveness drove the singer to shorten and

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stylistically truncate the display for the impatient audience. By the same token a highly attentive audience might drive the performer to become more artistic, and involved.

In other oral performances, such as riddling, time is a lesser concern (McDowell, 1979). But for competence to emerge performers must still understand audiences. The audience is part of the *display* in riddling (Taylor, 1951; Taylor, 1953)¹⁵. Still, riddlers must watch carefully for how the text is received. There are various kinds of riddles, each with specific ‘keys’: metaphoric riddles, pun riddles, parody riddles, etc. If a guesser is not familiar with one kind of riddle, the performance session may end in frustration. When a riddling audience quits the display no longer exists (see McDowell, 1979, p. 111). Riddlers cannot immediately export a text intact to a new audience, because the new audience must first become willing to assume the role of guesser.

Many children relish the opportunity to lord a riddle over unsuspecting victims, and children’s riddling is often marked more by their play with the power of hidden knowledge than their hope for a healthy exchange of riddles (Sutton-Smith, 1976; McDowell, 1979). Thus I have found that many people—adults and children—are annoyed by riddles and dislike the role of guesser. A competent riddler must know how to maintain a working relationship with guessers, or his tenure as performer will end abruptly.

The emergent quality of performance means that competent performers are not merely holders of knowledge and skill (though they must have these). Competence resides in performers’ ability to appropriately *adjust* textual displays as they become

¹⁵ Bauman (1977, p. 40) notes the relationship between performer and audience in Keenan’s work with Malagasy marriage negotiations, where the involved parties are simultaneously performer and audience. If one party leaves the negotiations, the display itself ceases to exist because the genre of negotiation depends on mutual participation.

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aware of audience. Knowing about this relationship makes a difference when we turn to education. In any instruction on competence in performance we must address the effects ways of performing have on real audiences, and not toward instruction in discrete, generalizable skills. This is among the most basic points for fluency in oral reading. Expressive, emphatic oral reading cannot be taught one time for all texts¹⁶.

But we do not merely react to our audiences in the moment. We must also bring to bear a cumulative sense for what audiences expect in a particular kind of display. Competent performers develop a sense for what is “appropriate” or “acceptable” to hear—either in a particular social group or in the culture at large (Hymes, 1975, p. 16). Performers must draw on competence as audiences to be able to adjust their texts for a current audience. They must think, “What bores me when I am the audience?” or “When have I been frustrated at guessing riddles?” and so on. Performers of conventional kinds of texts must consider the desired effect of a performance both in the moment and in terms of structured social expectations. A teller of scary stories, for example, must consider the effect of facial and vocal expressions in maintaining the element of fright in the audience.

I have suggested prosody is one of the ways we can adjust text to give it a particular meaning. But because verbal performances are emergent—dependent on audience—we would gain little by teaching discrete features of prosody (I learned this by experience). Discussions of prosody must be embedded in discussions of audience. How did her students respond when Mrs. McWilliams sang “The Wreck of the Edmund

¹⁶ Appropriate emphatic prosody must be discovered for each text through a determination of what the text is supposed to evoke in audiences. Instruction in appropriate emphatic prosody must thus cross all grades, and all levels and genres of texts. It is not something we can relegate to the primary grades. If anything the need for instruction in prosody increases as texts increase in sophistication.

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Fitzgerald” in a particular way? What did it make them think when she slowed down? What did it make them feel when she sang louder? Why was it easy for them to sing along in this part of the song, but not in that one? Prosody must be discussed in terms of its communicative effect in concrete contexts, not in purely technical terms.

Supplying Prosody Makes Words into Actions

The way we assume responsibility for a text in performance is by speaking in a certain way—including use of prosody. Even to think about language this way requires a philosophical maneuver. Language philosophers have long discussed the relationship between language and reality—based on the notion that humans use language to refer to their perceived reality (see Austin, 1975, pp. 1-3). The corollary question, and one that seems to have consumed much academic energy, is how we can assess truth in language. But when studying speech performance, this is a dead end, because artistic texts are often self-referential (they provide their own internal reality) and need not be judged true or false. It is the performative function of speech—the use of speech to create actions in the social world—that orients us appropriately to the philosophy of literary language.

Austin (1975) insisted that language is not primarily referential, suggesting rather that it is communicative¹⁷. Were we able by speaking to simply refer to realities and thoughts that already exist, we would at some point be able to arrive at a literal, uncomplicated, standard language (Bauman, 1977b, p. 17). This ideal, unambiguous language does not and will not exist. All speech, like performance, is emergent because

¹⁷ While it seems utterly obvious to state that language is communicative and not referential, we have to keep in mind the agenda of language philosophers has been to sort out the question of the relationship between reality and perception. Austin’s theory represents a major shift away from the historical trends of his field.

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humans are unpredictable. Thus Halliday (1985) felt compelled to avoid objectifying language as a static object at all:

A language is not a well-defined system, and cannot be equated with 'the set of all grammatical sentences,' whether that set is conceived of as finite or infinite. Hence a language cannot be interpreted by rules defining such a set. A language is a semiotic system...what I have often called a 'meaning potential'... Linguistics is about how people exchange meanings by '*linguaging*.' (Halliday 1985, p. 7, italics added)

Making language into a verb instead of a noun is not just erudite semantics. We gain something when we avoid objectifying language. Primarily we frame the question of knowledge in terms of *action*. We do not ask only what students *know*, we ask what they can and will *do* with knowledge¹⁸.

Austin (1975) believed for any given act of speech¹⁹ there are three aspects: the locutionary act (the behavioral act of getting the words out), the illocutionary act (the way we hope speakers will understand our speech), and the perlocutionary act (the actual effect of the speech on an audience). It is primarily the second aspect, illocution, that is important for communicative competence in performance and prosody is at the back of it. Illocution is a technical term for *ways* of speaking. To understand speech we must know "in what way we are using the locution [or words]" (p. 98).

¹⁸ It is worth noting that educational standards documents are strongly oriented to encourage performance with knowledge instead of passive possession.

¹⁹ It was a thorough process of inquiry by which Austin (1975) and his student, John Searle (see Searle, 1970) came to assert that all speech has a performative function. The first discovery Austin made was that there is a certain class of words in most languages with a purely performative function. Utterances such as "I baptize you" or "I pronounce you man and wife" or "I testify that I am innocent" have no referential function. The right person in the right circumstances utters these words and actually *commits an act*, the same as if she had done something with her hands. Later, Austin and Searle came to believe that in the absence of such a performative verb, that the performative function is still *implied* and understood. When someone says "Shut the door," and they say it in a particular way in particular circumstances, we must infer whether this is a "command" a "suggestion," and so on. Even a simple statement implies the performative "I state that..." or "I declare that..."

Austin was careful to distinguish *ways* of using words from their lexical and grammatical meanings. As with all study of signs, the common conception of ‘meaning’ can get in the way. Vygotsky (1986) was careful to use the term ‘dictionary meaning’ to denote the lexical content of a word, and to write ‘sense’ when to denote the social intent of language. Austin chose the word ‘force’ to describe the way we want listeners to interpret our words. The “illocutionary force” of speech would signal listeners “whether we were advising, merely suggesting, actually ordering, whether we were strictly promising or only announcing a vague intention” (Austin, 1975, p. 99).

As speakers we may signal the intent, or illocutionary force, of speech by using performative verbs (I command, I state, I urge, I suggest). But most of us do not speak like lawyers or queens (I declare, I warrant, I submit) in everyday speech. We more frequently use prosody to signify intent, such that “listeners have little difficulty recognizing a command when they hear one even if it is disguised as a simple prediction such as ‘Candidates will provide their own drawing equipment’” (Olson, 1994, p. 93). Part of the magic of reading is that we must supply our own prosody—i.e., the motivation of the text—even when it is not given to us directly in the printed script²⁰.

Because punctuation is not a sufficient compensatory system for the lack of prosody—even at the phrase level²¹—good readers (and other verbal performers) must learn to monitor the textual and pragmatic meaning of a text in order to supply an appropriate prosody *during* the speaking of the text.

On numerous occasions in small group read-aloud sessions I have seen audiences look over the shoulder of readers to help when they pause too frequently for word

²⁰ The remarkable exception to this is comic book scripts, where prosody is indicated by graphic devices.

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recognition—apparently to keep a more acceptable pace. The sound clip in Figure 2 of the previous chapter illustrates a reader who returned to supply prosody once he had sounded out and called all the words. Ultimately, he was able to piece together a unified interpretation of the passage he read, even though it was based on an incorrect word²². But this ability diminished as the texts became longer and more complex. Still, his oral self corrections to supply prosody were desirable, because they showed partly where his “zone of proximal development” was for text interpretation.

Prosody is about signaling intent. When we speak of meaning and prosody, we are speaking beyond the lexical, ‘dictionary meaning’ and often beyond the syntactical meaning of speech. Prosody is more about global interpretation of texts, with their intentions and effects, than a mere matter of vocabulary or grammar comprehension. Prosody is part of what makes words into actions.

Supplying Prosody Demonstrates Communicative Purpose

Given the active, communicative function of prosody we must keep in mind that there are different effects of prosody in verbal arts. First, prosody is a way for audiences to identify performers as ‘native’ members of a speech community (Armstrong and Ward, 1931). Second, prosody is part of the way speakers send signals that help them break through into performance from other kinds of communication²³. Third, prosody is a

²¹ As cited above: “[Grouping] has nothing to do with punctuation but rests solely on the meaning” (Hazen, in Stayter & Allington, 1991, p. 144).

²² In the clip we hear him speak the words “a cold came” instead of “a cow came.” He assumed that all the characters in the passage had caught colds while camping. His interpretation made him laugh out loud by the end, and was ultimately much more pleased with his comprehension than were any of the other students who read the same passage on the Durrell comprehension measure.

²³ Bauman (1977) notes how important it is for us to avoid the idea that there is a “normal” kind of communication from which performance is a departure. “The members of every speech community have available to them a diversity of linguistic means of speaking, none of which can serve a priori as an

means for directing audiences to meaning in a text. Each of these functions is important for setting communication-oriented goals for verbal performance because each purpose helps us notice when, how, and why emphatic prosody might be used.

Armstrong and Ward (1931), in their groundbreaking work on English intonation²⁴, speak of prosody as the fundamental element in deciding whether learners of English actually sound English.

A German who speaks English very well was not understood by a bus conductor when he asked for a ticket to Queen's Lane with the stress and intonation Queen's Lane [\ .] instead of [- \], although his sounds were perfect. This shows the important part that these two elements of speech—stress and intonation—play not only in good 'accent' but in making for mere intelligibility. (p. 3)

'Nativeness' is one of the most basic functions of prosody. By a sense of nativeness, audiences can make early decisions during a display whether they will spend the time to listen at all. In classroom terms, we have to understand that the reader who calls words or spends inordinate time recognizing words does not sound 'native' for the performance of *reading in English*. The social effect is the same as if a bigoted person quit listening because he heard a foreign accent. Audiences tune out. It is certainly not gracious, but people in real communication make spot judgments like this all the time. Being read to by a less competent reader can take up much time for little return, so the audience that commits to a read-aloud session wants to be sure the reader is competent and may take any early signals to the contrary as an excuse to drop out.

As I noted above, children who sense a performer is less competent will often jump in and help. But I also noticed the children who were willing to do this were usually

analytical frame of reference from any other" (p. 17). We may break through into performance from *any* other mode of speech—from conversation, from an introduction, from giving directions, etc.

friends of the reader. If there was no personal investment to hold them to participation, I found that children would just as soon get up and walk away from a less competent reading. It was rude, but in terms of rights and responsibilities of readers the dysfluent reader was the one who broke the contract (Tierney, 1980). The same is true of a riddler who forgets the answer—audiences may quickly exit under such conditions. Performers must become ‘native’ to the texts they hope to perform.

The curious exception to this contract is the teacher or parent, who will listen tolerantly while a reader sounds out every word in a text for fifteen or twenty minutes. The teacher holds an exceptional role in a group of children and it is thus questionable whether she is always part of the same speech community as when children are alone.

Standards of ‘nativeness’ are by no means fixed. I have found the scholarly community tolerates well the various sounds of English spoken at international conferences. But I also have been with immigrant Southeast Asians who exhibited command of English lexicon and grammar but a poor prosody. They are still treated more brusquely than the rest of us at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The need for a ‘native’ sound is at least partially a vindication of Schreiber’s (1980) method of teaching readers to read in prosodic ‘chunks’. While the method does not focus the performer on the textual meaning, nor explicitly on audience, it at least sends readers the direct message that fluent reading is more *acceptable* than word calling or sounding out. Hymes (1975) has found that a performer’s sense for what is ‘acceptable’ or ‘appropriate’ arches over all other aspects of communicative competence.

²⁴ It is still used as a foundational reference on prosody in audiology textbooks (see, for example, Martin, 1991).

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Prosody is a Way of 'Breaking Through into Performance'

Prosody is part of the signal speakers send to audiences that they are in a display of text. For example, we can recognize from a distance when a joke is being told, when someone is telling a story, and when someone is reading aloud. We use prosody to send and receive “metacommunicative messages” (see Bateson, 1972, p. 178 for a description of this term) that “key” audiences in to what kind of communication is going on. In other words, prosody helps us “frame” various kinds of performances (Bauman, 1977b).

So many scholars have noticed the peculiar sounds of reading aloud that we now read about it as “book register” (Sulzby, 1986), and we hope for children to develop a sense for this register during an emergent literacy phase. Esser (1988) completed a thorough descriptive study of the differences between intonation of reading aloud and pure speaking. He believed there is a difference between “reading aloud and spontaneous speech” (p. 1). What he did not take into account is that reading aloud and spontaneous speech admit of different kinds of speech. He assumes all pure speech will have similar patterns, and that all oral reading will have similar patterns.

In the educational setting, however, we will find different prosodic demands in different kinds of texts. For example, informational texts are likely to contain lists and instructions. Such passages make different prosodic demands than passages from storybooks. The same degrees of difference hold true for kinds of “spontaneous” speech.

It is speakers’ sense of genre conventions that will often guide prosody, not only the fact that they are performing with one or the other medium (print versus the voice box alone). The reader who sees all reading as a unified way of communicating will not likely supply the emphatic prosody necessary to interpret a peculiar text.

When we are involved with a kind of performance, we expect to hear the right kind of voice. Hymes (1975) found that his American Indian informants changed language registers when they assumed a higher level of responsibility. Now and again they would break from English into Wishram. This was a signal they had stopped being mere ‘reporters’ of the tales and had momentarily assumed the responsible role of myth teller—a role they were somewhat loath to fill. For people who are bilingual, code switching can be a matter of switching languages. But in speech communities where English is primary, code switching will involve changes in prosody, not language.

This is true in other languages as well: “Comparing two renditions in Bolivian Quechua of the same tale by the same narrator, one a report of the tale’s content, the other a performance, McDowell discovered virtually total contrast in paralinguistic (prosodic and gestural) features between the two. The constellation of paralinguistic features keying performance in Quechua, however, is not necessarily the same as one would find in another community; what is important is the contrast between performance and other ways of speaking in the informant’s own community” (Bauman, 1977, p. 20). Moreover, it is important to discover the prosodic ways of ‘keying’ or breaking through into performance for different genres of verbal performance.

When we think about teaching children to use prosody appropriately we need to have a sense for what prosody sounds like in genres such as storytelling, reading aloud from story books, reading from information books, riddling, singing, and so forth. As teachers we need to have a good sense for the characteristic sounds of performances.

Prosody Signals Various Kinds of Meaning

To get a good sense for the characteristic prosody of different kinds of performances we have to know what to listen for. We should know the facts of English prosody, so we can recognize when someone creates a new meaning for a text. I have noticed undergraduates in the courses I teach have difficulty hearing pitch contours in speech, including reading aloud.

The primary facts of English prosody necessary for educators to consider are (a) that meaning can be changed by shifts in stress and rhythm, and (b) that meaning can be changed through the pitch of stressed syllables. These elements—pitch and stress—define the normal prosodic “tunes” of English and it is variation on these elements that creates the meaning of “emphatic speech” (Armstrong & Ward, 1931).

Regarding stress and rhythm we cannot operate under the fallacy that English prosody is inherently metrical, because it is not (Couper-Kuhlen, 1988; Raffel, 1992). We do not have to alternate between stressed and unstressed syllables as traditional poetic meters suggest²⁵. In emphatic speech we may unstress irrelevant words entirely, stressing only those we want emphasized. We also put high pitch on information we want to be emphasized. The following example illustrates (listen to sound clip in Figure 8):

²⁵ Even the more complex metrical feet allow for only two unstressed syllables between stresses. Raffel (1992) cites the “Chaucerian compromise” (pp. xiv, xv), noting that Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* marked the beginning of metrical verse in English. Meter was borrowed from the Continent (from contemporary French and Classical Greek poetry). Because poets are really the only people who have studied the active use of prosody outside this century, the compromise is important. Students of prosody in poetics are often duped by post-compromise poetry into thinking English is metered. Shakespeare’s careful enjambment is exemplary of ways English can sound competent when metered, but we have to remember that meter was used largely as a mnemonic for actors and as a pattern for making each carefully chosen word intelligible to audiences.

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| I'm surprised neither of you remembers where I put it. (Armstrong & Ward, p. 66) |
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Figure 8: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A reading of the sentence “I’m surprised neither of you remembers where I put it” with nine unstressed syllables and three stressed. surprised1.mp3.

This pitch and stress pattern emphasizes the stressed syllables of “surprised” and “put it” as crucial information, and ‘chunks’ the entire utterance into one information block by conspicuously downplaying *nine* unstressed syllables in a row. If the same words were given other prosody we would expect to understand the phrase differently. We can illustrate this with punctuation and italics (listen to the sound clip in Figure 9):

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| I'm surprised. <i>Neither</i> of you remembers <i>where</i> I put it. |
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Figure 9: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A reading of the sentence “I’m surprised neither of you remembers where I put it” with a pause and change in emphasis (compared to that in Figure 2). surprised2.mp3.

When we treat “neither of you” as one block of information by stressing it, we get the sense those being spoken to stand accused. This interpretation would not be possible without calling attention to the middle words by resetting pitch to a high point on a stressed syllable, and dividing off another informational block.

The examples above illustrate *informational* meaning, one of only five different aspects of meaning we can create by prosodic contrast (Couper-Kuhlen, 1986). The other four are grammatical, indexical, illocutionary, and attitudinal meaning.

For *grammatical* meaning prosody may provide necessary contrast. Couper-Kuhlen (1986, p. 146) uses a sentence (“George has plans to write”) that shows how changing the position of a high-pitched stressed syllable in an utterance can change the syntax. If we treat the sentence as one informational block, the position of stress forces new syntactical quality on the words ‘directions’ and ‘follow.’ In “George has PLANS to write” (listen to sound clip in Figure 10) the word ‘plans’ “is the direct object of *write* [i.e., George must write some plans].” But in “George has plans to WRITE” (sound clip in Figure 11) the word write “is the complement of *plans* [i.e., George intends to write].”

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| George has PLANS to write. | George has plans to WRITE. |
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Figure 10: Sound clip (use CD ROM). One way of reading "George has PLANS to write." plans1.mp3.

Figure 11: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Another way of reading "George has plans to WRITE." plans2.mp3.

In the latter sentence the word “plans” becomes the direct object of the verb “has”. The grammatical roles of the words in the information block changes depending on prosody.

Indexical meaning is about the ways prosody identifies people as members of speech communities. ‘Motherese’ is an example. Some studies on prosody in everyday speech note how important it may be to avoid working-class prosody during gatekeeping

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interactions such as job interviews or counseling sessions. Also, “it has been claimed that sex-group membership predisposes men to avoid certain intonation levels or patterns which women use” (Couper-Kuhlen, 1986 p. 113). This kind of meaning is linked to our concept of who is ‘native’ to a speech community and who is not.

Illocutionary meaning is about what a speaker intends as the pragmatic function of words. In the utterance “I’m surprised. *Neither* of you...remembers *where* I put it” the function might be to accuse. When prosody segments words into informational blocks, we can more easily determine intent.

Why don’t you look in the other room? [I genuinely *ask* why you do not go there]
Why don’t you look in the other room. [I *suggest* you go in there to search]

Rhetorical terms such as “ask,” “suggest,” “accuse,” “claim,” “deny,” or “apologize” have a direct performative use in English. Prosody delivers the illocutionary force of English in the absence of direct performatives.

Even in the presence of direct performatives prosody helps us ascertain the *attitudinal* meaning of speech. The words “I apologize” are performative, because we cannot refute them. When we *say* we apologize we actually *do* apologize. We may not be sorry, but we apologize. But we may also speak the same words effusively (with prosody and facial gesture) to imply our remorse. “I ask” may be said imploringly, impatiently, or angrily. Prosody does much to convey speakers’ psychological attitudes. For example, the enthusiastic ‘That’s great!’ is utterly different from the sarcastic version of the same words (Couper-Kuhlen, 1986, p. 112).

The purpose in bringing each of them out is to show the *variety* of ways prosody sends signals to audiences about how they should understand a text. They can understand it in affective, social, or text-based terms. Prosody also serves a discursive function. It

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helps speakers and audiences orient themselves and to know what roles they are involved in. The grammatical, attitudinal, and illocutionary meanings are created when speakers send prosodic signals as to how a set of words is supposed to be understood.

Current Knowledge about Learning and Development from the Performative Perspective is Limited

Communicative competence in performance can at least partially be taught. Scholars who have done research with developing performers, however, have not explicitly addressed teaching and learning. They usually found and described spontaneous development.

Despite the dearth of models for teaching from the performative perspective, it makes sense to articulate a working model for *learning and development* before developing teaching methods. In fact, a good part of what we hope to do by saturating a classroom with performance is to simulate a rich environment conducive to learning and development (see Wadsworth, 1978 for a review of Piaget's work).

A review of literature from the performative perspective, including discussion of learning and development, leads me to a number of general observations. The principles listed below seem to cross each of the studies reviewed above and to be generally congruent with the definitions of performance described above.

- Knowledge about performance is likely to develop before style. Development may occur during an observational phase where performing style is figured out tacitly, or by mimicking performance before one is sure of a competent style.
- Growing performers need a balance between 'safe spaces' and 'evaluative spaces.' In a safe space novice performers can try their emergent knowledge with low risk, but in

the harsher evaluative spaces peer audiences are frank about expectations and push performers to be competent.

- Even a short spurt of performance can help performers ‘learn’ their way toward competence—either by making mistakes, or by recognizing a burst of competence.
- Performance is a ‘presentation of self.’ Audiences have a strong influence on shaping a performer’s persona and sense of competence. This persona is tied to a performer’s ongoing willingness to risk public performance.
- Novice performers have to learn to monitor the needs of audiences—to get beyond egocentricity in their roles.
- There are ambiguities in every kind of verbal arts. To understand and perform competently in one kind or the other, the growing performer needs to discover and work with ambiguities.

It is Hymes’ (1975) pattern of interpretability, reportability, and repeatability that suggests the first principle of development above. We can reasonably expect that ability to understand or talk about performances will precede ability to enact them well. Brady (1984) found this true of one of her informants, Charlene, who moved from town to her relatives’ home on the Navajo reservation. Charlene was new, and thus spent a considerable amount of time just listening before she finally ventured a story.

But observation time does not need to be lengthy. Stone (1994) found her daughter’s joke-telling competence expanded in a short period of a few days after appropriating a joke she heard at a party—very different from the weeks of Charlene’s storytelling apprenticeship. Even so, it is knowledge *about* performance that develops first, then “artful expression of that knowledge” (Brady, 1984, p. 104). That is, a child

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may be well versed in Skinwalker lore (or riddling, or Grimms' fairy tales, or playground songs) without being able to impress an audience with a performance. The period of developing knowledge may be almost immediate or it may last days and weeks.

It is unlikely a growing performer would ever move from the role of entertained audience to responsible performer if it were not valuable. Brady's (1984) group of children used Skinwalker stories as a kind of cultural capital, where an accepted identity in the group depended on becoming a good storyteller. Stone's (1994) daughter tried joke telling for the pure pleasure of being the one to cause an audience to laugh (many children espouse this value).

In shifting from the role of audience to performer, novice performers seek out safe spaces to try their knowledge. Brady's informant tried out her earliest Skinwalker story not in a Skinwalker session, but during a lighthearted 'scary stories' session. Audiences did not judge as harshly here.

Stone's daughter often told stories to her family (1994, pp. 5-6). So when she began to appropriate a joke telling repertoire she performed an improvised joke first for her mother and brother—a safe audience. Only later did she try improvising a joke for a less familiar audience (pp. 6-8).

Stone's daughter is an interesting example, because her understanding of the joke on the level of interpretability and reportability increased radically *when she risked performing*. The joke she improvised for the less-familiar audience did not work. But instead of carrying on as if it had been a successful joke she stopped and said, "Well, that wasn't very good, was it?" Stone continues, "We ALL laughed—not at the joke, but at her acknowledgement of its failure" (1994, p. 8). The daughter's ability to evaluate her

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own performance proved she had gained communicative competence but it had not transferred to performance. This is a clear instance where a short burst of learning drove development²⁶. Where only a week earlier she knew little about this kind of joke-telling performance, she now exhibited ability to interpret and report on it, and was not far from competence.

If children find safe spaces to try performances, what is it that pushes them toward competence? Stone's example is generative because it shows us that with the safe we also need the riskier context of the less-familiar, more evaluative audience to push us to competence. Brady's (1986) work corroborates this, citing the Piagetian notion that

[A]s the child grows older...he is more and more thrown into the company of older children who are not as solicitous as adults are. Other children do not try so hard to penetrate the obscurities of his language. Moreover, they argue with him; they challenge what he says and force him to defend himself. It is under social pressures of these kinds that the child is eventually forced to adopt better modes of communication. (p. 108).

It is thus the unforgiving, evaluative stance of the peer audience that pushes performers to figure out what counts as competence. At the end of stories Brady (1984) often heard straightforward evaluations of the story: e.g., "Ohhh! That was really scary!" or "That isn't so scary." In novice performances participants are "making mistakes, correcting themselves and each other, apologizing and beginning again" (p. 108).

This means children do not necessarily *wait* to try performing until they mentally develop a style. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1976) noted that children telling knock-knock jokes and other 'format' jokes often go through a stage of mimicry without any understanding of what makes the jokes work. Only after a period of less competent, less responsible performance—bluffing—do performers figure out the knowledge necessary

²⁶ This is a good example of Vygotsky's (1978) understanding that key moments of learning can result in

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for competence. The egocentricity in mimicking jokes purely because we know they get a desired response—laughter—must eventually change before we can say a performer is competent. We eventually have to “get” the jokes we tell.

The egocentric phase—“where each child does not know the rules or how to apply them but thinks he does” (Brady, 1984, p. 113)—may persist unless novice performers take risks and experience evaluation. Both McDowell (1979) and Brady (1984) found children who had insufficient experience as performers often failed to orient audiences—not leading them into the appropriate setting in a story, or not making it clear that a riddle is not to be taken as a literal question.

The duality of the safe and the risky is fundamental for children’s development of a performing persona. They need both so that they can come to know what counts as competence, but also so they can develop a style of speaking. The performing persona is a part of a person’s identity in a speech community. Brady borrows from Goffman (1959) when she writes the performer’s role is a “way of presenting oneself” (1984, p. 104).

While this is not a study of identity, such terms as ‘persona’ and ‘voice’ are often used metaphorically in the study of identity (see Harré & van Langenhove, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The performance persona constitutes only part of a person’s identity, but the portion depends on how valued performance is. Performers of verbal arts put their *body* on display. The face, voice, and hands are physical media. So performers’ sense of self is inextricable from their ability and willingness to perform competently. Performers must value performance enough to risk putting their own self on display.

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The concept of value was central to designing this study, because I could not assume the participants in the study came to the school year with a pre-existing value for storytelling, riddling, reciting poetry, singing, or for reading aloud. The participants and I had to work to design a context where many participants could come to value verbal performance.

It was only in a context where performances were valued that we could be sure children would exert themselves to manage the “ambiguities” (Sutton-Smith, 1976) of performance. In his study of riddling, Sutton-Smith found that one of the difficult concepts in traditional metaphoric riddling is that one must think *across* categories of classification instead of within them²⁷. This is unknown to children when they first hear riddles, even though they may recognize riddles as a kind of play or mimic them (Bateson, 1972). Such ambiguity is characteristic of verbal performance.

The ‘developmental principles’ elaborated above are central to the design of this study. To study performance we had to create a classroom where we could be sure participants would value performance. We also had to ensure multiple and varied situations for performance so that students could find a good mix of safe places and risky places to develop in. Also, we had to provide a number of performance genres so participants could find the kinds of performance they were most ready to engage in.

Generating a Performative Model for Studying Learning and Development of Language

Understanding of the performative perspective on language helped me develop the theoretical model to organize this study (as discussed in the introduction). The

social-cognitive definition of performance let me know I should focus strongly on audiences as well as the performers since it is audience that demands competence. The children in this study had to become competent *audiences* as well as performers. Because prosody is a signal for when a performer assumes responsibility, I had to be able to listen for differences in pitch, stress, and loudness. I also had to think about the effects of prosody on audiences.

To help participants develop toward competence, I had to have multiple and varied performance contexts where performance was valued, where participants could both be safe and take risks, and where multiple genres were available. In addition, I had to design instruction. Educational approaches to performance lacked a broad enough performative perspective to be useful in designing instruction, and none of the performative theorists went beyond unguided development and learning. In addition, these studies did not examine prosody. This is a classroom study. I wanted to *help* children develop a sense for communicative competence in performance and explore the role of prosody—not merely create opportunities for those who would likely become competent performers anyway.

I organized this study partially to investigate the developmental process outlined above. Again, each of the scholars who has studied learning and development in performance did so incidental to another research agenda—usually without educational goals. I wanted to be more inclusive of social arrangements and different kinds of performance, and to see how children would respond to these. I also wanted to discover how participants would use prosody in performances. Because I was explicitly focused

²⁷ For example, the riddle “Every time I meet her I give her a kiss” refers to a cup. In order to answer the riddle the guesser must break away from the category of people suggested, and find the metaphoric

on learning, development, and teaching I hoped patterns would emerge to help me conceptualize an oral language curriculum from a performative perspective.

In particular, I wanted to know how we could assess performative concepts such as audience awareness and prosody. I am not speaking of assessment in the sense of testing and evaluation, but as ongoing informal assessment that guides everyday instruction. In the current assessment climate, it makes good sense to discover the most salient categories for observational assessments before authoring evaluative measures.

I was familiar with performance theory before the study began, but was not sure what would happen with a performance-centered language curriculum. The classroom is very different from the anthropologist's field, because I could not merely observe what was already going on. Performance theory offered me a starting point. Mrs. McWilliams and I used our understanding of performance to figure out how to create a rich performative context to initiate the study. In many ways the more detailed questions and purposes of the study evolved during its course. My conception of learning, development, and teaching communicative competence in performance (including the role of prosody) changed because of my involvement with the Michelle McWilliams and her students.

connection to a completely disparate category of objects.

CHAPTER 2

Arranging a 'Natural' Performing Context in an Elementary Classroom: Methods of the Study and Description of the Site.

The study depended on a site where children were already involved in and comfortable with verbal performance. A basic premise for the study is creating variations on the curricular theme of verbal performance (increasing the number and variety of performance opportunities). I chose Michelle McWilliams' second grade classroom because it was already rich in performance. Performance was not unusual to the children, and they were already comfortable in a variety of performance situations before the interventions for the study began. Another key part of the study was the introduction of performance and prosody as topics of explicit instruction.

To orient readers to the methodology of the study I will describe the research site, the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology, the design of participants' roles, and the plan for explicit instruction. These descriptions are followed by a discussion of data collection and analysis.

The point of this chapter is to emphasize the "naturalness" in the performance situations we created, observed, and recorded. Because the concept of the study originated with an understanding of children's natural performances in play settings, I sought a methodology congruent with field recording methods typically employed in children's folklore and other fields concerned with observing and recording performers in their 'natural habitat.' It was not only participant observation that was necessary, because

we wanted to actively *create* a kind of “playgroundness” in the classroom. The concept of playgroundness will guide the discussion of data in further chapters.

The Research Site

The study was conducted in a second-grade classroom at an elementary school in the Midwestern United States. I chose the site because I was already familiar with Michelle McWilliams’ classroom, having worked with her on a Professional Development School project for two years. The school is in a small, predominantly middle-class town near an urban area. She described the school and community as becoming slowly more assimilated into the urban area. The town is less than three miles outside the southernmost neighborhoods of the urban area. Among members of the class were children of families who had been in the area for multiple generations, as well as a number who had only recently moved to the area. The school is on the south side of the town, across the river from a small commercial center. It is in a residential area yards from the town’s library, with wooded areas on the west and south borders of the grounds. An ample playground lies between the south side of the school building and the woods.

When Mrs. McWilliams moved to teach at this school in the 1995-96 school year, it was her second job at the school. She began her career at the same school over twenty years earlier, had since moved to various schools in the same area of the state, and had taught for seven years in Okinawa, Japan during the 1980s. Immediately prior to taking the position at this school, she had worked in the same district at another elementary school. Among major differences Mrs. McWilliams cited between the two schools was that the school she left had a transient population. This school she moved to had a stable

population. The second difference was that the other school offered limited support from parents and community. This school was known for its active parents, with numerous parents volunteering on a daily and weekly basis. Overall, Mrs. McWilliams' view of this school was that the majority of the children came to school ready to learn and that parents took education seriously.

The school's enrollment at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year was 377 and at the end of the year was 412. Fifty-two percent of the student body was male, forty-eight female. Twenty percent of the enrolled students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. The ethnic makeup of the school was reported as given in Table 2:

| | American Indian or Aleutian Nation | Asian or Pacific Island | Black | Hispanic | White | Multi-ethnic |
|--------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Male | 2 | 0 | 6 | 13 | 196 | 16 |
| Female | 0 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 180 | 15 |
| Total | 2 | 2 | 14 | 17 | 376 | 31 |

Table 2: Population of the elementary school in this study, broken down by ethnic categories and gender.

The figures in the "multi-ethnic" category were not given by families at enrollment, but reported by the school's faculty as they became aware of children's multi-ethnic backgrounds (thus this category may overlap with parent-reported ethnicity).

The school uses two achievement indicators in public reporting: a state-administered achievement test is administered in the fourth and fifth grades; the Stanford Achievement Test is administered in the third grade. The percentile average score for third-graders in the fall of 1996 on the Stanford Achievement Test was 42 for the "Reading Comprehension" category, 41 for "Spelling," and 47 for "Total Reading." A

three-year average of the school's scores (from the 1994, 1995, and 1996 tests) in the same categories was, respectively, 42.33, 39.66, and 44.3. The national mean for this test is fifty in all categories.

Reporting for the state-administered test is given in terms of percentages of students who scored in the highest category of proficiency. This test measures two kinds of reading: informational, and story reading. The total percentage of fourth-graders in the highest category for "informational reading" was 43.1% (50% for females, 38.7% for males). In the "story reading" category the total percentage in the highest category was 72.4% (64.5% of males, 84.6% of females). The school's principal, in his 1996 public report, wrote that on the state test the "scores are not where we want them to be." Based on socioeconomic indicators, the school does not fall into common "at risk" categories for low achievement, yet performance indicators put the school below national means.

I began the study in the fall of 1997 with Mrs. McWilliams' second-grade class and continued to work with them through the next school year (1998-99) when the class was a second-third grade split.

Methods and Research Design Appropriate to the Performative Perspective

The methods for this study are congruent with the research questions and are informed by the theoretical traditions outlined in the previous chapter. That is, I considered verbal displays of text in terms of *performance*. In this section I will discuss the observational methods that allowed me to act as a teacher in the classroom and as an *observer* of performance. Goldstein's (1964) concept of "induced natural context" was the starting point.

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My desire for participants to experience freedom in performances called for special attention to how we established roles. To create a model of roles I drew on the methodological work of Fine and Glassner (1979). As the roles emerged, the model for research resembled a kind of cross between participant observation and action research.

Because my goals were educational I also had to know Mrs. McWilliams' curriculum so I could design instruction that would be congruent with her classroom. Finally, this section also deals with the methods of collecting and analyzing the data. These methods were informed by performance theory, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Children's Communicative Competence in the "Natural Context"

I had to arrange a setting where children could engage prolifically in a range of informal (play) and formal (work) verbal performances. In an earlier study I followed the tradition of children's folklorists and looked for children's spontaneous verbal performances on the playground (Erekson, unpublished). Children's folkloric performances have their own rules (Knapp & Knapp, 1976), and there is a body of conservative texts and genres transmitted verbally across generations of children.

My work on the playground confirmed and broadened my understanding that children, when willing and free, can display a communicative competence in a various kinds of performance without being explicitly 'taught.' Observing children in this *natural* context made it easy to see them as competent and creative. But I also observed that these competent performers had no arena where they could grow as verbal artists. Dewey (1933) wrote, "[T]he real problem of intellectual education is the *transformation* of more or less casual curiosity and sporadic suggestion into attitudes of alert, cautious, and

thorough inquiry” (p. 181, emphasis added). Children’s words, spoken with communicative competence on the playground, fall like trees in the forest—with no one to hear them they do not officially exist. I wanted to create a situation where children’s competence as speakers and listeners could be recognized officially. This meant a compromise that brought the formal world of the institution together with the informal play world of children, and it meant a unique approach to participant observation.

Arranging “Natural” Contexts for Research

In the classroom it was unlikely I would find the “natural” spontaneity of children’s playground performances. Even if I did find spontaneity, it might appear in fleeting transition times as children moved from one place to the other in the classroom, or when they were supposed to be doing something else. This would have been nearly impossible to record methodically, and these performances would have *conflicted* with the official classroom instead of being integrated into it. Ethnographers and folklorists encounter a similar problem—often they cannot record the performances they want because the performance context has gone extinct. In my situation, the ideal performance contexts did not exist in the first place. The folklorists’ solution is ingenious and I have adopted it here. “Various attempts have been made to recreate ‘natural context,’ a research technique folklorist Kenneth S. Goldstein (1964) called ‘induced natural context’” (Singer, unpublished manuscript).

Inducing natural context means organizing a situation where ex-performers feel prompted to revive former competence from now-extinct folk contexts. While this is an artificial intervention, the method was better than interviewing because the dynamics of

the performance event were re-created and once more made observable. In such a situation, however, the folklorist takes an active part in *producing* the context, so the method for recording needs to take into account the fact that the observer may be “busy” with participants. Electronic recording equipment is virtually indispensable.

Unlike folklorists’ research, the context I wanted to observe was not a ‘traditional’ one that had disappeared into the past. It was one that did not yet exist, but which I believed could and should.

In educational research, where experimental social science has long dominated, and where the primary purpose of research is to encourage change to improve education, not simply to document existing and past circumstances, there is a different way in which ‘natural context’ is problematic. The particular kind of ‘context’ which the researcher wishes to document may not occur ‘naturally,’ because it demands new or unusual practice. In experimental research a ‘treatment’ is done, where a new practice is introduced and the results analyzed according to carefully controlled procedures. Fieldwork techniques are not controlled, however; they rely on gathering data as it occurs ‘naturally.’ So for fieldwork the idea is to introduce something that would not occur on its own, but to study it without controls, as if it were a ‘natural context’ (Singer, unpublished manuscript).

Singer proposes we call this an “*arranged* natural context.”

My hope was that the ‘natural’ tendency for children to engage in speech play and verbal performance could be imported to the classroom. So I chose to base my design on kinds of performance closely allied to the field of children’s ‘natural’ folklore repertoire: storytelling, rhyming, and singing. But I also made a compromise with the official curriculum, and planned to record performances of oral reading, as well as recording and fostering verbal performance in content presentations such as science or social studies.

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Designing Participants' Roles: The Problem of Observation with School Children

A compromise between school and play would not have been possible in all classrooms. I had to find a teacher who already seemed to balance authority with freedom, and for whom verbal performance was not a radical departure from her normal curriculum. The desire for a “natural” context demanded that the teacher and I agree about the value of playfulness. At the same time, I had to be ready to accept of a teacher’s role. Pure observation was impossible, because I had to develop and foster new performance contexts. The researcher’s role in an “arranged natural context” has characteristics typical of both participant observation and of action research. It was partly the children’s work that was under scrutiny, and partly my own ability to create and define the performance context.

“Like the white researcher in black society, the male researcher studying women, or the ethnologist studying a distant tribal culture, there is no way in which the adult participant observer who attempts to understand a children’s culture can pass unnoticed as a member of that group....[T]here is no possibility of the enactment of the complete participant role” (Fine and Glassner, 1979, p. 153). The role of ‘participant observer’ also holds special problems with children because “the only legitimate adult-child interaction outside the research situation is based upon the authority of the adult” (p. 153). While there are exceptions to that rule, this study posed difficult challenges in terms of role definition. Fine and Glassner (1979) see an abiding conflict between adults and children, and they define the conflict in terms of direct authority and positive contact (see Table 3).

| | | Direct Authority | |
|------------------|---------|------------------|----------|
| | | Present | Absent |
| Positive Contact | Present | Leader | Friend |
| | Absent | Supervisor | Observer |

Table 3: Possible roles of adult researchers in observation settings with children.
(Fine & Glassner, 1979)

No adult can maintain only one role—leader, friend, supervisor, or observer—and hope to gain the data and insights they want from fieldwork. I had to constantly switch roles to maintain an appropriate balance of authority and positive contact. Mrs. McWilliams could rarely afford to take the pure role of friend for any length of time, because she was responsible for the children in her room. She was legally liable and had to maintain some direct authority. This did not mean, however, she was not a friend. It merely meant that she did what she could to inhabit the role of “leader” more than the role of “supervisor.” For her this was the ideal. She never abdicated authority, but never dispensed with positive contact as a standard. By contrast, I was often in situations where I toggled between all four roles. If I took the children to another classroom or out in the hallway I divorced myself from the *de facto* leadership and expectations embodied in Mrs. McWilliams, and had to assume more direct authority than I may have wanted. When in the classroom, however, I could lean on Mrs. McWilliams’ authority role and be a “friend” when the children were amenable. I could also sometimes inhabit the “observer” role.

In concert with the problem of balancing authority and positive contact, Fine and Glassner (1979, p. 159) identified the following issues as constants in research with children: (a) adult role-related ethical issues, (b) problems of obtaining rapport and access, and (c) adult comprehension of children's social meanings. In addition, I faced two ethical issues central the study: informed consent to participate, and the subversive, antithetical quality of some children's verbal texts.

From the beginning, children and parents had to understand the nature of this study. I developed official consent forms and verbal protocols to this end in cooperation with the University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). One of the primary things Mrs. McWilliams made sure the parents understood in an August parent meeting was that I was invited by both her and the principal and that I would be working with the children as a kind of co-teacher. All parents except one accepted this situation, and the child of that parent merely did not respond in writing. This child is not represented in the study. When I took children outside the classroom I assumed the same responsibility as the teacher for the children's safety and personal conduct (e.g., making sure they didn't disrupt other people's work in the school).

The second ethical concern involved the anti-establishment orientation of some of the children's verbal play (Mechling, 1989). From my experience on the playground I knew that children in informal situations frequently swear, make sexual references, and make personal taunts and digs. One of the most difficult aspects in designing the study was considering how to allow "naughty" texts a place in the classroom without officially sponsoring material that might offend the official, adult culture. I was confident that the children understood when such texts were being performed playfully, but I was less

confident in adults' ability to see playfulness in children's speech. Mrs. McWilliams and I had one conflict with a parent on this point. The issue was a common parody of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Children sing a version called "Randolph the Bow-legged Cowboy." A full text follows:

Randolph the bow-legged cowboy
Had a very shiny gun.
And if you ever saw it
You would drop your pants and run.
All of the other cowboys
Used to laugh and call him names.
They never let poor Randolph
Join in any cowboy games.
Then one foggy Christmas Eve
Sheriff came to say,
"Randolph with your gun so bright,
Won't you shoot my wife tonight?"
Then how the cowboys loved him
As they shouted out with glee (Yippee!)
Randolph the bow-legged cowboy
You'll go down in history.

The parent of one child in the classroom took Mrs. McWilliams to task for allowing this song in the classroom. She took umbrage at the line "Won't you shoot my wife tonight," saying, "I can't believe anyone would even want to *say* such a thing." While the violent nature of the text is indisputable, the children seemed to understand it in the tongue-in-cheek manner it is intended, representing a typical caricature of an adversarial husband-wife relationship (such as in the 1950s situation comedy "The Honeymooners"). The situation was not the worst Mrs. McWilliams had to deal with, and she was mostly disturbed by the parent's 'irony impairment.'

But the incident also taught us an important lesson about classroom design. Because the children were allowed to sing the song in a whole group context it gave the appearance that Mrs. McWilliams had "taught" the children the song. Neither of us felt it

was appropriate to quit encouraging speech play, so we found our solution in group dynamics. Small groups were less official than large groups. In small groups, children took more responsibility for verbal performances and the performances did not take on the “official” patina they got in the large group. We simply had to exercise care about which texts made it to the public arena in the classroom. We kept a greater degree of freedom in less formal contexts like small group and one-on-one talk.

Obtaining access to the children’s informal speech was another methodological issue I had to address. I wanted a rapport with them. This was important because I could have walked into the classroom and assumed an authoritative role close to the teacher’s. But because I wanted access to children’s speech play I felt compelled to find another way in. In the early days of school I introduced my project to the class, but spent a few weeks observing and talking to the children. That is, I tried to start out in the “observer” quadrant and gain a balance between authority and positive contact.

I achieved this by drawing sketches of the children while they were doing regular classroom work. My skill at drawing is certainly amateur, but it was good enough to be impressive to the children. I made copies of the pictures I drew and gave them to the children. This became an anchor point for friendships between us. When establishing my role and gaining “access” I was careful to establish rapport before assuming any authoritative position. A line drawn through Table 4 below represents this process.

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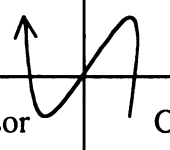


Table 4: The researcher’s progress through possible roles of adult researchers in observation settings with children: observer, friend, supervisor, and leader.

I have drawn the line through the “supervisor” role before the “leader” role, because I believe the latter is the most difficult role to achieve in a classroom—and that Mrs. McWilliams’ achievement of this role was due to her expertise as a veteran teacher. If I achieved the role of “leader” at all, it was only after many half-successful attempts to balance authority and positive contact. Mrs. McWilliams noted that my style more often erred toward friendship than it did toward supervision. She struggled with this yet appreciated it because it was something she could not always do herself. She found it difficult not to intervene when my style was too “hands off,” but also saw that the children made valuable efforts and contributions in a less directive relationship.

As the year progressed I learned to manage my role without trying to match Mrs. McWilliams’. It was a complementary relationship. I could not have managed as I did had Mrs. McWilliams not been there, and she told me numerous times what a positive impact my role had on the children—both in their language and literacy and in terms of personal confidence. At the end of the year the children wrote me farewell letters, and five of them remarked that even when they knew I was angry that I never raised my voice. Preserving a role that prompted the children to be ‘natural,’ yet did not create an

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open door for chaos, was an important part of the study. Mrs. McWilliams' veteran management skills and her predisposition to allow more talk in the classroom made this role balance possible.

I chose to work in Mrs. McWilliams' classroom because I knew she encouraged verbal performance. Her classroom demeanor was itself playful, and she did not sanction against children for performing verbally—within limits, of course. She offered a variety of opportunities for children to perform verbally in her classroom, most of which were formally directed by her. Singing, reciting, sharing pictures and writing, and organizing content presentations for real audiences were all part of the standard curriculum in her room. Her classroom was an optimal place to try to insert more kinds of spontaneous and playful verbal performance.

I hoped to find ways to create a speech community where disciplined, formal performances could join with children's linguistic playfulness to create a new kind of performance context—a meeting between the playground and the classroom. I wanted the children to feel as free and “creative” as they might on the playground, but also wanted to officially recognize their verbal play as school work. We struck a reasonable and workable balance between Mrs. McWilliams' official role as teacher and the role I wished to establish as a researcher.

Including Instruction in the Design

Beyond creating a context where children could perform with freedom and with the ‘support’ of the official curriculum, we wanted to teach prosody and performance directly. Because Mrs. McWilliams already made time for verbal performances, she often

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gave children directions on reading aloud, singing, and reciting. There were typical time blocks where we could give this kind of instruction to the whole class at once. I chose this as the most favored situation for instruction. It needed to stay that way. I found the children perceived instructional discourse in the small group as a disruption of a 'free space.' I used the small group to foster variety in performance. In the large group we talked explicitly about performance. This may not have been a perfect design, but it helped me preserve a balance between the official classroom curriculum and the playful curriculum.

There were two instructional contexts planned from the beginning of the study. One was the video viewing session, and the other was live modeling of performance. In both situations we worked with Mrs. McWilliams' tradition of having audiences discuss what made performances competent. The open discussions provided adults and teachers opportunities to give direct instruction and to guide children in their talk about performances. This approach follows from the belief that interpreting children's speech and action needs to be based on their own words—taking into account the unique, insider's point of view they offer on what they do and say (Erickson & Schultz, 1992).

Viewing videotapes is a way of eliciting participants' interpretations of what a recorded segment of discourse means from their perspective. Since the target of my instruction was communicative competence with verbal performance, I selected video and audio segments of children performing competently. The majority of these recordings came from our classroom, but I selected one segment from a published video package from the Center for the Study of Reading. This selection was entirely appropriate to the educational setting, since it helped us establish criteria for competence when considering

reading aloud as a performance. I was able to direct the children to specific segments of speech in a video and ask direct questions about what performers did with the text and how the audience seemed to respond.

The other instructional situation was modeling. While modeling may not be considered “direct” instruction, we took time to establish specific criteria for evaluation of modeled performances. The children in their evaluations became progressively more adept at using learned criteria. After the initial training we then coached or directed children to use criteria and pointed them to places in where performers made important moves. In this context, Mrs. McWilliams and I often took the floor as performers and then asked the children to talk out loud about what we had done for audiences during our performances (reciting, singing, storytelling, etc.). We assumed we could be considered competent performers with some texts and genres. We also invited outside performers to model performance. These invitations were likewise based on an assumption of competence, and we followed them with discussions about communicative competence.

Mrs. McWilliams and I also negotiated several time blocks during the normal school day when I could give instruction in performance. This was one of the most fruitful aspects of our partnership, because it enabled us to teach together in the way a “team room” is sometimes organized. If I came up with an idea for instruction or a new text for modeling, the schedule was flexible enough to allow for spontaneity. While I learned about this model for reflection and adjustment in an academic setting (Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987), Mrs. McWilliams was my original mentor for how to teach this way. Her flexibility and willingness to adjust plans is congruent with a model of teaching where teachers make frequent informal assessments of students’ learning, and then make

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ongoing adjustments to their curriculum based on what they believe students will benefit most from. She allowed me to participate in determining what the children's current needs were and in designing appropriate teaching and learning situations.

Data Collection Methods

The main means of data collection were video and audio tape. I also kept field notes and collected writing samples from selected students. Video and audio recorders were often running simultaneously. In many situations, I wanted to record both the audience and the performer and two video cameras allowed me to record from two directions at once. This allowed me to analyze performers and audiences.

The two-camera arrangement was rarely necessary during one-on-one and small group performances. During small group performances, I usually situated participants so they were all visible to the camera. I made audio recordings because voice was such an important aspect of the study. The microphones attached to the video cameras were sometimes unpredictable and I sometimes lost important data. So I kept an audio recorder as near as I could to principal performer(s). In addition, I kept the handheld audio recorder ready to record unpredicted performances.

The resulting database of recordings included fourteen VHS videotapes at about two hours each, eighteen 8-millimeter videotapes at about two hours each, and two digital videotapes at about one hour each. There is considerable overlap in the content of the videotapes (because of the simultaneous two-camera taping), and I catalogued the content of each of them. I also catalogued sixteen audiotapes, and most of these were approximately ninety minutes each. The video data thus represent about sixty-six hours

of tape, and the audio data about twenty-four hours of tape. These numbers represent a substantial catalog of information on the children's performances.

Data Analysis Methods

The specific data analyzed for this study were extracted from the general morass of recordings by reviewing the descriptions of performances written in catalogs. As I catalogued the tapes I made cursory notes involving "breakthrough into performance" and notable control of prosody.

This cataloging system was the first method of data analysis. I divided each tape into segments defined by who seemed to be in the role of performer. For example, in a read-aloud session there might be four readers. For such a performance session I would have identified and numbered a segment of the video each time a new performer took the floor. Under each segment I also cataloged descriptions that seemed important, such as the kind of voice I heard or shifts in the social arrangement.

Within a structure of cataloged segments I then re-cataloged some data, creating a sub-catalog for certain individuals. I identified all segments where these participants were performers or audience members. From these catalogs I identified patterns that seemed to be most relevant to my research questions. I then chose the most relevant video and audio segments to review and transcribe.

In the process of reviewing and transcribing I gave renewed attention to basic concepts of performance: the quality of the display (including prosody), the roles of the participants (performers and audiences), and changes in performers' responsibility for performances. My understanding of the research questions had evolved over the course of

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the study, so my application of performance theory in later analysis was more congruent with the organizing theory of the study. Also, a number of the direct teaching sessions occurred later in the year, so my understanding of the teacher's role in the process of learning and development was more thorough then.

The concept of "breakthrough into performance" is one of the basic constructs in the analysis. I examined video and audio data to find moments where performers and audiences seemed to assume responsibility for a display of communicative competence (Bauman, 1992). This meant the mere 'staging' of a formal performance was not the only criterion for defining performance. I used changes in communication—signs of "breakthrough"—to distinguish between performance and other communication. We must have observable signs that a performer has accepted and walked up to the responsibility to supply a display of communicative competence. People may be 'on stage' yet never assume responsibility for a display.

Because I relied on outward signs, there were probably performance events that went unnoticed or undiscovered. Also, audiences did not always give clear signs whether they perceived a performance as competent or not. Typical adult audience expectations (such as eye contact, or a still body) do not always apply to child audiences. Children may actively divide attention among a number of items or people in their concrete field of perception yet more or less attend to a display.

The primary signs of breakthrough into performance I watched for in analyzing the data were prosodic change and change in how performers managed audiences. The fundamental prosodic concept for analyzing breakthrough is the "tune," which depends on a relationship between pitch, stress, loudness, and rhythm. For a specific kind of

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verbal performance we expect a certain kind of prosody as normal, such as the unique prosody of reading aloud (Esser, 1988) or the singsong tune of nursery rhymes and metered verse.

Departures from expected tunes can be indicators of communicative competence. These departures can signal both emergent competence (as when a performer pauses to remember a word) and well-developed competence (as when a performer changes the stress-pitch pattern to emphasize a specific meaning). For performances less established in popular consciousness performance in a “normal” tune might constitute a great stride in competence. That is, the perception of a “normal” tune at all is at least an indicator of some degree of competence—a tacit understanding that verbal performers are trying to sound ‘native.’

Performers and audiences interact during a display of text. The text is one object in a display, but another object is management of social roles. There are a kinds of performances—such as magic and riddling—where positioning an audience can be as much a primary object as the text itself. Children in early elementary school are becoming increasingly aware of the social world and orient themselves to peers more so than during early childhood when they orient themselves toward adult caregivers. People in each role exert force to position each other. Sometimes this positioning force comes from the performer, sometimes from the audience. In this study sometimes it seemed like little force came from either side. For example, the children in the study knew how to be “natural” audiences more than they knew how be performers.

Selecting Participants for a Focus Group

Observations early in the year led me to choose a ‘focus group’ of children who had broken through into performance in some context. The object in isolating a focus group was to increase the chance that we would observe and record children in moments of development and learning. I worked to include at least one of these students in every recorded performance session for the rest of the year. While I had observed them breaking through into performance, I hoped to see how these students would respond in other situations—involving variety in text, genre, audience, etc. I also wanted to see how they would perform in more formal classroom situations.

Of the six focus students some were outgoing and always eager to assume the performer’s role, while some only broke through into performance on occasion. Some were fluent readers and some struggled with print. Three were boys and three were girls. Three were white, one was of mixed white and Filipino descent, one was black, and one was of mixed Ojibwa and Hispanic descent. The group thus represented several facets of diversity in Mrs. McWilliams’ classroom.

Because I observed and recorded the members of the focus group more frequently, I amassed a more consistent record of their performances across the school year. They were regularly involved in observation and recording in the normal run of events in the first half of the year, and they were purposefully involved for the rest of the year. I did not tell these students they were members of a focus group. And because there were six of them in a class of twenty-two, the rest of the class was still highly involved.

Henry, Shane, Becky, and Adam (all members of the focus group) figure prominently in the chapters that follow because a number of their performances helped

me define development and learning for verbal performance. Still, other members of the class, such as Amy and Mike F. (not in the focus group), feature strongly in the study because their performances also helped us understand learning and development.

Congruence of the Methods and Site with the Theory and Research Questions

The above outline of methods lays a kind of groundwork for understanding the logic of the research questions, and for understanding how the data are presented in later chapters. When designing the study and collecting data, I drew on methods from folklore because these methods are oriented to recording performances in “natural” contexts. The playground is among the most natural sites for collecting children’s verbal performances. On the playground children perform competently and frequently . But their performances are by and large undisciplined, sporadic, and casual. In essence, they do not know the academic value of what they do at play (Erekson, unpublished).

I wanted to arrange a classroom context where children believed they could perform with the comfort, control, pleasure, and interest they show on the playground. I wanted to *arrange* a context where prosody communicated meaning and intent. At the same time, I knew children speak with a classroom register (see Cazden, 1988) that runs counter my goal of ‘naturalness.’ In many ways, inviting children to use playful voices demanded that we carefully structure the authority of adults in the classroom. With Mrs. McWilliams and I working together, we developed a role where I could move between supervisor, friend, and observer. From such a role I was able to help the children feel like a kind of ‘playgroundness’ was welcome during academic work time.

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The design of roles put me in a position to observe the children's 'antithetical' speech—the kind of speech play that inverts and toys with social norms and expectations. It was not all clean, and it was not all nice. But I also heard the children genuinely communicating with one another, and putting on verbal performances with one another.

Because we were careful to design a 'natural' context for performance, we were not hesitant to introduce instruction in other contexts. An instructional program alone, without consideration for participants' roles, would run counter to a major organizing principle of the study—to invite 'playgroundness' into the classroom. With the small group context established, we began to work on instructional methods. Instruction is an important consideration in bridging the gap between playground and classroom, because the communicative competence we find on the playground is like unharnessed electricity. Instruction can help us take what children do 'naturally' and make it an overt object of alert, active inquiry. The hope is that by making knowledge explicit, we will help more children get access to performance knowledge and that some children will gain a deeper, more thorough competence at verbal performance.

The invitation to bring together the playground and classroom is not an ends unto itself, but a way of using competence children already bring to school. The participants in this study were not blank slates. They had knowledge and competence in certain situations and with certain genres. We hoped to harness some of their existing energy and use it in a planful way.

CHAPTER 3

Comfort and Risk in a Performance-rich Classroom.

Growing performers will acquire and use strategies to help them become more competent when they are in actual performance contexts. Developing performers need to inhabit a social setting where they can regularly hear models of competent performers. Only in actual performances will they get involved with discourse and texts they can appropriate and transform into individual knowledge. Growing performers also need opportunities to perform—places to try out their emergent understanding. Communicative competence can only be evaluated and worked on when public/social space are integrated in the experience. Part of the teacher's role is to provide variety and quantity of chances to observe and participate in performance.

This describes Michelle McWilliams' classroom. Inviting the playground into the classroom was not a gargantuan task with what she brought to the study. Her management style, her friendly approach to children, and her use of genres like singing and poetry recitation are all part of what she offered. Her curriculum made it easy to focus the study on oral language performances. Because we wanted children to experience the 'naturalness' of playground-like speech when they performed, but also to sense that their performances 'counted' as school work, we needed a context where verbal performances in many varieties would seem normal. This chapter details ways Mrs. McWilliams made the classroom conducive to verbal performance, and how her offerings helped us organize a program of recording and observation.

The intervention of the study involved creating variations on the theme of performance. Mrs. McWilliams' classroom was an ideal place to start because inquiry on verbal performance resonated with the flow of her everyday work. The *variation* on the theme was to increase the number and variety of opportunities for all students to perform and to observe performance.

Although the interventions of the study were not radical departures from what was already happening in the classroom they were necessary to ensure we observed specific aspects of the children's learning and development. We had to introduce new genres, such as verbal storytelling, and increase the variety of possible performance contexts, such as instituting the small group. We also had to find ways to make explicit what was being learned and developed by experience. Mrs. McWilliams' classroom was a setting where we could hope to 'arrange a natural context' for recording, observing, and participating in performances.

In light of the research questions of the study we had to methodically ensure a number of things: (a) We had to be able to help children become explicitly aware that verbal performance was an integral part of their curriculum for the year. (b) We had to help children become comfortable performing in a variety of social contexts with a variety of texts. (c) We had to be able to watch closely for who responded well to the curriculum so we could observe and record learning and development. (d) We had to figure out how to explicitly teach children to think and talk about communicative competence in performance. None of these goals ran counter to Mrs. McWilliams' curriculum, and the interventions of the study only helped us accomplish them further.

Her performance-rich classroom set the stage for inquiry on how children learn and develop as verbal performers. Below I will discuss her personal approach to the crucial first weeks of school, where she established performance routines and helped the children see verbal performance as a 'natural' part of their classroom. I will also discuss the importance of the genres in her usual repertoire: riddling, singing, reciting, and reading-aloud. Only in such a performance-rich learning environment could we hope to 'arrange a natural context' to learn about how children develop a sense for communicative competence.

Building Stages for Performance: The First Week of School

A key piece missing from many ethnographic studies in schools is description of those crucial first days of the year where the social world of the classroom is negotiated. Social and cultural structures that impact learning and development involve a relationship between levels of social influence: The influence of cultural and historical patterns is exerted from outward on individual minds, and individuals assert influence from the center outward on the social world (see Figure 12). With these various spheres of influence in mind, we must recognize that in American schooling the institutional and interpersonal spheres of influence are made new every year²⁸. In the first weeks of school both teachers and students generate beliefs and attitudes about how things work in *this* classroom for *this* year.

²⁸ While in cultural and historical consideration schooling is a remarkably conservative institution, it is still easy for us to recognize the immense variety of teachers children encounter from school year to school year. By the same token, any teacher will readily note how every cohort of students traveling through a school is different from those preceding and following it.

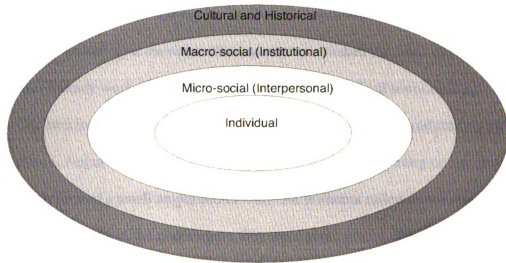


Figure 12: Mind in context. The diagram illustrates the mutual influences involved in creating the phenomenon of the individual mind, and the influence of the individual outward on social structures (adapted from Gavelek, unpublished).

During the first week of school teachers and students negotiate the “interpersonal” and “institutional” contexts of the classroom—patterns that last all year. If we want to understand what happens in the middle or at the end of the school year we need to know what patterns, routines, and purposes were set early on. I spent the first days of the year taking field notes on things Mrs. McWilliams did to make her classroom into a context for performing literature out loud.

During the first week Mrs. McWilliams organized three social/spatial situations that formed the basis for verbal performances across the whole year. First, at the front of the room the children sat on choral risers for whole group meetings where she sponsored such activities as “author’s chair.” Second, in the back of the room—the “couch” area—she established a less formal context for group meetings and reading aloud. Third, she ran a daily one-hour version of “literacy workshop” where children separated to various areas of the room for individual reading and writing. By the second day of class

she had already read two picture books aloud in the couch area and held a full hour of singing and dramatizing at the risers. She had also established the basic expectations and routines for literacy workshop, for free writing, and for sustained silent reading.

The two forums for whole group talk and instruction were introduced on the first day of school, August 25, 1998. The first was the whole-group meeting on the choral risers, which formed a small amphitheater. Mrs. McWilliams called all the children to come from their desks to the risers where they were given places. She explained to them that these places on the risers were theirs for the rest of the year. In this whole group arena Mrs. McWilliams did most of her whole-class instruction and large group work. Across the year a good portion of the performances took place here as well.

After describing how they should conduct themselves in this setting, she had them return to their desks and then called them to practice returning quickly and quietly to the risers. They did so effortlessly. Because she knew the risers would be an important place throughout the school year, Mrs. McWilliams stressed their participation in this setting from the beginning. Throughout the remainder of this first hour she acquainted the children with various other routines (classroom jobs, attendance, calendaring) and made some basic initial assessments (name-writing, knowledge of colors, numbers, calendar, etc.).

The second forum for whole group interaction was introduced the same morning. She called on class members to dismiss fellow students from their places on the risers to go to the back of the room for a picture book reading. This back corner of the room had a small couch, a soft chair, a rocking chair, and several throw pillows to sit on. Mrs. McWilliams always read picture books aloud to the whole class here, and came here for

other special talk. The area had an air of informality distinct from the risers at the front of the room. Seats were not assigned, but softer seats were desirable. Mrs. McWilliams often seated herself at the couch to read and children who got earliest choice of seats invariably chose to sit next to her on the couch or in one of the other coveted sofa seats. This created a chance for students to feel informally connected to her—and to feel special, because the “good” seats were few. By the end of the second day of class she had already read two picture books to them in this less formal couch area.

On the second day of school Mrs. McWilliams established routines for a daily “literacy workshop” hour. This was usually a full hour (sometimes more) for students to read and write, following typical models for literacy workshop (see Barr & Johnson, 1997). She introduced journals, with the understanding that children could write anything they wanted to. She gave a suggested topic for writing (a response to a picture book she had read aloud), but clearly told them they could write about anything. I heard part of an exchange between two children arguing over the nature of the assignment:

“No, we can write about anything.”
“We can write about anything?”
“Anything.”

Whatever the outcome of the argument was, the first speaker asserted the right to choose—an important element of Mrs. McWilliams’ literacy workshop.

In addition to free writing in journals, children chose books to read during literacy workshop. The set of books to choose from included Mrs. McWilliams’ vast classroom library on this first day, but soon included books children chose from home or other libraries. The first day of literacy workshop she gave children a set of ringed index cards

to log titles and authors. She also did a mini-lesson with them on what to do on the index cards and where to find this information on their books.

An important logistical piece of Mrs. McWilliams' version of literacy workshop was that she allowed children to choose any place in the room to read and write: on a couch, on soft chairs, at a desk, on the risers, or on the mini-trampoline. There were also several nooks without special furniture that became as desirable as the couch and easy chair: under the risers, behind a large shelf, or under a desk.

The primary expectation for reading during literacy workshop was one of silent sustained reading. The main exception to this rule was that she and other adults during this time would listen to children read aloud. Mrs. McWilliams used this time to do ongoing assessments of children's reading, to give instruction, and to be a serious audience for oral reading. Usually she read with them one-on-one for about fifteen to twenty minutes. Because they kept logs of their workshop books she could ask them to read from previous books as well as their current selections.

These three basic social arrangements were used throughout the study for introducing new texts and performers. They were also used for instruction and discussions about performance. The routines for interacting and performing in these settings was established early in the school year and well maintained throughout the year, making it easy to create variations on the social context.

Children were given opportunities to risk verbal performance, but were helped to see performance as fun. Within each of the social contexts Mrs. McWilliams created with the children there were elements of agency. Freedom is among the most basic

characteristics of play (Huizinga, 1950). Her focus on choice and agency helped us maintain an atmosphere of playfulness throughout the study.

Mrs. McWilliams often remarked to me how difficult it had been for her many years ago to break away from traditional models of teacher-controlled classrooms. But she noted that school became a much more pleasant and rewarding experience for her and her students once she increased the degrees of freedom in her curriculum. She had already invited some of the playground into her classroom in this respect.

Maintaining a Comfortable Environment for Verbal Performance

Verbal performance is risky. The social psychology of putting oneself on ‘display’ involves an understanding that displays are by definition vulnerable to evaluation. Children’s sense of competence at verbal performance is part of their overall sense of personal competence. Because their verbal performances are embodied—they come directly from the body—they can be a direct reflection on the self. It was important for the study that students felt comfortable taking risks with verbal performance. Mrs. McWilliams was the leader in fostering the children’s overall sense of comfort with talking in the classroom.

Her friendly personality was a powerful influence on the classroom. She often **greeted** the children in the morning with hugs, complimenting them on things they said or **did**. She responded to them on a personal level without condescending, constantly **displaying** her respect for students as individuals. She was so careful to do this that it **seemed** like she *worked* to find ways to include personal talk in the everyday classroom **business**. Because the personable quality of her discourse seemed unusual to me, one

morning I kept a tally of three different kinds of teacher talk to see how much she incorporated this kind of “personal” engagement into running the classroom.

Much in the spirit of a “time on task” catalog, I devised three categories to describe what I saw: (a) “Management” was a category I used to describe when Mrs. McWilliams’ talk was directed at managing single students’ behavior. (b) “Content” was used to describe the talk she used for giving procedural and subject-matter instruction. (c) “Personal conversation” was used anytime I saw her simply engaging in conversational asides with individual students. The results of the tally reflect neither a thoroughgoing analysis of her talk, nor are there video or audio data from that day. But the tally is practical for the purpose of demonstrating something about her everyday communication.

I listened to Mrs. McWilliams’ talk for about an hour and a half. She went through four different activity transitions. I tallied eighteen instances of personal conversation early in the morning, before any content work had begun. In the midst of her morning logistical business—taking attendance, getting a count of hot-lunch buyers, gathering homework and notes from parents—almost all the talk was of a personal nature. Students approached her and initiated conversations about new toys they had brought, things they had encountered on the way to school, or plans they had for the day. During a spelling test I heard five instances of personal conversation. In the transition to watching a video on sharks I counted another four instances of personal conversation, with one during the video. As the video ended and Mrs. McWilliams initiated sharing of comments and questions about the video I heard another seven instances of her breaking into personal conversation. The overall tally is given below in Table 5:

| | Morning sharing
(9:10 a.m.) | Spelling Test
(9:32) | Shark Video
(10:07) | Discuss Video
(10:28) | Total |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Management | 19 | 14 | 18 | 15 | 66 |
| Content | 8 | 27 | 4 | 6 | 45 |
| Personal Conversation | 18 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 35 |

Table 5: A tally of Mrs. McWilliams' speech interactions with students, categorized by management interactions, academic content interactions, and personal conversations.

In the middle of everything else, Mrs. McWilliams constantly finds ways to exhibit her respect for students as people. Part of getting business done is interacting on a personal level with children. While these personal asides did not depart from the "initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) sequence" Cazden reports as typical of teachers' discourse(1988, p. 29), I found it unusual the way Mrs. McWilliams wove attentive conversational asides into the normal talk of school.

Management comments are expectedly high for the first week, when routines are still being established. The number of "content" comments during the spelling test (27) may look out of balance. But since spelling tests must be given orally, every new word every repeated word and every answered question was counted as "content"²⁹.

What is remarkable is that in the midst of such a formal, procedural task as a spelling test, she found an excuse to speak to five students on a personal level—asking about family members, noticing new and interesting clothing, or commenting on someone's smile. In fact, there was no block of activity where she did not engage students on a personal level. This level of involvement is unusually keen even for a caring teacher.

²⁹ Mrs. McWilliams gives traditional spelling tests, but alters the authoritative pattern of the 'spelling bee' format by asking the *students* to provide examples of the words in context or in definition. This sometimes creates personal conversational openings between her and contributing students. They make their thinking about the words public, and is able to engage them as individual learners in this respect.

I never heard Mrs. McWilliams refer to the class collectively as “boys and girls” nor impersonally as “students,” preferring to call class members by their individual names. When she referred to the class as a whole she tended to use familiar terms like “you guys,” “you,” or “some of you.” Her personal conversations with students *are* part of her management strategy. It was common to hear her praising students openly based entirely on their unique personalities and ways of handling things (“I love how you think about things, Matthew, I can almost see that you're thinking deeply by the look on your face”). Such comments are intensely person-oriented, but are an ingenious way to help children feel like they make important individual contributions to the classroom.

The tally reflects something I knew intuitively: that Mrs. McWilliams is *professionally* concerned with students’ levels of comfort, power, and risk in the classroom. Many teachers could *tell* us that the personal connection between a teacher and her students is important, but Mrs. McWilliams’ minute-to-minute discourse displays this belief. Her engagement of students on a personal level is not merely an idiosyncratic departure from the work of the classroom, and is not seen as “irrelevant” or “getting off on a tangent” because she sees *conversation* as an integral part of her job. She purposefully puts personal talk into her discursive repertoire, integrating it with the obvious management and content talk.

A content-oriented example of the way Mrs. McWilliams’ personality sets a tone for comfortable performance is that she often publicly shares with students her personal reasons for curricular choices. When introducing several of the songs she sang with the children she told them her repertoire was influenced by songs her mother sang to her as a child. “Little Dog Under the Wagon” and “Señor Don Gato” were favorites of the

children both because they called for dramatic parts, and because they were songs about which Mrs. McWilliams reminisced learning as a child. The children listened, engrossed when she spoke in specifics about her own childhood. She did not digress into a nostalgic or advice-giving “when I was young” tone, but spoke in a way that showed she remembers what it was like to be a kid and to *enjoy* language performance. These clear windows into her thinking were models for the children that the personal risk of singing and other verbal performance could yield pleasure on a personal level.

This personal context is important because the theory of performance foregrounds the risks, rights, and responsibilities inherent whenever someone ventures to “break through” into a responsible performance. I volunteered and worked in Mrs. McWilliams’ classroom for over four years because I knew children in her classroom were likely to take risks even when their performances would not be of virtuoso quality. They were comfortable improvising and taking the floor to perform even if they sometimes failed.

My own role in the classroom during these first days of class was mostly defined by my desire to gain a relationship of trust with the children before I received parental permission to record individual information. By contrast with Mrs. McWilliams, however, I more frequently took the role of observer. While I have pages of hand-written notes from my observations during this time I was most often acting as a participant in classroom activities. I participated in conversations, discussions, singing, and reading, sitting with the children on the risers or on the floor. I read with and to children from books they chose for literacy workshop. Later in the year I assumed more of a position of direct authority in several situations.

By the time I began organizing storytelling groups at the end of the month, I had already established a good relationship of trust with many of the children. I did not actively create any interventions during these first weeks because I believed it would be necessary for me to document any strong interventions on videotape (which had to wait for written consent).

Both Mrs. McWilliams and I sent signals that we valued the children. But in the early days of the school year it was mostly Mrs. McWilliams who established an environment where their talk was respected and valued. This was fundamental for the recording and observations in the study. The children felt safe talking in front of the teacher on both curricular and personal levels. At the same time, Mrs. McWilliams had the children performing verbally from the earliest days of the year.

A Theme of Performance Runs Through Mrs. McWilliams' Curriculum

The four basic kinds of performance Mrs. McWilliams initiated early in the year were: singing, riddling, reciting, and read-aloud. These were the core for the 'theme' of verbal performance that was a central aspect of her curriculum. Because the theme was set, we were able to create variations on it for the purpose of the study. I played on each of kind of performance Mrs. McWilliams introduced, adding texts, increasing the number of opportunities to perform, and helping children perform in various social contexts. The description of each kind of performance in Mrs. McWilliams' repertoire should help us understand that her classroom already engendered a broad number of performance genres within a variety of contexts.

Singing

Singing was a kind of performance where Mrs. McWilliams modeled her personal commitment to verbal performance. As mentioned above, she began the year by introducing to the children songs she knew from her childhood. Also in singing she initiated direct instruction about performance, even though she did not put it under the blanket of the term “performance.” Singing spanned the entire year and thus provided a consistent place for children both to perform and to listen for competent performance.

By the second week of class (September 5) the children knew at least three songs, and were encouraged to take control of performances in various ways. For two of the songs, “Señor Don Gato” and “The Little Dog Under the Wagon,” Mrs. McWilliams dramatized the lyrics and had children act out parts on the floor in front of the risers. When children acted out parts they had to sing characters’ speech. To enhance the quality of these performances Mrs. McWilliams often gave children direct instruction in communicative competence. She “blocked” the dramatization of the stories, positioning performers to face the audience. Without her help they would often turn away, put their hands in front of their mouths, or direct lines at her instead of the larger audience. She frequently coached the children to speak loudly and clearly, and in the first week of school taught them to use the term “enunciation” when giving and receiving feedback.

Almost all children had difficulty at the beginning of the year orienting their dramatized singing parts to a broader audience. They did not come to ’s classroom understanding audience or how to put their voices on display for audiences. She taught them by praising in specific terms when they performed well: such as, “I could really understand you because you enunciated” or “It made me laugh because of the way you

made the robber sound so tough.” She also asked them to re-perform when their displays were not appropriately audience-oriented. For example, “Could you say that again, honey, I don’t think they could hear you in the back,” or “You kind of trailed off the words at the end, could you say them so we could hear the last part better?” She also taught them by modeling poor examples with good examples. For enunciation, she often showed children what it was like to hear them mumble, turn away, or fidget during performance. These were effective demonstrations for showing the children not only what they should do, but why what children do naturally might not be good communication for a large group. This was important groundwork for helping children perform in formal situations.

Mrs. McWilliams also performed regularly with her guitar from her personal repertoire. She introduced “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” as a kind of classroom theme song, which was sung by the whole class for visitors. The children were fascinated by the song and its dark content, and took pleasure in singing such a serious song for an outside audience. The song was an extremely strong piece in Mrs. McWilliams’ verbal repertoire, and she carefully led the prosody with her guitar. She modeled expression that followed meanings in the song. For example, after loudly and passionately singing through the storm and the wreck she paused, muted her guitar, and sang the next verses in a ghostly whisper (accompanied by light finger picking instead of strumming). In the earliest performances the children watched her, rapt with her expressive performance. Before long they emulated the performance. She set out models of verbal performance that got uptake from the learners in the classroom.

One of the interesting things about singing performances was that in choral performance there was wide variation in how responsible performers had to be. For any given song, there were usually only a handful of children who sang with a voice expressive enough to stand out in my recordings. The rest could be heard as a kind of background singing. Song to song and day to day I could never predict who would take the responsible role and who would fade into the background. Children may have made choices based on favorite songs, whether they were having a good day, whether neighbors were distracting them, etc. Yet from the earliest days I never heard a song in Mrs. McWilliams' room without some students taking responsibility for supplying emphatic prosody to the well known songs.

The performer/audience relationship is almost unique in choral singing because most of the time (except in the case of "Edmund Fitzgerald") there was no external audience. The children sang for themselves, acting simultaneously as audience and collective performer. There seemed to be a kind of unspoken agreement among the children that singing performances would be competent communication even if many of the children were less active about supplying prosody. The performances were regular and almost everyone *participated*, but not every person had to assume *responsibility* for a display of full communicative competence.

I knew from previous years working with Mrs. McWilliams that the singing context would be an important performance context from the beginning of the year. I also knew that her children usually walked up to the models she gave, and that they enjoyed dramatizing the songs themselves. This was true of the participants in this study as well, who cherished the opportunity to sing favorite songs. Mrs. McWilliams also laid a

foundation for explicit talk and teaching about performance by directly giving the children feedback and teaching them how to do the same for each other. In fostering singing she created a foundation for the study in three ways: she started a year long tradition the children could participate in as performers and audiences, she gave important models of competent performance, and she initiated direct instruction about communicative competence in performance.

Riddling

Riddling was an important contribution Mrs. McWilliams made to the study generally, because in riddling performances we saw children learn and develop. Riddling is a unique kind verbal performance, and added variety to the classroom discourse that could not be achieved through any other performance. This is because riddling is dialogic. Where singing, reading aloud, and storytelling often involve long uninterrupted stretches of speech, the riddler purposefully turns the floor over to the audience. Riddling thus highlights audience and makes it ‘visible’ in ways we might not see as easily with other kinds of performing. A competent riddler *must* demonstrate overt orientation to audience. Mrs. McWilliams’ incorporation of this genre laid a foundation on which important events in the study were built.

Establishing the rhetorical positions of riddler and guesser is all that is needed to constitute a riddling performance (Taylor, 1951). McDowell (1979) calls this act of positioning the “ludic interrogative” (i.e., playful questioning), and recognizes games like “Twenty Questions” or “I spy” as rudimentary forms of riddles. Taylor (1951) notes that traditional riddling often involves some kind of metaphoric relationship between the

riddle and its referent. Children's riddle books are usually filled with puns and parodies (the latter of which children don't usually have a basis for understanding). Most of Mrs. McWilliams' riddles were logic problems she took primarily from George Shannon's (1991) *Stories to solve: Fifteen folktales from around the world*. A transcript from one session follows, with the riddle text italicized for emphasis:

| | | |
|-----------------|----|---|
| Mrs. McWilliams | 03 | Once there lived an old man who had three sons. When he grew old and ill/ |
| Unknown | 06 | Yes we did. |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 07 | I know, but we want to see if Jim--Jim can answer it/ |
| Mary | 10 | What about the "Clever Wife" |
| Jim | 12 | The Clever Wife we did. I know that one/ |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 13 | Right. We did that one, but I know you guys know the answer, so don't shout it out/ |
| Emery | 16 | I don't! |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 17 | Once there lived an old man who had three sons. When he grew old and ill and knew that he soon would die, he called all three sons into his room. "There is no way I can divide the house and farm to support all three of you. The one who proves himself the cleverest will inherit the house and the farm. There is a coin on the table for each of you. The one who can buy something that will fill this room will inherit all I have." The eldest son took his coin, and went straight to the market place and filled his wagon full of straw. The second son / |
| Shane | 53 | (Shane coaches Mrs. McWilliams to cover the answer page.) |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 54 | He can't see it/ |
| Shane | 55 | It has all the answers right here. |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 60 | Um, the eldest son took his coin/ |
| Shane | 64 | Don't look! (to Jim)/ |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 64 | Went straight and bought straw. The second son thought a bit longer, then also went to the market place, where he bought sacks and sacks of feathers. The youngest son thought and then quietly went to a little shop. He bought two small things and tucked them into his pocket. That night the father called them in to show what they had bought. The eldest son spread the straw about the floor, but it filled only one part of the room. Then the youngest son smiled, pulled the two small things out of his pocket/ |
| Henry | 91 | Wait! You forgot the first/ |
| Mrs. McWilliams | 91 | and soon filled the room. |
| | 95 | The second son dumped out his sacks of feathers—I'm |

sorry—but they filled only two corners of the room. I kind of
 messed it up. Do you get it?
 Jim 102 I don't think I heard what you messed up.
 Mrs. McWilliams 104 Okay. Okay. "Yes," said the father. You are indeed the
 cleverest, and have filled the room when the others could not.
 You shall inherit my house and farm. What had the youngest
 116 son bought. And with what did he fill the room?
 Now, these children guessed some better answers than...
 (Answer: Candle and match.)

Riddles punctuated the year. Mrs. McWilliams' did not use the Shannon book
 daily, but she organized several different performances throughout the year. I remember
 seeing the text perched on the cabinet next to her chair at the front of the room all year
 long, always ready at hand. Because the riddles depended on figuring out logical
 conclusions or inconsistencies, Mrs. McWilliams used them in conjunction with math
 and science to generate discussions about logic.

The children's tenacity at guessing was uncanny. For example, I have one
 videotaped example of the children guessing for *twenty minutes* at one of Shannon's
 riddles until they finally got it. When Mrs. McWilliams suggested they put the riddle
 aside and come back to it another time, the children protested and immediately offered
 new solutions. The same held true when I wrote several riddle rhymes for the class and
 asked for guesses. Eventually children started bringing their own riddles and the guessing
 was just as rigorous. For example, when Becky asked the riddle "What is the champion
 of hide and seek" she kept the class guessing for over five minutes. When I motioned to
 stop the session the children squeezed in about five more guesses before Becky gave
 them the answer: "God." Henry immediately interjected, "I was going to say that." The
 idea of being shut off from guessing increased the audience's desire to guess. For
 whatever reason this dialogic kind of performance generated a standard for

communicative competence from the *audience's* perspective. They wanted to be part of creating emergent performances.

By the same token, they were extremely patient at letting me guess riddles they had already solved. Twice Mrs. McWilliams performed riddles from the Shannon book when I was not at school. When I came to class, the children had already guessed the answer and wanted to see if I could get it, and how quickly. They waited patiently while I hazarded various guesses, and seemed to watch me with an unusual intensity—I often thought they were trying to *see* how I would get it.

Because riddling was modeled well and valued in the speech community, the children often brought riddles in spontaneously. Adam asked me one riddle he had already performed for the whole class (listen to sound clip in Figure 13):

I'm rough and gray as rock.
I'm plain as plain can be.
But hidden deep inside,
There is beauty in me.
(Answer: Oyster).

Figure 13: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Adam's riddle and surrounding context.
oyster.mp3.

Mrs. McWilliams mentioned that Adam had “found [the riddle] when he was reading a chapter book.” He recognized and incorporated a text from print into a verbal repertoire. He knew that the class had come to value this kind of performance and thus spontaneously took responsibility for offering a fresh text.

Because of the interesting discursive qualities of riddle performance, I gave it significant attention in the study from January through April. I authored a number of riddles and looked for verse texts with riddles to them. Between singing and riddling

alone there was wide variety in how children took roles of audience and performer, and wide variety in how they performed texts.

Reciting Memorized Text

Knowing the text is an important part of communicative competence. While memorization is not the best way to think about verbal performance, it is one way of helping children feel competent with their performance. All the children in the class demonstrated some ability to memorize, and as they performed memorized text for audiences they experienced the pleasure of delivering the right words in the right place at the right time. Again, precision and memorization are not the best we can hope for, but memorized texts seemed to help children gain confidence in front of audiences. They could perform without having to worry about coming up with original words.

Mrs. McWilliams also provided important variations in audience for two formal performances during the year. The “Thankful Celebration” was held in November, and the “Shark and Whale Presentations” were held in April. For both of these performance sessions Mrs. McWilliams invited parents, grandparents, and other people from the school to be audience. The performers for each presentation were expected to memorize parts and recite them for the audience. Mrs. McWilliams was able in this situation to speak explicitly about audience as well. Before the “Thankful Presentation,” for example, she was able to coach children further in enunciation and in generally being audible for a large group. She also helped individual students think about how their parts fit into the scheme of the whole performance. She did not want to give prompts during a formal performance, and insisted they listen for their own cues.

Formal performance situations were important places for children to encounter authentic audience. Mrs. McWilliams believed the class members could perform in risky situations, and the children walked up to the expectation. They memorized their parts and performed fairly precisely in the presentations. While only some students were able to perform with expression when reciting, it was remarkable to see them memorize such quantity. The “Thankful Celebration” involved multiple parts for each child, and lasted for over an hour. The “Shark and Whale Presentations” were the same. It was no small feat for the children to memorize parts and keep them in order.

For each formal performance audience response was remarkable. For example, after the “Thankful Celebration” one parent commented to me that few teachers at this school asked children to recite or memorize texts at all, and she appreciated how Mrs. McWilliams made the effort to organize the students in a formal performance. Each parent I spoke to commented on how much energy children invested in learning parts and in considering the prospect of a formal performance. The children saw it as serious work. For the “Thankful Presentation” Mrs. McWilliams had over fifty audience members in her classroom for an evening performance, and in each of the two sessions of the “Shark and Whale Presentations” we had thirty adult visitors and as many as two other classrooms of students visiting. The children made few mistakes, both in terms of memorization and in terms of remembering their cues. Because Mrs. McWilliams and other adults supported the children well in rehearsals their knowledge of the texts was usually not an issue at all when they faced the risk of the new audience.

In addition to formal performances, Mrs. McWilliams introduced a number of verses by A.A. Milne for group recitation. While these were originally read aloud from

posters, as the year progressed numerous children recited without prompts. Mrs. McWilliams returned to these verses regularly. At least twice during the year she invited other classrooms from the second grade to join her class for reciting and singing. While the invited guests necessarily relied on posters during the performance, Mrs. McWilliams' students seemed to take some pride in looking *away* from the print. As with the formal performances, reciting was a kind of performance where they could make gains in confidence by merely demonstrating memorization.

Memorization is not the only way to achieve accuracy and competence in presenting text, but in some audience situations memorization seemed to alleviate concern about knowing the text. Knowing the text is an important part of communicative competence. We do not want to hear stops and starts, 'um' and 'uh,' or wait for minutes while performers jar their memory. Plain memorization provided students a direct path toward competent participation in front of evaluative audiences.

At the same time, memorizing parts helped the children gain a sense that they could contribute in presentations of knowledge that were distributed across a group. Their parts in choral recitations and their individual parts in group presentations showed they could be responsible participants in a group effort. Mrs. McWilliams believed this kind of collaboration was an important way to encourage children's responsibility for each other's academic success.

An interesting difference between the recitation in the "Thankful Celebration" and the "Shark and Whale Presentation" was that the former was entirely scripted by Mrs. McWilliams. For the latter presentation, only the first half was scripted for the students. They were expected to take an active part in choosing or authoring texts for the other

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half. The difference in ownership was followed by a difference in the kind of voice we heard children use when reciting. In the November performance and in the first half of the April performance the voices were a kind of “recitation voice.” This voice is like to word calling in oral reading, where precision rendering of exact words is the main object. In memorization where the children were partially authors or had chosen their texts I heard more ‘phrase chunking’ and emphatic prosody. The children were more willing to depart from mere precision when they were personally invested in the actual text.

Still, with or without emphatic prosody, recitation was another part of the theme on which we were able to make variations. Reciting helped children engage in competent delivery of texts for real audiences. While ‘recitation voice’ is not a paragon of communicative competence, it is a kind of minimum. Memorization generated confidence because it allowed for positive evaluation from audiences. I played on this element of confidence starting in December by bringing in nursery rhymes for the children to memorize and discuss. Everyone in the room participated at some point with the nursery rhymes, and all of them enjoyed them because they could be quickly memorized and competently recited.

Reading

Mrs. McWilliams reads aloud expressively from novels to her class. She modeled how meaning in reading resides partially in performance. During the study she read aloud from the Little House series, the Boxcar Children series, Roald Dahl’s *BFG*, and other popular read-aloud selections. Children need models of ‘vocal illustration’ to show them how this is done. I recorded Mrs. McWilliams reading a passage from *Little House on the*

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Prairie, where her prosody was a riveting and meaningful part of the performance. The passage started as an idyllic frontier cooking scene, but was soon interrupted by Pa's hasty entry on horseback (listen to sound clip in Figure 14).

Text read

Ma gazed around the whole circle of earth and sky. She could not see anything unusual.

"Likely it isn't anything, Laura," she said. She raked coals around the coffee-pot and the spider and onto the top of the bake oven. The prairie hen sizzled in the spider and the corncakes began to smell good. But all the time Ma kept glancing at the prairie all around. Jack walked about restlessly, and Pet did not graze. She faced the northwest, where Pa had gone, and kept her colt close beside her.

All at once Patty came rushing across the prairie. She was stretched out, running with all her might, and Pa was leaning almost flat on her neck.

She ran right past the stable before Pa could stop her. He stopped her so hard that she almost sat down. She was trembling all over and her black coat was streaked with sweat and foam. Pa swung off her. He was breathing hard, too.

"What's the matter, Charles?" Ma asked him.

Pa was looking toward the creek, so Ma and Laura looked at the creek, too. But they could see only the space above the bottom lands, with a few tree-tops in it, and the distant tops of the earthen bluffs under the High Prairie's grasses.

"What is it?" Ma asked again. "Why did you ride Patty like that?"

Pa breathed a long breath. "I was afraid the wolves would beat me here. But I see everything's all right."

"Wolves!" she cried. "What wolves?"

(Wilder, 1971, pp. 84-85)

Emphatic prosody

Increase in pace
Increase in loudness
Stretching of words "flat,"
and "neck"

Pace slowed down again

Increase in pitch

Increase in pitch.

Figure 14: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Mrs. McWilliams reading emphatically from *Little House on the Prairie*. michele1.mp3.

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Mrs. McWilliams narrated the calm activities of Ma and the girls with the bucolic rhythm that should accompany a hearthside scene on a slow summer day. But when Pa hurried across the prairie she quickened her voice, appropriately heightening the contrast between calmness and urgency. Her sense for appropriate prosody was keen because these were books she had read aloud many times. She knew that to communicate surprise, suspense, or humor she should supply more than just the words. Reading aloud from novels was a compelling kind of performance for her audience. By the end of the year a third of the children were re-reading the novels she read to them or reading books by the same authors. At the beginning of the year there were only about two students not intimidated by novels. The children followed Mrs. McWilliams' enthusiastic models.

Another site for reading aloud was "author's chair." Like most versions of author's chair, Mrs. McWilliams' was a short time set apart for children to put their own writing on display. This was a less-frequent fixture at the beginning of the year, but became more standard toward the end. It was usually held at the end of literacy workshop, prior to morning recess. The opportunity to read one's own work aloud is both an opportunity and a risk. When Mrs. McWilliams encouraged a child to share a piece of writing or to talk about a picture she never forced the person. Just the risk of sharing was high, but to risk reading the work poorly made a lot of volunteers hesitant. Mrs. McWilliams usually stepped in if she could tell an author was shy by asking whether they wanted her to read it for them. In many cases this was what the students hoped for. Assuming responsibility for authorship of a written text is one thing, but responsibility for a verbal delivery is another. For example, Deanna was one writer who frequently shied away from sharing her texts, and I found she also sometimes had difficulty reading

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fluently from her writing. Sometimes students like her, who struggle with ‘mechanical’ processes of writing, are unable to give their own texts a fluent, expressive reading. But the fact that they know this, and will shy away from a large group performance shows that they have an awareness of audience expectations.

On the other hand, some authors relished the chance to voice their text. I recorded several sessions of author’s chair to look for students reading with appropriate prosodic phrasing and with emphatic prosody. Mrs. McWilliams reported that during one author’s chair session Shane—typically not one to break through into performance for the large group—supplied emphatic prosody to a debut read-aloud of an installment in his “stinky dog” story series. I had difficulty finding any other large-group example of Shane breaking through into performance. The chance to be an original voice for one’s own text seemed to be the source of both confidence and fear. Some students never took the opportunity to share a personal text in front of the whole class, and some could not get enough of it.

The “couch area” was a place for dual responsibility in reading aloud. Sometimes Mrs. McWilliams took the floor herself to read an entire picture book or novel chapter during the half hour in this area. Other times she shared the floor and passed her book to different readers. This was the most frequent site where she handed out multiple copies of trade readers such as *Josefina: Story Quilt* or *Eugenie Clark: Shark Lady*. But she also read picture books here. Reading aloud in the couch area—unlike reading for literacy workshop and her novel reading—was a time for Mrs. McWilliams to pay close attention to comprehension, breaking up the reading with frequent questions. Not only did she ask questions, but encouraged children to generate questions to ask each other. At the

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beginning of the year she was the lone model for comprehension questions, but by October she had already turned over much of the responsibility to the children.

In the couch area children took some responsibility for incorporating oral reading into their performance repertoire. The other main setting where Mrs. McWilliams encouraged oral reading was in one-on-one sessions between children and adults during literacy workshop. Her first use of extra human resources in the classroom (parents, grandparents, student teachers, and volunteers) was to have them read with a child during literacy workshop. I met with children in this setting from the beginning of the year, and there were about four parents and two grandparents who came in regularly for literacy workshop the whole year. The high school also sent volunteers over twice a week during literacy workshop and we had one or two of these volunteers present each day. Although Mrs. McWilliams' goal for literacy workshop was to help children move toward silent reading, there were frequent opportunities for them to read aloud to adults.

Every day Mrs. McWilliams listened to two to four children read aloud individually during literacy workshop. This was her way to assess students' reading and to give individual reading instruction. In second grade most of the children were already proficient enough readers that she did not use group instruction. Two of her students were in Reading Recovery, and two went to a resource room for about an hour a day. With daily literacy workshop she could thus work with each child individually at least once every two weeks.

As with reciting, much of the work Mrs. McWilliams put into her classroom design was to create audience situations where communicative competence would make a difference. When she modeled by reading aloud to the children, the class acted as a

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genuine audience and depended on her for a competent delivery. In shared reading at the couch area, she shared responsibility with students, who acted as audience members and performers. For author's chair, students acted as peer audiences for each other's displays, again distributing roles of audience and performer. And during literacy workshop, adults came from outside the classroom to listen to children's oral reading. Mrs. McWilliams' read-aloud routines involved a good deal of audience variety.

It is clear that we began the study in a place already rich in performance. She not only created places for children to perform and listen to verbal performance, but also introduced multiple kinds of performance. She introduced explicit talk about performance. Mrs. McWilliams' curriculum allowed me to make interventions for the study in the spirit of "arranged natural context." Much of what I already hoped to see was naturally there in Mrs. McWilliams' everyday work. When I wanted to study a particular aspect of performance, we arranged a variation on what she already did.

Creating Variations on Mrs. McWilliams' Theme of Performance

There were three kinds of 'arrangements' we made to vary Mrs. McWilliams' theme of performance. The first was an additional social context: the small group. The second was introducing new texts in existing contexts. The third was introducing verbal storytelling as a new kind of performance. Each of these arrangements was important for different reasons.

The addition of the small group accomplished two things. First, it created a less formal situation for performance, and second, it helped us increase the number of overall opportunities for each child in the class to perform and listen to performance.

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In the existing contexts in Mrs. McWilliams' curriculum the performances were either adult-oriented or directed at a large group. Because I wanted to hear the voices I knew from the playground, it was important to create a situation where children could engage each other on a personal level. Bakhtin (Emerson, 1995) believed that effectiveness and responsibility in human action decrease as people think and act in larger groups. I believed we would miss important instances of "breakthrough into performance" if we did not arrange places for children to perform with a small number of peers. During my observations of oral reading I noticed many children who seemed to view *demonstration of precision* as the main purpose in performance when they read aloud with adults. When they read with each other it was for entertainment and information.

Mrs. McWilliams and I held the small group performances during literacy workshop. While she worked with individuals on reading and writing, I took groups of two to four children with me for verbal performances. We sometimes held small group performances in the classroom, sometimes at a table in the hallway, and sometimes in another room.

Some children displayed a quick sense for communicative competence in the small group setting. I chose focus group members because of the way they assumed responsibility for displaying communicative competence in performance early in the study in the small group. A number of performers, like Henry, Shane, and Ariel rarely broke through into performance in the large group but did so often in the small group. Because my role in the classroom was less authoritative than Mrs. McWilliams' I tried to tolerate more side conversations and 'off task' behavior during small group

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performances, knowing that it was these off task voices that might break through into performance.

Because I could meet with these groups three to five days per week we were able to record participation in performance for almost every child every two weeks. Focus group members would show up in recordings several times over the same two weeks. We were thus able to see people perform individually on a more regular basis than if we had relied on only large group contexts, where students' individual turns were less regular. Students like Henry and Ariel abdicated performance in the large group when they could. We were able to observe many more performances for them because of the small group. The creation of the small group was among the most important "arrangements" we made as a variation on the theme of performance.

With a wider range of social situations in place, another of the important variations on the performance theme was simply adding texts to Mrs. McWilliams' standard repertoire of singing, riddling, verse recitation, and reading aloud.

For reading aloud in the small group the children usually brought their own texts, chosen from the library. Each was responsible for having two library books each week to work with during literacy workshop. I complemented these with a books from my own read-aloud library, making sure they had a wider range of choices than just their own books. They sometimes chose to read aloud from their books and sometimes from mine. But the important thing was that I tried to fade into the background position as a recorder and allow the children to read the books to each other. Some children flourished in this reading environment. For example, Troy and Cary seemed to read better when they could play off each other verbally. The small group read-aloud context was a setting where I

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could introduce new texts, and a place where some children could perform more responsibly than in individual reading.

For reciting, I introduced a battery of nursery rhymes in the small group and the large group. Beginning in the small group, I found a healthy spirit of competition between children to see who could memorize the most and the fastest. They got chances to recite in the small and large group contexts. I was careful to introduce less familiar rhymes, because even for these children there was a sense that nursery rhymes were for younger children. But there is little variety in most people's nursery rhyme repertoire, so the novel rhymes were interesting. The size of the rhymes made it possible to observe multiple performances of texts where word recognition and memory were not big issues.

I was satisfied with the way the children broke through into performance with the nursery rhymes. I worried they might word call from the papers, but they favored the singsong cadence, and this helped them break away from word calling. It also became a sign of prowess to have a whole verse memorized and to recite it while someone else held the card. Precision was a strong element in the psychology of this activity, because each child who performed wanted to get all the words right. Yet because nursery rhymes have so many mnemonic devices (rhyme, alliteration, meter, and repeated phrases) they could achieve precision quickly and then work on competent delivery. Because these texts were mostly below their reading level (with the exception of some archaic usage and vocabulary) the size helped alleviate some of the risk that might accompany reciting or reading longer passages.

For riddling, I merely added a new kind of riddle to the existing performance routine. As mentioned above, Mrs. McWilliams' riddles were primarily logic problems. I

introduced a set of riddles related to the content of the second semester's science presentations on sharks and whales. They were of the class typically referred to as 'metaphoric riddles.'

I am a comb for the sea
I comb all its snarls through me
Little bits, tiny strings, I catch in my grooves
But I only eat the ones that move.
(Answer: Whale's baleen)

I tested such riddles in the small group, and when children proved they could make the connection with some help we took them to the large group. The children enjoyed riddling, and I noticed after the introduction of metaphoric riddles there was an increase in the number of riddles they spontaneously offered to the class—such as Adam's riddle about the oyster, and Becky's riddle about God. The children also began taking riddle books out of the school library.

Riddling is partially about power. Riddlers get to maintain a kind of influence over their guessers because the riddler knows the answer and the guesser does not. But in Mrs. McWilliams' classroom, it was not a mere matter of control. Children actively enjoyed the process of guessing. Because we scaffolded the children's guesses, they did not usually reach the frustration point that makes riddles so annoying for so many people.

A number of the verses we learned for recitation also had the quality of riddling to them because they were narratives that demanded inference. Several of these I introduced based on shark and whale content for the science presentation. Because I chose based on familiar content as well as a familiar kind of performance, the children were willing to engage the texts. For example Mike performed the following poem by John Ciardi (1975)

with **breakthrough** into performance on the last two lines (listen to sound clip in Figure 15).

The thing about a shark is...teeth.
One row above, one row beneath.
Now take a closer look, do you find
It has another row behind?
Still closer. Here, I'll hold your hat.
Is there a third row after that?
Now look in, and—look out! Oh, my.
I'll never know now. Well, good-bye.

Figure 15: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Mike F. reading Ciardi shark poem, with **breakthrough** at the end of the reading. `matciardi.mp3`.

The **content** of this poem was pleasing to the children because it followed how they had **learned** that sharks have multiple rows of self-replacing teeth. Prosody is important **throughout** the verse for maintaining rhythm, but the rhythm has to be appropriately **broken up** in the second to last line. If read inappropriately, the words “look in and look out” **seem** to mean the character in the poem should turn her eyes inward and then turn them **outward**. But the phrase “look out” needs to be an interjection—“Look out!” I heard **several** readers perform it with an even prosody across the entire line. Mike, however, who **was** the text’s first reader, caught on to this piece of meaning and broke through into **performance** from word-calling for just those words (listen to clip in Figure 15).

We incorporated these riddles and verses into the April “Shark and Whale **Presentations**”. Members of the focus group chose texts from a bank of several verses and **riddles**. I sought out these texts merely as ways of raising the number of interesting texts the **children** would encounter during the study, but they ended up fitting into Mrs. **McWilliams’** plans for the formal Shark and Whale presentation. The flow of

performance was richer because Mrs. McWilliams and I were collaborating. There were more opportunities to perform and more contexts across which texts could travel.

For singing, one major text I contributed also connected with Mrs. McWilliams' repertoire. Mrs. McWilliams' performance of "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" had increased the students' interest in Great Lakes shipwrecks. Jay Steelstra also wrote a shipwreck ballad about the wreck of the Rouse Simmons on Lake Michigan. "The Christmas Tree Ship" was a song I introduced in December. It joined Mrs. McWilliams' song as a popular text to request during choral singing.

While my singing and guitar playing with this song were not nearly as well practiced as Mrs. McWilliams' virtuoso performance of Lightfoot's song, the content connection seemed to make a difference. The children were interested in the shipwreck and asked numerous content oriented questions about the story. With this content interest sparked, I introduced stories from William Ratigan's (1960) book *Great Lakes Shipwrecks*. These became a strong tradition for both reading aloud for the next context we "arranged" to introduce to the class: verbal storytelling.

Storytelling

Among the most important contributions of storytelling was that it allowed the children to engage lengthy narratives without the constraints of print. This was important for children like Becky, for whom reading was always a struggle. In storytelling she often broke through into performance, where in oral reading her problems with word recognition prevented her from doing so. She was able to be a competent participant in stories without worrying about her reading.

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In previous years I found many children have a remarkable propensity for verbal storytelling. My experience was corroborated by scholars in children's folklore (Sutton-Smith, 1981). Children will tell stories if given the chance. There are essentially two approaches to storytelling: improvisation and traditional telling. I opened the floor to both approaches in the small group setting, where storytelling began.

I initiated storytelling by introducing traditional stories. I found this an important piece of scaffolding. Without an existing structure on which to improvise I found that children's stories often lost momentum, with tellers becoming increasingly less competent as their tales rambled on. With traditional material on which to improvise, I found that the children were in more control of their texts and could break through into performance easier.

A number of the stories we heard during the year were pure improvisation (not based on material I gave). But because we wanted to create opportunities for as many children as possible to break through into performance, it was important to give them material to work with. Only some performers are ready to improvise, and even from these performers we could not expect *ex nihilo* improvisations at every opportunity to tell.

We worked with traditional texts from the corpus of Fairy Tales: "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," "The Three Bears," "Red Riding Hood" and others. We also incorporated texts from world folktales: "The Scalded Wolf" from Massignon's (1968) French collection, and "The President Wants No More of Anansi" from Courlander's (1960) Haitian collection.

As the year continued, what was traditional became localized in the classroom. I initiated a cycle of tales involving a character called the "Barbie Shark" which the

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children took up as their own, often improvising on the character and episodes I had told to create their own stories. Henry, Becky, Adam and others contributed original material. My tale of the Barbie Shark's origin (see appendix for full text) was among the most requested verbal texts across the class. The children made it part of a storytelling tradition. They did the same with the shipwreck stories mentioned above.

I not only sang the "Christmas Tree Ship" song, but also told the story verbally in the small group. We took similar stories from Ratigan's (1960) book of shipwreck stories, which became popular reading for the children, and invented ways to tell them without the book. A handful of these stories gained currency in the small group between December and February, and were an engaging complement to the two ballads we frequently sang in the large group.

Stories, like other texts, were portable. Within the classroom there were opportunities to take what was introduced and fostered in the small group, and bring it to the large group. Mrs. McWilliams arranged several storytelling sessions for the large group throughout the year. In these contexts both adults and children told stories that had become traditional verbal texts in this speech community. In creating these large group gatherings, Mrs. McWilliams validated what was done in the small groups—giving it credence in the structures she had established as the 'official' curriculum (see Erickson & Shultz for a discussion of various levels of curricula).

A number of children responded immediately to storytelling. Henry, for example, improvised on the "Three Billy Goats Gruff" material in the very first storytelling session he participated in. He continued to take responsibility for his storytelling performances throughout the year. Shane was another performer for whom small group storytelling was

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important. Like Henry, he seldom broke through into performance in the large group. But in the small group with storytelling he did so frequently. It was in small group storytelling where I heard Ariel break through into performance for the first time in the whole year.

As a genre of literature—or language arts—verbal storytelling has ties to reading aloud. Verbal storytelling gave the children a different setting where they could encounter narrative. For those still struggling with reading, this allowed them to develop communicative competence with a kind of text had heard as audiences to storybooks.

The mnemonics for telling stories are different from those in singing and reciting short verse. To tell stories well, children had to follow their emerging sense for the narrative structure of their texts. Mrs. McWilliams believed this had a significant impact on their writing. In May and June she had the children write character based stories—a common writing project in her curriculum. We gave as many of the children as possible chances to develop their stories orally before they wrote them on paper. When looking at the final products, Mrs. McWilliams commented to me that in terms of length and development the contributions of these children far outshone what she had seen from any second grade group in previous years. Storytelling was an important genre for making connections to literacy.

The Need to Study Performance in a Performance-rich Environment

The balance of risk and comfort, of freedom and structure can never be perfect in any classroom. But for this study, Mrs. McWilliams offered an ideal situation. Variations

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on the theme of performance were received well by the children because verbal performances seemed 'natural' in this classroom.

Mrs. McWilliams established traditions that helped children become tacitly and explicitly aware of themselves as performers. She taught them directly about communicative competence. She helped them feel comfortable taking risks with their voices—both modeling the use of emphatic prosody and encouraging them to speak expressively. She did all this in several social contexts in the classroom and across different kinds of verbal performance.

The interventions for the study were ways of fine-tuning what we would have found naturally in Mrs. McWilliams' classroom. But the interventions were important because of the way they were responsive to what she offered. Because we worked at enhancing what she already did in terms of volume and breadth, our contributions had a recursive effect on the curriculum. She appropriated most of our interventions, where we had created the interventions based on her existing practice.

The social routines for verbal performance Mrs. McWilliams instituted at the beginning of the year were complemented by our addition of the small group setting. In the small group we heard performative voices that harked to the playground, and Mrs. McWilliams was careful to invite these performers to put their texts on display in the large group settings that were part of the classroom context from the first day of class. This official validation of the more intimate performance was an important step in this study. I hoped from the earliest days of design to find ways to encourage children's most natural sounding voices within the classroom. I wanted children to dare to use their own

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emphatic prosody when performing texts in school. The partnership we established between scholarship and school teaching was in many ways ideal.

Mrs. McWilliams wanted her children to grow in verbal communication. She believed this growth would impact the children's academic performance in literacy, but she also knew that verbal performance was important in and of itself. The children's favorable response to the interventions was not surprising considering their strong response to Mrs. McWilliams' verbal performance curriculum. Because the collaboration was so seamless we were able to observe and record performance consistently for many children. In the two chapters that follow, I will outline some of the main things we learned from the children's performances.

In the next chapter I will examine small group performances because these were designed to emulate the playfulness of children's everyday speech. The small group's informality was rich ground for breaking through into performance. Following that discussion, however, I will examine the case of Henry, whose performance demonstrates a transition to competence in a formal, large group setting.

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CHAPTER 4

Inventing the Enhanced Playground

The playground is an apt metaphor for this study because children's verbal competence is typical there. The problem of how to invite a playful quality of performance into the classroom is one of the central questions of this study. But we did not merely want to observe and record isolated instances of communicative competence; we wanted to observe moments of growth—learning and development. Thus we had to invent a context made of elements from both the playground and the classroom. The fundamental aspects of play that were indispensable were freedom, informality, and orientation to an object (i.e., a toy) (see Huizinga, 1950; Knapp & Knapp, 1976). The objects or toys we played with were texts.

This was the small group performance context. This was held during daily literacy workshop time, which was the existing context most congruent with the concept of 'playgroundness.' Mrs. McWilliams offers degrees of freedom in many of her classroom situations, but most of the social contexts for performance in her curriculum involved a large group. The large group seemed to add social risk that many students (Henry, Ariel, and others) were seldom willing to accept. In the literacy workshop environment we minimized this risk by offering the first student chosen for the small group the choice of the remaining group members, and also a range of text and genre options.

In literacy workshop time children were used to choosing genres and texts for reading. The spatial setting was informal, with personal 'favorite' spots Mrs. McWilliams

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let children choose at the beginning of the session. The combination of informality and choice was an ideal match to the concept of playgroundness. The problem was that literacy workshop was primarily an occasion for silent sustained reading (or writing). For the study we needed verballity, not silence. So we devised a space for a single small group to work on verbal performance during literacy workshop.

The members of the small group were allowed to talk where other students during this time were supposed to be silent. Because our talk was inserted in a context that was already free and informal, we invented an “enhanced playground.” We maintained many elements of freedom for the children (choice of genres, texts, and often social partners), yet we methodically organized the group as an occasion for verbal performance alone—not for other kinds of play. It was playground/school.

The small group was designed to harness loose energy and guide children toward communicative competence. It was also a complement to Mrs. McWilliams’ regular large group verbal performances. In the small group we could offer an informal, in-school chance for all students to perform. This was especially important for those reticent to break through into performance in the large group.

Just putting this new context for verballity in place helped us learn much about how children develop communicative competence in performance. Data from the small groups can help us articulate what kinds of constructs and terms are salient in children’s learning and development. The formality of the large group setting prevented some children from ‘publishing’ their knowledge of how to perform, even if they were privately appropriating and transforming it (see the diagram of the ‘Vygotsky Space’ in chapter one). Moreover, in the large group children willing to perform may have used

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voices more tailored to formal presentation than to play (such as the singsong recitation voice), and thus did not break through into responsible performance. Creating a new public/social space was a purposeful way of opening doors for development.

We saw communicative competence in the small group because we saw children performing texts and understanding them. As performance develops from mimicry into responsible interaction between performer, text, and audience, we expect that ‘repeating’ performance becomes inextricable from ‘interpreting’ it. That is, the competent performer knows how to transform the performance in such a way that it is understandable for an audience—or at least such that the audience continues to attend to the performance. To do so performers must understand the texts themselves.

Storytelling grew to be a favorite genre for the small groups, and I observed important moments of “breakthrough” and growth with that genre. The data here deal primarily with the development of children’s ability to ‘repeat’ and ‘interpret’ texts. ‘Reporting’ on, or talking about text, is an aspect of communicative competence I will integrate in the two chapters that follow.

The data in this chapter represent four performers in the small group setting. The data examined below illustrate three main areas of findings. First, I discovered that performers in the small group felt they could share responsibility for performances. In almost every case examined below, storytellers engaged in direct dialog with audience members who helped in composing the story. The overlapping speech and shifting and sharing the floor were features of ‘playground’ that became part of the classroom.

Second, I saw two continua of responsibility: a continuum from mimicry to responsibility in performance, and a continuum between single-context performance and

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multiple-context performance. Each of the performers in the class came to the small group with varying degrees of ability to assume responsibility for communicative competence in storytelling. We were able to deduce development by marking when specific children assumed new or unusual responsibility. A child's actual development would involve their position on each of these continua (see Figure 16 below). Growth would involve movement across the continua. A competent performer's 'repertoire' should become progressively more inclusive of various contexts and levels of responsibility.

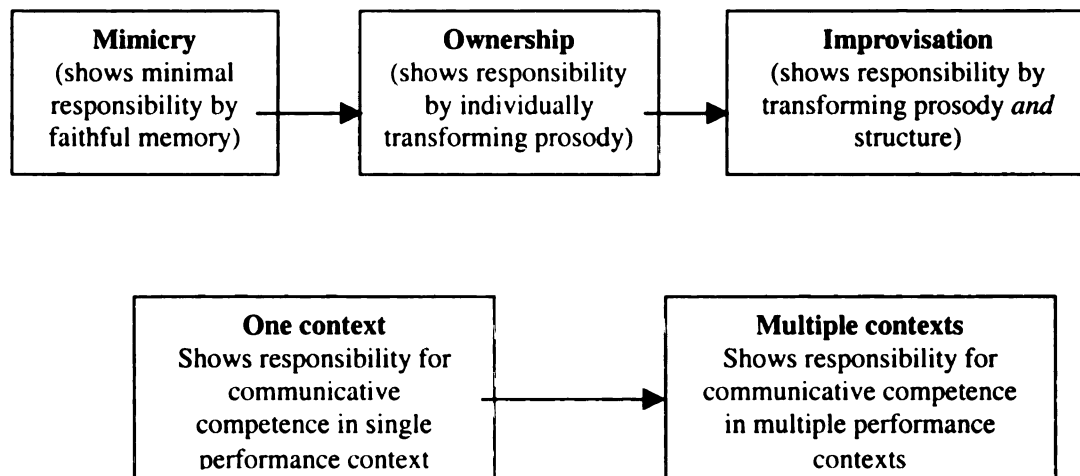


Figure 16: Continua of responsibility. In verbal performance we can conceive of development in terms of how performers transform story material, and whether their competence is limited to single contexts or crosses contexts. Performers become more competent as they gain control over prosody and text, and as they gain control over multiple social contexts. The work of development involves figuring out by experience how to control text and context in more sophisticated ways.

Third, each of the cases below is a demonstration of children appropriating and transforming text in some way. Thinking about the processes of appropriation and transformation can help us elaborate on what happens as children move along the

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continua shown above. Children appropriate texts even when they perform at the lowest end of responsibility (on the left of Figure 16). Children in the small groups also showed transformation of stories by means of prosody. When moving beyond mere mimicry, students used prosody to repair miscues, to cajole audiences into listening, and by using emphatic prosody to guide audiences in interpreting a story. I also found one child who told one story in three different social contexts, and developed a kind of ‘conventional’ prosody for that story. Each of these uses of prosody involved transformation by which students began to gain ownership of stories.

Another means by which I saw children appropriate and transform stories was improvisation. In improvisation, children showed control of performances by both prosody and structure. In improvisation we saw children use prosody for all the purposes mentioned above—to manage the performance discourse and to guide interpretation. But they also actively manipulated story elements such as characters and events to suit compositional purposes and personal interests.

Shared responsibility for composition, a continuum of responsibility, and the transforming of familiar material are the main concepts of development I found when examining the small group data. These concepts are important because they provide us with a framework for discussing how students grow as performers.

Mimicry and Bravery: Ariel Breaks Through Into Performance

The first storytelling session I will examine is an example of mimicry. Ariel was among the shyest performers in the class. As late as March, I had never observed her break through into performance, regardless of social context, genre, or text. In one small

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group session, however, things came together such that she offered an entire telling of “The Three Bears.” In doing so, she mimicked someone else’s performance session. Her performance history provided me with a good sense for what it takes for someone to assume even minimal responsibility for communicative competence in performance.

The extreme case of Ariel’s shyness highlights the crucial role the responsive audience played in the small group. Because she openly recoiled from performing in the small group and the large group, social risk was among the most difficult aspects of performance for her to manage. On March 11, however, Ariel, Henry, and Cary agreed to stay in from recess to tell stories. Cary told first, and after his story we lightly prodded Ariel to tell. With some reluctance, she began a strictly traditional version of “The Three Bears.” Ariel had engaged in storytelling only one time previous to this, in October, and gave no sense that she assumed responsibility. In the meantime, the only verbal performances I have on record for her are one session of reading aloud and one recitation of a poem with a group of peers (see Table 6). When reading aloud she called words and spoke so silently as to be inaudible to both people and recording equipment.

| Date | Oct. 21 | November 13 | December 2 | March 11 |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Description of Ariel’s Performance | Storytelling outside the classroom during literacy workshop: “Three Billy Goats Gruff” | Joint recitation with Tiffany and Dani of Shel Silverstein’s verse about a “Snowball” from <i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> . | Read-aloud during literacy workshop from book of tales: “The Three Pigs,” and “Teeny Tiny.” | Storytelling during recess. “The Three Bears.” |
| Audience | Mary, Dani, Jim | Whole class | Tiffany, Deanna, Jim | Henry, Cary, Jim |

Table 6: A catalog of all Ariel’s observed performances for the whole school year, organized by date, description, and audience participants.

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Ariel needed express invitations to perform at all. In the small groups, she tried to pass the floor along when she could. In her first storytelling session (October 21) there were three girls (Ariel, Dani, and Mary) and myself present. When I had finished telling the first story I started to offer the floor to the next teller. Ariel immediately overlapped my speech to direct the floor toward Dani.

Jim: Okay. Let's let somebody else have a try/
Ariel: Not me! Dani!

This was the same pattern of active avoidance she exhibited in the storytelling session in March with Cary and Henry. In that session, when the floor came open Henry volunteered Ariel. She quickly turned the invitation around:

Henry: Okay, Ariel's next!
Ariel: No I'm not going second! I'm last! You go.

Not only did she position herself away from the floor, she insisted she would be *last*. Henry and Ariel danced around each other this way a few times, so I took the floor and told a story³⁰. After my story was over, Henry and Cary engaged in a couple minutes of improvising on ideas for similar stories. Henry showed some eagerness to get started, but not so eager that he would go next.

Henry: Well, can I tell mine?
Jim: Yeah.
Henry: No, Ariel goes next.
Ariel: mmm mmm! (shaking head to say "no")

I wondered if Ariel's "no" was expressed partly because Cary had told an improvised story and she did not feel ready to improvise. When both Henry and Cary had finished their stories, we all contributed to helping her get started (see Appendix for a full transcript of the session):

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Jim: Um, can you do one that you already know, like “Little Red Riding Hood” /
 Cary: Make one up! /
 Jim: or “Goldilocks” or...
 Henry: Make one, make a “Little Red Riding Hood” one up.
 Jim: Which one do you think you know from reading it or hearing it before?
 Goldilocks and the Three Bears?
 Ariel: (nods)
 Jim: Yeah, you can tell that one.
 Ariel: (moves toward a chair and sits down to tell)

For Ariel, little could be left up to chance. She needed help and support from adults and peers just to be willing to start a performance and maintain it. When she started out the performance of “The Three Bears” in March, she had a couple of false starts, started to giggle, and then suggested she might stop the performance. Cary jokingly said she might want to perform for a larger group, and defensively noted that she had laughed at him during his performance (she claimed her reticence was because she was afraid we would laugh at her). He was playfully coaxing her to take the risk. She laughed with Cary, and Henry and I started to give her content prompts to get her started on the telling. I said, “Okay, there were three bears...” Henry supplied “Once upon a time.” And with these prompts, Ariel began.

After a few lines had already been told, Ariel got stuck on what the food was the bears had cooked. Henry and I both chimed in with the word “porridge.”

Ariel: I don’t know it.
 Cary: And she found a little house.
 Ariel: And she found some...
 Henry: Porridge.
 Jim : Porridge.
 Ariel: Porridge. She found some porridge.

³⁰ I authored this tale based on material from stories made up by children in Sutton-Smith’s (1981) *Folkstories of children*.

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Any time after this when it seemed like she was stopping because of content, Cary and Henry chimed in with a word or phrase. In this respect, the first half of the story was a co-telling. Ariel began to look to her co-tellers as content prompters³¹. The responsibility was distributed across those designated as audience and the one designated as teller.

Ariel borrowed two prosodic elements directly from a December large-group storytelling session of the same story. She borrowed a “snap!” sound effect for the breaking of the small bear’s chair. She also affected a character voice for the baby bear in the same way it had been performed in the December session³². From the point in the story where Goldilocks sits on the chairs, Ariel told the rest of the story without any prompts, assuming full responsibility for her knowledge of the text. This mimicry was remarkable because her ‘borrowing’ spanned three months’ time. She had obviously been well in tune as an audience member and was poised, in terms of the Vygotsky space, between transformation and publication. The individual knowledge was there, but it had not been tried out in public space.

However, just before she told the part where the bears look at their beds, a couple of third-grade girls came in looking for Mrs. McWilliams. They sat down far across the room from us to wait for the teacher to return from recess duty. At the exact moment they entered the room Ariel’s voice became quieter, and she continued her telling in a very soft voice. She shied away from public/social space when the audience dynamic became less familiar. She also discontinued using the character voice for the baby bear. She entirely changed her prosody based on the appearance of these older girls. She retracted

³¹ The children were sufficiently responsive that I did not have to supply the prompts.

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some of the responsibility she had assumed. Her willingness to maintain a display was always fragile. Granted, her level of responsibility was that of mimicry, with her reliance on emphatic prosody 'conventional' for this story in the speech community of this classroom, but even this responsibility disappeared when outsiders came into the performance space.

This interruption from outside came very near the end of the story, and Ariel quickly performed the last lines to finish the story. But Cary chimed in to give the story a dramatic wrap-up.

Ariel: She woke up and ran outside and that's the end.

Cary: And broke her back and killed herself!

Ariel: And broke her back and killed herself.

Like Henry, when Ariel felt it was appropriate she took relevant audience comments and made them part of her text. She seemed to court shared responsibility. Cary and Henry both supported her in moments of hesitation. In every case these two peers offered support not in the conventional sense of praise, but by helping her become oriented to the text and assisting her display. Ariel responded to the contributions from both Henry and Cary as audiences and co-performers by taking their offerings into the display and using them to maintain continuity.

Ariel needed a lot of support and a degree of privacy for her to feel comfortable enough to take responsibility for a display of text. She showed responsibility in mustering the courage to actually put the text on display, but she needed the audience's support to do even this. Her hesitation to assume responsibility was interpreted by Henry, Cary, and me as a need for assistance. The moment of competence began to emerge when Ariel

³² The high-pitched 'baby' voice for baby bear in this story is typical, but was nonetheless available to her when she was an audience in the December session.

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accepted this interpretation and allowed us to help her. Beyond getting started, she needed help to fill in early gaps in the story. Again, she appropriated prompts from the audience. Last, she manifested responsibility along prosodic lines. Once she began telling her story she spoke fluently, and supplied an emphatic character voice for the smallest bear, and a sound effect for the breaking chair. But she held back the supply of prosody when older girls from outside the classroom community entered the performance. Her sense of competence had extremely narrow limits, and any challenge was threatening. So the provision of a more 'private' setting with spirited and supportive co-performers was fundamental to her breaking through into performance. During the year we were often able to provide such a private performing arena by staying in during recess or by using unoccupied rooms in the school for small group performances.

The small group was the place where I saw Ariel deliver this first competent performance. She did not improvise, or put any kind of 'persona' on the text, but she worked strongly with material that existed—remembering a prosodic move from a storytelling session she heard *months* earlier (the sound effect). While Cary and Henry told fairly novel improvised stories during the same session, Ariel benefited by having a traditional 'stock' of text from which she could choose. She also benefited from a history of fairly recent verbal performances from the classroom. She drew on this history for prosodic moves and perhaps for memory of the story. Also, throughout the process of getting started and telling the story, the dialogic nature of overlapping speech was a helpful and relevant support to her performance. She encouraged and accepted 'interruptions' as shared responsibility.

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What Can We Learn About Development from Ariel's Performance?

Development in this case involved Ariel's shift toward willingness to put a verbal display in public space in the classroom. She represents children for whom social risk is an immense challenge. Her ability to break through into performance depended on the willingness of her audience to share in responsibility for the display.

All participants in the room had a stake in the display. When outsiders encroached on this special communal storytelling session, Ariel quickly closed it off. The interlopers did not share responsibility, and they would have acted as mere voyeurs for the display of text. Of course, these visitors seemed disinterested in the display and did not physically approach the couch area where we sat. But Ariel's *perception* of risk in the performance mattered more than the visitors' real intentions. To a large extent, she performed only because Henry, Cary, and I helped her feel willing. None of the visitors had helped her in this way.

Sharing responsibility in this case meant the participants helped each other in assembling the display. Ariel invited this sharing by leaving pregnant pauses where Cary and Henry filled in content. Had Cary and Henry not been willing or able to make such interjections Ariel's performance would have soon reached an end. It was thus important that she chose familiar material, for which both Cary and Henry could offer help. Cary's ending to the story was also a prominent example of overlapping speech. Ariel accepted this overlapping contribution just as she had for all the pauses.

The data from Ariel's performance thus show three salient constructs about development of verbal performance: (a) the performer's perception of social risk, (b) the ability and need of a performer to share responsibility in composing the text, and (c) the

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growing performer's need to draw on familiar performances. In the large group, Ariel's particular configuration of these constructs would have stacked up against her composing a competent performance. But in the small group the social risk was minimal, her audience was willing to share in the composition, and she was allowed to choose from a stock of familiar material. The 'playgroundness' of the small group worked for Ariel so long as all these pieces were in place. Social risk in publication outweighed all other concerns, so she needed to have a safe place created where she could be helped to manage and monitor the risk.

Gaining Control of a Runaway Text: Shane Breaks Through Into Performance

Sharing responsibility for a verbal display was difficult in the large group setting because conventional classroom etiquette prevailed there. Children were not supposed to use overlapping speech and they were held to a fairly rigid system of teacher-filtered turn taking. These characteristics of the large group made it manageable, and the performances in the large group worked well. But not all people could perform there—such as Ariel—and not all people performed equally well there. The small group created an occasion for shared responsibility in putting on displays. It also gave people a chance to grow in their ability to exercise control over their texts.

While Ariel's display of "The Three Bears" was largely a piece of mimicry, other performers transformed traditional texts to fit the peculiar needs of a performance situation. Shane, for example, co-created with Courtney a way of telling "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" that was unique to the social needs of that particular performance session.

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This was traditional material, and Shane followed my model of the story closely. But in terms of *delivery*, Shane and Courtney created something entirely new.

Shane's first utterance expressed concern for accurately remembering the text. I had put some pressure on accuracy by reviewing story elements and made explicit what content a telling needed in order to "count" as this story. He histrionically tapped his temple with his index finger while saying, "I need to think first." I prompted him to use a stock beginning, and he replied with, "Once upon a time." In his next line, he stalled and changed voice, deepening the tone to exaggerate the "uh." "Uh, (chuckle), uh, I already said 'once upon a time' so what's next?" His vocal change seems to have struck a sympathetic comical chord for both the girls, one of whom laughed and the other made a comment about Shane being funny. For the next thirty seconds the performance stalled on the fact that there were three billy goats, until Courtney left the table to shut the door. Shane resumed performance and spoke more content of the story while she was gone, supplying three key elements by the time she sat back down (grass, other side of river, bridge).

Giggling from all three children set the general tone of the session. While I smiled, my not joining in the giggling may have put me in an outside position. From beginning to end, the three children rarely made overt eye-checks or directed comments at me while exchanging between themselves. Shane resumed a somewhat deepened voice, slowed down the word "and," then rapidly paced the words "then they saw a bridge," speaking directly to the recently returned Courtney. He got quite a quick burst of laughter from her. About ten seconds later, he put on the deepened voice again when the troll's first line came up. He seemed to be stalling, but also to be playing on the

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comedic effects of stalling. A “duh” dumb voice is a simple way of describing the voice, and Courtney picked up on this when he seemed to break character.

Shane: and here comes a little troll and goes, uhh (puts finger to temple) mmm
 what comes next?
Courtney: He said that? “mmm uh, what comes next (in ‘duh’ dumb voice) ?”
Jim: Yep, because the troll is dumb, right?
Courtney: Yeah! “Uhhh, what comes next?”

My interpreting and reframing Courtney’s input as legitimate for the content of this story seemed to help Shane make an adjustment. He picked up the dumbness of the troll as part of his text. And then made a fairly smooth transition into telling the rest of the story.

Shane: Duh, duh, I’m duh gonna eat you up.

As Courtney continued to poke fun of his miscues, Shane overtly acknowledged that he was trying to think of the content of the story. “Hey, I don’t know this story. I’m thinking of something.” Shane checked his eyes on me momentarily here, and then for the next 54 seconds his turn proceeded fairly uninterrupted (although still punctuated by giggling on his part and Courtney’s). He didn’t use the “duh” voice again, and he didn’t note difficulty remembering the text. His version of the text was far more brief and collapsed than mine, but held some integrity. During these last 54 seconds the amount of text Shane spoke was far greater proportional to the interjections made by his audience, where for a while they were going almost in turn.

In Shane’s longest string of narrative, he made illocutionary moves to get the last two goats off the bridge. For the second goat he added a line, “then he walked off the bridge.” He gave the word “he” a low intonation, and the next four words successively higher intonation, increasing in speed as he spoke the line. From that moment his

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audience settled into their chairs, and gave more rapt attention. They still giggled at his the ‘dumb’ voice, and other histrionic prosody, but they no longer interrupted his turn.

From the moment he described the second goat’s bridge crossing, Shane was delivering the text within what seemed like a ‘register’ he had created for managing the stress of remembering the material. His voice consistently got a laughing reaction from his peer audience, and he thus continued it throughout the performance.

In this storytelling session, there is a definite point where Shane *more fully* assumed responsibility to his audience for a display of communicative competence. Prior to the moment where he described the second goat’s bridge crossing, his performance was remarkably similar to Ariel’s in that he needed his audience to help him get started. But when he finally remembered the story line, the story was not mimicked. His prosody and much of the wording was developed *during* this telling of the story, and was maintained by virtue of the reaction it caused in his audience. This was a kind of dynamic responsibility Ariel never showed. He transformed the text into something wholly his own, and something unique to that storytelling session. Once Ariel got started she relied on mimicry. Both strategies were appropriate for the circumstances of each performer in his/her respective performance session.

Social risk was not the primary issue for Shane. He did not hesitate to openly confess he could not remember the material. Memory was his primary issue. While he was trying to ‘buy’ time, he found a prosodic device that kept his audience entertained. Shane’s comfort in the role of performer became fuller both by remembering the story and by (accidentally) discovering prosody that made the story entertaining. The fact that he appropriated the “duh” prosody, and transformed it for use when he was *not* in

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memory trouble signals a jump forward in communicative competence. He got in tune with what made his performance seem interesting and worthwhile to an audience.

What Can We Learn About Development from Shane's Performance?

Shane's performance illustrated his discovery of the audience reaction. As he continued to play with his prosody to create a kind of 'dumbness' for the narrator, his audience continued to react with laughter. Arguably, this kind of voice play could quickly get old and cease to have this effect on audiences. But for the moment it worked well. Shane's performance session could have ended badly had his audience not been willing to co-construct the performance with him. Courtney's gentle goads at him during the performance helped him get started and helped him discover the "duh" voice he used in an uninterrupted flow of text.

Shane very much needed the small group context to get his performance underway. He strongly leaned on the silliness that pervaded the performance session, and which I left unchecked because it was not disturbing anyone. Had Shane made the same kind of miscues in the larger group, he would have subjected himself to a much larger-scale mocking and possible sanctions against his silliness (which would have caused general unruliness across the whole audience). He could not have interacted with his audience in the same manner in the large group because he would have been dealing with many more people. The early phase of his small group performance was largely a dialog between him and Courtney (with one interjection from me). The small group context was important for Shane. It was there he discovered how to appropriate his audience's

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reactions into the prosody of his performance. The ‘playgroundness’ of the small group was thus essential to Shane’s ability to move forward with this performance.

Improvisation: Henry’s Transformation of Storytelling

Like Ariel, Henry was shy of performing for the large group. But from the beginning of the year he performed readily in the small group. Where Shane’s performance showed a kind of responsiveness to audience, Henry’s performances showed much more clearly that he was in a dynamic relationship with his texts. Shane’s silly use of giggling and the ‘duh’ voice were ways of handling the social problem of memory. When Henry told stories he seemed ready to take the material and put his own mark on it almost immediately. The data involving Henry’s storytelling helped us understand further the process of transformation toward communicative competence. Shane’s transformation of the ‘duh’ voice was more of an improvisation, but Henry’s transformation of story material helps us understand what competent audiences might be attending to.

I recorded six storytelling sessions involving Henry as the teller (see Table 7 below). Each of these was in a small group. In addition to these sessions, Henry participated frequently as an audience member for other children’s storytelling and for my storytelling in the small group. He also participated in numerous rhyme sessions and oral reading sessions. But it was in storytelling that he seemed most ready to assume responsibility for a display of communicative competence.

His first small group performance was an improvisation on “The Three Billy Goats Gruff.” Improvisation was an important part of how Henry showed breakthrough into performance. What is remarkable is that he started improvising so early. Many of the

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participants were hesitant to try telling at all this early in the year. In Shane's performance of the same text, I heard him stay fairly close to the traditional text. Henry, however, changed the text itself in his improvisation and clearly began to develop a personal idiom for storytelling.

| Date | Oct. 22 | Dec. 3 | Feb.6 | Mar 11 | Mar 23 | Apr. 30 |
|-----------------|---|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Story | Improvised version of "Three Billy Goats Gruff" | Improvised version of "The Three Pigs" | Improvised version of premise for "Barbie Shark" | Improvised story of presidents and shape-shifting shark | Retelling of "Barbie Shark at Meijer" | Co-telling (retelling) of "The Scalded Wolf" |
| Audience | Mike R., Troy, Jim | Margaret, Dani, Jim | Adam, Trey, Jim | Cary, Ariel, Jim | Jim, Adam, Dani, Deanna, Shane | Mike R., Denny, Jim (co-tell with Mike R.) |

Table 7: Chart of Henry's recorded storytelling performances tabulated with date and audience composition.

All of Henry's storytelling involved transformation of material he had acquired as an audience to storytelling. The supply of material was just as important for Henry as for other students. But what he did with the material was different. What made Henry a unique case was that he was willing and able to perform in the small group, but rather unwilling to perform for the large group. Like Ariel, he shied away from volunteer situations and positioned himself away from performance in the large group. But in the small group, he was often the first to volunteer. Social risk was high for him in front of a lot of people, but not with an intimate storytelling group. The playgroundness of the small group helped him generate a history of improvisation in storytelling.

Henry's first storytelling session with "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" started with him volunteering to be first (after I modeled the story material). It was more usual for

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students to fight over who *had* to be first than for them to volunteer. Henry wanted to assume responsibility.

His performance of “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” did not start out as an improvisation (it followed the typical pattern of the goats needing to cross the bridge to get more food), but it became one as he told. To openly improvise he had to have a command of the text and of his personal delivery (i.e., prosody and gesture). The improvisational changes he made were signs of communicative competence.

The first change he made to the traditional text was that the bigger billy goat cross the bridge first to confront the troll, leaving the smaller billy goats behind³³. The second major change he made was that the big billy goat handled the conflict immediately instead of going through any kind of successive crossing of the bridge. The third, and most original change was a sequel—another bridge (listen to sound clip in Figure 17). Every other participant in similar storytelling sessions in October told a story almost identical to the ‘bare bones’ model I offered at the beginning of each session. But immediately after my model, Henry departed from it. The transcript of his telling follows:

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| Henry | Um, Jim, can I do it...first? |
| Jim | Yeah, you can be first if you want to go throw your uh, throw your wrapper away then we'll be ready. |
| Mike R. | I'll be waiting. |
| 8 | |
| seconds | |
| pause | |
| Mike R. | I'm sitting by Jim, too. I'll cross under (the table). |
| Henry | <i>Once upon a time there were three little billy goats. They were eating away and then they all ate it up. He said, we don't have enough food anymore, so the three little billy goats saw a bridge to cross and then a big uh /</i> |
| Troy | laugh/ |
| Henry | <i>big troll came and then he scared 'em and then um then then then</i> |

³³ In the traditional version, the goats cross in succession, beginning with the smallest and ending with the largest.

they all went across...no, the giant billy goat went across and leaves the little guy, the little ones and then they saw the troll. He pops up and then he said, and then the um the billy goat, the biggest billy goat said, "I challenge you for a fight." And then he, and then um/

Mike R. No, that's what the troll said/
 Henry *He went back and he and he um did his, um, his, scraped back his feet and then ran so fast that he shooted him...into space/*

Troy Laugh/
 Henry *and then they went across and they ate and they ate and then there was another bridge/*

Troy gasp/
 Henry *and then they, then there was another two trolls now. That the troll got back, and then um he married ano--a girl troll /*

Troy laugh/
 Henry *Then they try, they both did that and there was this um purt, there was this purty, um, goat and then the big goat married her and then um they all went across and then they um, and they're leading the little ones and, um, then the things popped up/*

Mike R. the trolls/
 Henry *the trolls popped up and then they said/*
 Troy (whispers) It's not supposed to be...
and then the troll said, "I challenge you again, with my wife, um, for a fight." And then, and then um the/

Troy sigh/
 Henry *mother and the father um scraped their feet. And then the other ones, they all came charging, but the big billy goats won, and then they lived happily ever after. The end.*

Figure 17: Sound clip of storytelling session with Henry's improvisation on "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." 3bg.mp3

Not only did Henry improvise on the text, he also actively supplied prosody to guide his audience in constructing meaning. While his text is overall fluent, without lapses in memory, it is when he provided a kind of growl to the word "scared" that we can first gain a sense he assumed responsibility for guiding his audience to *interpret* the performance. Merely taking the floor and putting up a display of text is not enough to

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show a performer has assumed responsibility. Willingness to take the stage is *part* of communicative competence, but it is only the beginning.

It is Henry's attention to one word, "scared," that signaled he was doing more than merely taking the floor. With his voice, he created an 'illustration' for the text, suggesting that the troll surprised and frightened the goats. This kind of illustration is a sign that he felt responsible for what the text meant to his audience.

A moment later in his telling, he used emphatic prosody to repair the text and to key his audience in to the correction. At first he said all the goats went across, but then he corrected himself, saying, "No, the giant billy goat went across and leaves the *little* guy, the *little* ones." He emphasized the word "little" two times by carefully stressing the word and raising its pitch relative to surrounding words. The combination of purposeful stress and pitch provides the necessary contrast (Couper-Kuhlen, 1988) for the correction, showing that the goats are crossing the bridge separately. In this respect Henry showed he was responsible for guiding the audience's understanding. He knew the conflict would involve the biggest goat and the troll, so he made sure the text leading to the conflict was congruent.

A third piece of emphatic prosody in this segment of the story came when Henry marks the segue into his 'sequel.' In the line "they went across and they ate and they ate and then there was *another* bridge" he purposefully stresses the second syllable in the word "another" and simultaneously raises the pitch of that syllable. This emphatic prosody acts as a kind of discourse marker, signaling that there will be more narrative to come. Had more already been expected, he might not have needed to emphasize the word "another." But he already told an 'ending' to the story, and moving into a second phase

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without some kind of signal would have been awkward. He uses prosody to guide his audience to the next phase in the performance.

The last key piece of emphatic prosody comes later in the performance, when Henry has given the troll a wife. When the two trolls return, perhaps for revenge, Henry fills their challenge with far more emphatic prosody than he did with the goat's challenge in the first cycle of the text. The prosody cleanly separates the trolls' character speech from the surrounding narrative and gives it a prosodic quality equal to the term 'challenge' in the text. It is the voice of a tough (if postured) challenge.

Henry's control of performance in the small group manifested itself in terms of improvisation on the text. At the same time, he was forced to create a unique prosody to solve some of the potential problems his improvisation might have caused audiences. He guided his audience to a number of different kinds of meaning: informational meaning (by correcting the text so the little goats stay on one side), textual meaning (by giving voices that show us how to interpret the trolls' characters), and discursive meaning (by guiding the audience into an unusual second phase of the story).

As with Shane and Ariel's performances in the small group, Henry's performance involved a good deal of interaction with audience members. In his telling of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," for example, both Mike and Troy overlapped speech with Henry's performance. Henry responded to their overlapping speech as a kind of dialog, and seemed to adjust his performance accordingly.

Mike's overlapping speech was directive. In two cases he corrected the narrative for Henry. In one case, Henry was grasping unsuccessfully for the word "troll" and had

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substituted it with “thing.” Mike prompted him with the word “troll.” Henry then regressed to speak the lines with the correct word.

Troy’s overlapping speech had a more subtle quality. He laughed, gasped, and even sighed at various moments during the performance. In each case, Henry responded by adjusting his text in some way. For example, Troy’s first laugh was found at the beginning where Henry was also grasping for the word “troll.” Following Troy’s laugh Henry quickly put the right word in and then immediately gave special emphasis to the word “scared.” He not only repaired his text, but he also made sure it was extra emphatic just following his miscue. In the context of overlapping speech, this piece of emphatic prosody served a dual purpose. Saying “scared” in the right way helped his audience interpret the story *and* it sent a signal that he did in fact have enough control to tell the story.

Henry did not manifest this kind of control with all genres in the small group. It was only with storytelling. He had greater difficulty when reading aloud. During one small group session, he read aloud from a book of his choice about cheetahs (listen to sound clip in Figure 18).

Henry: When a cheetah runs at top speed it almost seems to be flying through the air. Hmm. This cheetah is moving so fast that all...all four of its feet are off the ground.

Figure 18: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Henry’s reading of a passage from a personally chosen informational text about cheetahs. cheetah.mp3.

In this segment of recorded reading Henry began the passage reading in ‘prosodic chunks’ and then progressively turned to word calling, so that by the end he was entirely

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word calling. We paused briefly after he finished this passage in the book, and when he started up again he asked me to read the next part before he had even spoken another word of the text. That is, where his performance in storytelling was marked by willingness to take the floor and then by responsibility for communicative competence, his reading aloud was marked by low competence and then abdication of responsibility for the display—turning it over to me.

But his abdication of responsibility was also actually a sign of his *sense of competence*. In temporal terms, he first heard his prosody deteriorate and he then decided he would not further embody the display with his own voice. This suggests that he was at least partly monitoring his own competence by being audience to his own voice. He wanted to hear fluent reading, but could not consistently provide it for this text. Because we were in the small group, Henry had someone to defer to and the performance did not simply dissolve. The small group context remained important for Henry even when he could not fully assume responsibility. Because he was not forced to ‘go on stage’ with a frustrating text he was able to preserve his emergent sense of communicative competence in the small group. Again, sharing responsibility was an important feature of the small group.

What Can We Learn About Development from Henry's Performance?

Henry's improvisations are important because they show a different kind of responsibility to text than do Ariel's and Shane's performances. Where Ariel and Shane's performances highlighted responsiveness to audience and the dialogic interaction between performer and audience, Henry's performance showed these qualities *and* an

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ability to control and manipulate text. Ariel's and Shane's texts were by and large mimicry. Henry actually changed the structure of the text and at the same time used prosody to help create an interpretation of his new text. He also adjusted his text based on audience response, and made overtures to ensure the text made sense to them.

Henry's history of improvisation in the small group (transcripts from several performances are included in the Appendix) suggests another level of sophistication in developing communicative competence in performance. Lord (1960) believed that the virtuoso performer was one who could actively manipulate text³⁴ within constraints. A competent performer when "repeating" text goes beyond mere repetition or mimicry. A good performer must have power over the text and over how it is interpreted. Thus in Hymes' scheme of cultural understanding, a competent performer must be able to repeat and interpret a performance.

Transforming Text across Social Contexts: Becky Breaks Through Into Performance

For a number of performers (including all three discussed above) the quality of "playgroundness" was essential for their breakthrough into performance. But there were others, such as Becky, who were willing to perform in almost any social context. Social risk was not a great issue for performers like Becky. For her, the playfulness of the small group transferred easily to performances in front of a large group. She told the same story, "The Barbie Shark," in three different contexts (small group, group of ten peers, and whole class). She helped us see what students may learn by performing the same text across contexts. Her original public performance is analyzed in detail below. Becky

³⁴ Of course, in traditional culture the kind of improvisation Henry was doing might be frowned upon. But in modern school contexts Henry's improvisation is the kind of originality we hope for in writing.

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transformed the prosody from this original performance for use in future performances, arriving at a kind of conventional way of telling the story (she employed a number of prosodic devices to try to get her audience to laugh).

But willing performers are not always competent performers. Becky had to learn how to manage her text and audience differently than did those performers who put on displays only for the small group. In particular, the dynamic of shared responsibility changed. She could not distribute the performance equally across ten or twenty people as other performers did across two or three people. A performer who is developing communicative competence needs to be able to manage audiences that are larger, less controlled, and perhaps more formal. Small group storytelling was an important curricular structure for many of the students in this story, but the concept of “playgroundness” should be a bridge toward academic performance. The small group should not be the only context where children develop understanding for how to control texts and manage audiences.

Becky’s storytelling will help us define what is important in performing for a larger group. She exhibited control of prosody, which she used when figuring out how the larger group performance needed to be handled. Gaining control of a new situation is an important step in learning how to be a performer. As with all the performers in this chapter, the moment of learning/development that will be examined below is fairly immediate, derived primarily from experiences in one performance session. But because Becky performed this same story at least three times in three different social contexts she demonstrated she had learned to transfer her performance across contexts—something the other performers discussed did not demonstrate.

The story Becky worked with most was “The Barbie Shark.” While Henry reworked the material of this story to improvise his own new stories, most of Becky’s tellings were fairly close to the models I had given.

She first encountered this story in the small group. I told it to her and two other children in the group. I also told the story for the large group on at least two occasions after this (it became a popularly requested story). As an audience member Becky was witness to a number of successful tellings of the same story in different contexts. These experiences as an audience member were where she began to appropriate and transform the performances.

In early March, when I first asked her to try a telling of the story for a larger group (a group of ten children from the class) she jumped at the opportunity. I did not assume her eagerness equaled competence, knowing that eager performers often enjoy the ‘stage’ but do not necessarily know what to do there. But she did walk up to the responsibility of taking the floor by using prosody to communicate with her audience.

Her start was a little bit difficult, because the beginning of the story called for the teller to directly address the audience. The typical way I had modeled the beginning of the story was by introducing the character of the Barbie Shark with the following line

Who here knows anything about the Barbie Shark?

After a brief pause I would supply the answer in metered rhyme:

Well, the Barbie Shark is a shark with a Barbie where its head should go
And its fins in front and its fins behind are parts from a G.I. Joe.

This kind of question pattern repeated itself two more times to establish first the setting and then the magical qualities the character possessed--each time with the teller asking the audience a question and then supplying an answer. Remarkably, Becky did not

merely plow through this part of the story, but tried to use the question/answer pattern. At first she hesitated when the audience did not answer her questions, but then she realized that she was supposed to provide the answers. She figured out how the rhetorical question worked. This was partly a matter of her understanding how to manage the discourse of an audience during a performance. The audience's role in hearing a rhetorical question is to leave the floor to the one who posed the question, and not to assume regular conversational positions. The audience understood this, but for Becky it took some getting used to.

Once she understood the rhetorical question, she still hesitated when remembering the beginning of the story. But she repaired by using emphatic prosody. I have set up the transcription below to emphasize the length of her pauses with respect to her bursts of speech. Words on which she used emphatic prosody are italicized. The last line in the transcript is the one in which she broke through and used prosody simultaneously for its entertainment value and to emphasize the fact that she was no longer struggling with remembering the text.

| <u>Seconds</u> | <u>Speech</u> |
|-----------------------|--|
| 0-2 | Duhhh/
(audience laughter) |
| 2-6 | Does anyone know what the Barbie Shark is? |
| 6-10 | (pause) |
| 10-12 | The Barbie Shark |
| 12-14 | is (pause) |
| 14-19 | a shark with a Barbie head where the sh |
| 19-21 | where where the head's supposed to be |
| 21-25 | (pause) and (pause) |
| 25-31 | and its fins in front and its fins behind are parts from a G.I. Joe. |

She began the performance with a silly 'duh' voice, like Shane had above. Both she and her audience laughed. This move bought her two seconds to think, without

creating “dead air,” holding her place in front of the audience while she came up with some content. Her first burst of content came when she remembered the way the story starts with a question (seconds 2-6), and this was followed by a four second pause. However, this was not treated the same as a memory pause, because she did not fill the time with the same kind of speech she did at the beginning. There is a barely audible “eh” at about 9 seconds, but not the drawn out “duhhh” she used earlier, nor the “um” I heard so frequently from Henry. She was pausing partially to wait for an answer. The “eh” at 9 seconds was quickly followed by her filling in the answer--the first three words of which came easily. But she struggled to come up with the rest of the description. She stretched the word “is” into a whole second and then left another second pause after it (seconds 12-14). This was a memory pause, again holding her place while she came up with content.

She then let out another eight words (seconds 14-19) which were delivered in prosody somewhat less than native. The first thing she did was to stress the word “a” and pronounce it with the phoneme <e>. In a run of native prosody, unless purposefully emphatic, the word “a” would be unstressed and pronounced as a “schwa.” She also made the pitch rise at the end of “shark,” signaling the use of Tune 2. Tune 2 is used when the speaker has said something provisional, and is either leaving the floor open for comment or is going to say something more (Armstrong & Ward: 1931). It was also a way of holding her place until the next words came to her, but this only took her a split second here. The four words “with a Barbie head” came out fairly natively, and were spoken with the more certain Tune 1: i.e., the two words “with a” were unstressed and lower in pitch than the word “shark” which had preceded them, and lower in pitch than the stressed word “Barbie” which followed. The word “Barbie” thus set the tone for the

group of words. The word “head,” in true form for Tune 1, was lower in pitch than the preceding stressed syllable.

In the next group of words (“where the head’s supposed to be”) there were three things that happened. The first was that she faltered on word choice. The “sh” at the end of this group (second 19) may have been the start of the word “shark.” She opted against this word, and put the word “head” in its place in the next group of words. The second thing she did was to start out stressing the word “where.” She did this twice (once at the end of seconds 14-19, and once at the beginning of the 19-21 segment) before she finally collapsed it into an unstressed pair, “where the.” This pair can be spoken essentially as one quick, unstressed syllable, and preceded the first stressed syllable (“head’s”) in the group of words in segment 19-21. She needed to make this move to the unstressed in order to make the rest of the phrase flow properly³⁵. The last thing is that she did not notice that the phrase “where the head’s supposed to be” would not rhyme with the phrase “are parts from a G.I. Joe” at the end of the next line. This is interesting because the latter line she quoted verbatim from my performances.

Between seconds 21 and 25 Becky also paused again for memory, stretching out the word “and” and leaving pauses before and after it. But the last six seconds were a burst of emphatic prosody. She emphasized the word “front” by raising its pitch, and then for the remainder of this part of the text she slipped into a singsong iambic meter. Unlike Henry’s iamb, Becky’s was marked by the way she reset the pitch on every stressed syllable. This is what produced the singsong quality. On top of the iambic meter, she also

³⁵ This can be represented either by illustrating the pitch and stress after the phrase: Where the head’s supposed to go (· ¨ · - · _), or by putting the proper marks after the words in the phrase: Where the · head ¨’s su · ppo - sed to. go_ go _ There are three places where elision or contraction puts together two syllables that would be pronounced clearly separately

added a voice effect to the words “are parts from a G.I. Joe.” The voice was more “raspy”, and was congruent with the content of the words—the “masculine” voice matching “G.I. Joe.” This was Becky’s sound play on a phrase that had become a stock beginning for this story.

Her performance was generally marked by the kind of histrionics that would entertain her audience. The laugh for many children is a premium response. In places where Becky thought laughter was appropriate, she usually led out by laughing herself. Sometimes the audience joined in, and sometimes they didn’t. Among the other things she did with her voice to heighten entertainment in the performance were: (a) pausing for the audience to fill in a repeated phrase, (b) stretching words, (c) raising her pitch to emphasize the importance of particular words, (d) making character voices, (e) making sound effects, and (f) slowing the pace or rhythm to emphasize a resolution.

In the list above I have mixed technical descriptions of sound with descriptions of their functions. These descriptions make more sense with direct examples from Becky’s performance.

One of the simpler things Becky did was to raise her pitch for special contrast. The following group of words is an example:

[Al Gore] jumps up *through* the ceiling, *through* the roof

Both times she said the word “through” it was emphasized by increased pitch and by an increase in loudness (the two often move together). She created a nice rhythmic parallel by emphasizing them both in turn, but she also intensified the meaning of “through,” suggesting “right on through” or “all the way through.” Her emphatic prosody was

usually used to create meaningful contrast and not merely to create a more sensational display (though she was sometimes doing both).

There were two key places where Becky stretched words. One was the word “drool” and the other was “little.”

And they sit down, and *pick* up their menus and Bill Clinton starts to *drooooool*.
(laughs)

Her stretching this word is interesting because it is one of the more sensational funny parts in the story, and Becky gave it emphasis in a way she had not heard me do in my previous tellings. Immediately after this word she started to laugh. The audience did not join her, but this did not seem to make Becky uncomfortable. She continued on. Her initiation of the laughter in this and other places in the text is like a cue to the audience that what she said should be understood as funny.

When she stretched the word “little,” it fell in a passage with three other emphatic words--all sound effects.

[A]nd then Al Gore, he came up a *liiiiitle* crooked, and *Bam!* New hole in the roof. *Bam!* New hole in the ceiling. *Shht!* Straight into the waitress outfit.

The word “little” in this case does not have the sensational connotations of “drool,” but it does bear a good deal of meaning. Becky not only stretched out the vowel, but also raised the pitch to an extreme high and held it there for the duration of the vowel. Because the character’s crooked flight is just enough to make a difference in this story, the emphasis on the word “little” indexes an irony. That is to say, he may have jumped up only a little bit crooked but it was enough that he didn’t fall back through the same holes he made going up. It is significant to the plot of the story that this happens. Becky’s pitch and stretching of the word “little” carries a burden for illocutionary meaning--i.e., that we are

supposed to take the word “little” not in its most literal sense, but rather in the sense of “just enough.”

In the same segment of speech Becky used the words “bam” and “shht” as sound effects. Both of these were borrowed from my performances (which had been going on for several months already). “Bam” (a dictionary word) was borrowed intact, while the quality of the “shht” sound was Becky’s unique interpretation (we have no stable words in the English lexicon for this sound). These sound effects serve an entertaining function, but also serve to index meaning. They take the place of words such as “his body hit the roof as it was coming down and made a great deal of noise as he came through the wood” and “his body fit just right [in the waitress outfit].” In this case the sound effects may help the storyteller walk up to the Gricean maxim of informational quality: making the speech contain enough information to be interpretable but not so much as to be over-informative. These effects were things Becky only had to imitate, not innovations she had made on the text. But still, she preserved them conscientiously (she was very careful throughout the performance not to miss any content), and performed the effects in such a way that she showed she tacitly understood their function.

Another interesting feature of the sound effects words is that they created a kind of rhythm to the phrasing. They might be written to show this as follows:

Bam! New hole in the roof.
Bam! New hole in the ceiling.
Shht! Straight into the waitress outfit.

The prosodic effect is one of increase. The first sound effect is followed by five syllables, the second by six, and the last by eight. The last line is also the active climax of this part of the story.

The two samples of character voices in the next clip also illustrate a connection between prosody and meaning.

Please help us! Bill Clinton's going to eat every single one of us!" And the Barbie

Shark says, *"Mmm, I'll see what I can do."*

The voices for the lobsters are given in a sustained higher pitch—almost a “baby bear” voice. Becky used a very similar voice in telling “The Three Bears,” in “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” and in numerous other situations. While this was a predictable voice for her to slip into, it signals her personal investment in the text—that she was taking responsibility for the display. At one point during our rehearsals for the shark and whale presentations, Aaron made a comment about the voice, saying “Stop talking like a baby—it’s stupid.” This was the only such response she got to that voice, and she continued to use it. The one negative comment did not weigh strongly against her perception of what helped her maintain communicative competence in storytelling.

The second character voice is filled with implication. The words “I’ll see what I can do” are often used in a provisional sense in English, but Becky amplified this sense by using a voice that sounds either tired, bored, apathetic, or some combination of these. It is the attitudinal meaning carried by the prosody in this case. We can imagine someone saying these words enthusiastically and removing much of the provisional sense from the words--i.e., suggesting “Let *me* have a try at it!” But as Becky delivered them we get the sense that the character is offering no guarantees of great effort. She presented a hero who wasn’t going to break his back to get things done, but who also won’t just stay away from trouble. This voice represents Becky’s unique interpretation of the text.

The next passage contains Becky's closing words for this telling.
"He looks at his self, unhooks his self, and walks over to the table and *says*
'What'll it be, Bubba?'"

This is the part of the story in which the phrase "What'll it be, Bubba" is spoken for the second time. In my performances for the whole group I learned to pause here and let the audience fill in the line with me. Becky learned to do this as well. While the character speech in this line probably has a unique sound quality to set it apart from the surrounding speech, the most important thing Becky did at this point was to change the pitch contour of the group of words "and walks over to the table and *says*." With the distinct rising pitch on her last word she brought this incomplete phrase into Tune 2. That means she was either waiting for further comment or was going to say something more herself. Because the syntax was also marked by a gap—"says" being an inappropriate grammatical ending to this group of words—the audience could infer that they were being prompted to participate. The overemphasized pitch accentuated this effect, and the audience did chime in and participate. Interestingly, however, they were not quick to do so. They waited until Becky had spoken the first words and then joined in.

The last segment I will discuss from this telling is for me the most interesting. While most of Becky's emphatic prosody seems to have the effect of intensifying or radically redirecting meaning, the following passage involves is a quite subtle use of slowed rhythm and reduced loudness.

And *down* comes
And down *back* comes *Bill* Clinton right in his seat, picks up his menu and *starts*
to drool again.

This segment starts rather strongly with the words "down" and "back" both being raised in pitch and loudness. But at the end of the segment, Becky slowed down the last four

words and reduced the loudness to accompany the sense that this character's action had come full circle. It is a kind of resolution. There still remains more action in the story's plot, and this resolution provides a quiet contrast for the next piece of punctuated action on the way. While there are other more prominent ways Becky displayed use of rhythm (such as the meter she created with sound effects, and the parallelism of "through the roof, through the ceiling"), this segment shows Becky in control of this part of the text.

This telling of "The Barbie Shark" was in word quite faithful to the modeled performances Becky had attended as an audience. But in prosody, Becky had very much individualized the text for this performance. This represented at once the process of transformation and publication. While parts of Becky's text were identical to those from my performances, she was not merely mimicking. In the process of publication she was simultaneously transforming the text by means of prosody.

Later, when she performed the story in a formal performance for parents and other classes in the school, she used many of these same prosodic devices again. She did not repeat use of the 'duh' voice, because with practice the beginning of her tellings became much more fluid. She discarded prosody that was self-corrective and preserved prosody that indexed meaning, such as the stretching in the line "and Bill Clinton starts to *drooooool*" or "Al Gore, he came up a *liiiiitle* crooked." These were means by which she made the text her own.

What Can We Learn About Development from Becky's Performance?

In transferring and repeating this story across contexts, Becky learned something about the continuity of prosodic effect that the other students could not with their single

performances of a particular story. The prosody she used to get the audience to laugh at the story in her original telling is the prosody she leaned on in subsequent performances. The audience continued to laugh as she predicted they would. So while she was transforming and publishing the text she was also engaged in the process of conventionalizing the prosody for this story.

By the end of the year there were particular moments in this story the class could repeat chorally with the same prosody as the teller (the most prominent was “What’ll it be, Bubba” at the end of the story). This kind of choral response reminded me of the way people were able to chime in chorally at conventional moments in “The Three Bears” (such as “Someone’s been sleeping in *my* bed”). Becky had moved her knowledge from public/individual space (where she *appropriated* the texts from my models) to individual/private space (*transforming* it as she published it) through social/individual space (*publishing* it) and finally into public/social space (generating somewhat *conventional* usage for prosody). In an emergent way, all these phases were presaged in Becky’s first public telling of the story. In each telling she had to transform and re-publish the text, and the process of conventionalization was like a kind of refining process where she decided what emphatic prosody to keep using.

The small group was a place where Becky discovered and appropriated texts she later used across social contexts. Because social risk was not as strong an issue for Becky, the playful element of the small group emerged most strongly in her attempts to generate laughter in the large group. Because she first encountered the texts and the laughter in the small group, she was able to move into the larger group with a less formal communicative stance than I normally observed for these children. More often than not,

children performing an original performance for the large group spoke with a recitation voice that merely demonstrated memorization. Becky went beyond this and tried to communicate comedy to her audience.

“Playgroundness” is an Occasion for Development of Responsibility in Performance.

The small group was arranged to invite the spirit of the playground into the classroom. Qualities of the performances that emerged in the small group met our expectations for playfulness. Among the more prominent aspects of the small group was that children felt they could *share with their audience* the responsibility for composing a verbal display. Also, each student showed us development from a different position on a continuum of responsibility—i.e., each student developed from a different ‘starting point.’ Finally, each example above shows students transforming familiar story material in some way—by mimicry, by prosody, and by improvisation.

Another playground-like feature of the small group was its informality, and that the children had a voice in choosing participants. This helped children minimize social risk by actively controlling the makeup of the group, choosing those partners who would pose the least social risk for them when performing.

In the cases examined, children used prosody to manage communication. They used prosody for self-correction and repairs to the discourse of performances. But they also used prosody to guide audiences in interpreting verbal displays. This latter use of prosody was enacted with differing degrees of individual responsibility across the four performers examined.

Ariel demonstrated mimicry. Shane and Becky both moved beyond mimicry by providing their own unique emphatic prosody during the telling of the story (while keeping the text fairly close to models they had heard before). Becky used prosody to transform the material of “The Barbie Shark” story for use across contexts, showing a degree of responsibility in the act of transfer. Finally, Henry used prosody in the same ways all of the other children did, but he also showed a high degree of individual responsibility by actively transforming textual structures in improvisational performance. For each of these children, the degree of responsibility they showed represented individual growth and development.

No individual child could show us development in all ways at once. It was important for us to observe a number of children over time so that we could discover a continuum of responsibility from mimicry to ownership to improvisation. The informality and playfulness of the small group helped each of these children grow and develop starting from the point of actual development. That is, the intervention of the small group allowed us to ‘boost’ what it was children were already willing to do.

The ideas of shared responsibility, of a continuum of responsibility, and of transforming familiar material are basic concepts in the development of communicative competence in performance. The playgroundness of the small group helped us discover these things because in the small group I saw children do things they either would not do or had not done before. The small group storytelling session was a special occasion for performative speech.

But Becky’s example above shows us that the small group was not everything. Her great stride in development involved transferring the story she had learned toward

performance in the large group. The large group context was significantly more formal and classroom-like than was the small group. While Mrs. McWilliams' general friendliness and support of the children continued in the large group, a number of children were hesitant to perform there. Becky was not. The aspect of development Becky demonstrated for us—transferring performance across social contexts—was much more radical for students who did not like the prospect of performing for the large group.

In the next chapter I will examine a riddle performance enacted by Henry in an extremely formal context. His riddle performance is an important case example because he showed a complete transformation from unwillingness to perform in the large group to performing with a high degree of individual responsibility. The categories and processes of his development in the formal, large group context complete the invitation of playgroundness into the classroom. As an academic goal, we eventually want children to become better at performing in formal school contexts as well as informal playful ones.

CHAPTER 5

Discovering Authentic Communication in a Formal Performance Context: Henry Learns to Use Prosody in Performance

To be seen as competent, performers often must learn versatility. Verbal performance is like other performing arts in this respect. For example, if piano students are limited to only one piece, or can only play well at home, their competence would not be judged as highly as that of the performer who performs a range of pieces in a public recital. In this chapter I will examine Henry's acquisition of versatility in his performance repertoire.

Henry's high point of competence involved his telling improvised stories in the small group. The formal, large group context intimidated Henry for most of the year. Social risk was high for him in this situation. He never volunteered to perform in the large group (although he did contribute in discussions about performance), and he rarely took a solo stage even by assignment. But late in February, he took on the task of performing a riddle during a formal science presentation on sharks and whales (to be rehearsed through March, and performed the first week in April). During the formal performance he demonstrated a new ability to perform in a formal large group *and* ability to manage his audience via prosody.

Performing the riddle in the large group involved progress into unexplored public space. To make this move successfully, Henry had to learn both the discourse of the new genre and the discourse of the formal large audience. Within this new discursive context, Henry had to figure out how to manage his communication with the audience. He did

this, as he did in storytelling, by direct communication with audience members and by the prosody he used when delivering his text.

In terms of cognitive development, cycling verbal performance into a new kind of public space demanded a new *transformation* of Henry's knowledge about performance. Where he had become comfortable cycling his knowledge of performance into the public space of the small group, he had to discover the pleasure of performing competently in the large group. He discovered this when he broke through into performance during his presentations of the riddle.

Henry went from avoiding large group performance to being able to manage a large audience and his text at once. We can illustrate the transition from competence in the playground-like small group to competence in a formal large group presentation through his riddle performance. This single day, with its history, can help us create a picture of a performer learning to traverse the boundaries between formal and informal performance.

Henry's assumption of responsibility for his riddle performance in the large group was important because it showed him moving into a more disciplined performance context. Of course, the playgroundness of his storytelling was not something I sought to discard. For Henry as for other children, informal playful contexts will always be fundamental aspects of the invitation to use existing and emergent verbal competence in the classroom. But as Dewey (1933) has said, "[T]he real problem of intellectual education is the *transformation* of more or less casual curiosity and sporadic suggestion into attitudes of alert, cautious, and thorough inquiry" (p. 181). Fostering playground competence does not mean ignoring the realities of performance in a disciplined

academic environment. The formal verbal presentation is a test of competence and also represents an academically important context for displaying disciplinary knowledge.

Henry showed us that growth did not occur in terms of skill with prosody alone. His development involved primarily his awareness of audience issues, of which prosodic control was a sign that he had solved the social problem of how to deal with a large audience in a formal context. Within one day he became willing to use his voice to demonstrate his communicative competence in this new setting.

Henry also showed us the important role of a supportive performance context. He actively distributed responsibility for his performance across teachers, audience, and self. In the process he seemed to create a 'safe' context where he could take social risks. Henry had never performed for a large group without being assigned to do so, and had always liquidated his assignment as quickly as possible. This presentation of the riddle was also assigned, but his manner of presentation became much more responsible than I was used to seeing from him in the large group. His performance demonstrated part of the "gradual release of responsibility" model of the teacher-learner relationship (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). That is, he showed us gradual *assumption* of responsibility from the perspective of the learner. Even if we as teachers gradually diminish our guidance of performance situations, we cannot always count on students to move toward independence. Henry took the initiative to move toward independence.

There were three phases of development in Henry's performance of this riddle. The first involved Henry's frequent discussion during rehearsals of his own competence and of the audience dynamic. During this time Henry demonstrated active preparation for the formal event. The second phase involved Henry actively managing the risk/safety

dynamic by arranging for a 'plant' to guess the riddle in his first performance (in the morning). This arrangement also demonstrated his consciousness of audience as one of the main issues he had to resolve to gain competence. The third phase involved Henry's movement toward independence from the end of the morning performance into the afternoon performance session. His arrangement for a 'plant' was a way of sharing responsibility for competence. In the afternoon session he showed a marked departure from this kind of dependence. Each of these phases shows Henry at a different point in solving the problem of how to perform in the formal large group context.

Henry Overtly Considers the Meaning of the Audience to the Performer

The concept of 'authenticity' in communication is among the strongest results of examining Henry's talk about performance. Henry spoke openly and independently about performance and audience during rehearsals for the shark and whale presentation. I have transcribed three instances of his discussions. Each instance gives us a sense that Henry thought more about performance than he may have been getting a chance to verbalize. Henry spontaneously initiated these discussions during rehearsal with the focus group. The rehearsals seemed to have little effect on the way Henry delivered the riddle. More so they seemed to be opportunities for him to reflect on communicative competence. Henry insisted on getting his thoughts about performance out in the open, often calling my name repeatedly until I let him speak his mind. His remarks reflected a desire on his part to express his emerging understanding of the social aspect of performance.

The first discussion of performance Henry actively pursued was in a rehearsal on March 18. In this discussion he evaluated his own competence, expressed his desire to

appear competent for an audience, and showed his fear of evaluation by older audiences.

He also discussed his memory of having been audience to Mrs. McWilliams' presentation

when he was a first grader. Below I have transcribed the part Henry rehearsed in this

session:

Hi, my name is Henry. The great hammerhead has a keen sense of smell, and is an impressive predator. Its diet is mostly fish, like sardines, herring, tarpon, jacks, and grouper. But it prefers to eat stingrays, skates, and other sharks. The great hammerhead uses the side of its head to hammer a ray to the bottom so it can't get away. Then it turns its head to the side and chomps a big bite out of the ray's wing. It keeps going around and around and taking more bites until the ray is totally gone. The great hammerhead gets eaten by great whites, killer whales, and tiger sharks. If a bunch of dolphins fight against a hammerhead they can kill it by butting behind its gills with their noses.

When Henry practiced performing this part I stopped to give him feedback. He used the feedback conversation to actively explore the state of his performance:

00 Jim I think that you had learned your part in the middle there much better, and I still think you would have it memorized a lot better if you would do things with your hands (numbering off fingers as a mnemonic for speaking a list of items) like we do. Uh, the part where you had to memorize the fish, you memorized it really quick as soon as you did it with your thumbs.

16 Henry Then I was like, then I didn't have that , um, this part, these lines I was doing it real well. Where the hammerhead uses the side of its head on a ray.

Where I wanted to critique his delivery of lists, he chose to emphasize that he had improved the delivery of another segment of his part. He was actively thinking about his

competence in terms of *how* he spoke the lines, not just in whether he had memorized them.

By discussing the idea that he could be competent with one segment and less competent with another segment in the same passage of text he demonstrated a sense that there were different informational blocks in the text. First there was a section formatted as a list where he named the hammerhead's prey. Second there was a section where he explained how the hammerhead eats rays. Third there was a section where he described the main predators of hammerheads. His discussion of his improved performance showed his own sense of competence.

The next comment he made was oriented toward how audiences would perceive him. I coached Henry to use physical gestures to help him visualize the chunk of information in which he explained the hammerhead eating a ray. But Henry was shy about using his body in this manner even in rehearsal. He was afraid over-acting would make him look silly:

- 31 Jim Yeah, you're doing that really well, and I think you'd do it even
 twice as good if you'd, like, when you say 'it uses the side of its
 head' you would do like that (pushing side of head into open palm
 of hand) and then//
- 40 Henry But I don't want them to laugh at me.

Henry's concern was that audiences would see such histrionics as odd, and that this would be a reflection on his person. He was concerned about making friends, but his shyness did not paralyze him. He wanted to learn to represent himself *well* in the presentation, and wanted his actions to send positive messages about himself as a person as well as to deliver information. He did not abdicate responsibility for the display. He wanted to find a balance that would leave him looking good to his peer audience.

Performance in front of peers was not viewed as a simple matter of acting. All the members of the focus group seemed to perceive any role they took in the presentation as a highly personal matter. I asked the group to discuss Henry's part being read two ways—with and without what I believed were appropriate prosody and gestures. Their responses showed they understood the way a performance is enacted is a reflection on the performer's self.

I modeled a performance of Henry's part without emphatic prosody first, mocking a recitation voice as I read the part. Then I presented a model with prosodic emphasis, such as: (a) pausing between "Hi, my name is Henry" and "The hammerhead shark has"; (b) marking the list of fish with pauses and high-pitched initial stresses; (c) raising my pitch on the word "prefers" to contrast the general list of the shark's prey with the list of its preferred foods; (d) raising my pitch on the word "hammer" when describing how the shark holds a ray to the bottom of the ocean—to emphasize the violent motion.

I asked what the difference was between the different ways I had performed these lines. Shane chose the word "boring" to describe the first recitation—the one with 'recitation' voice.

Shane: The first one sounded really...it sounded boring, and didn't in the second one."

Shane's sense for what is boring is a social evaluation, pointing to the effect of a way of performing on an audience.

I asked the group members in turn whether they wanted to perform the boring way. They all said no (except Adam, who was poking fun at the whole conversation, "I want to be boring!"). In the context of this talk about being boring for an audience I then

asked again what the difference was between the performance with emphatic prosody and the one without:

- 4:48 Jim Okay, what was exactly the difference, though? In both of the parts I did all of the words, right?
- 4:50 Becky I know!
- 4:56 Jim So just knowing all the words//
- 4:56 Becky I know!//
- 4:57 Jim Isn't the only thing. Becky?
- 5:02 Becky It's because of, like, if you're just standing like this (hands to side, standing still), and stuff, then they'll be like, "oh, you're not excited, you're not fun—you don't want to go on adventures and stuff. And if you're, like, moving around a lot, and like, doing what Henry does a lot, they'll know you're excited, and you like to go on adventures, you have a lot of friends, you know...

Becky connected boringness to self-perception. Deanna also connected her vision of successful performance to friendships in the school. She responded to the issue of being boring as follows:

- 4:26 Deanna I don't want to be boring. I want to have a lot of friends, and not be boring. Because *I* don't like being bored.

Both Becky and Deanna explained the recursive effect verbal performance can have on one's sense of self. When I pursued Shane's use of the term 'boring' they linked boringness with a kind of social standing with peers in the school. At the same time, Henry viewed over-acting as a potential reason for children to make fun of him. Between them all they recognized verbal performance involves social risks and an investment of self.

Investment in the performance—breakthrough—is risky because the way the text is enacted reflects on performers—their sense of authority over and ownership in the text. This is much the same concern Hymes (1975) experienced with his Native American informant, who felt reticent about speaking the Wishram language during storytelling.

The “physical” and conceptual change to the Wishram language meant implicating himself as co-author of the text—a part owner. For various reasons he mostly avoided this responsibility. So it was with Henry, who wanted to maintain both his everyday self and his performer persona, but without the performing persona impinging on his everyday self. As I continued to insist Henry incorporate dramatic gestures, he continued to resist and negotiate. Above I mentioned how he “talked me down” to a less flamboyant gesture to represent the hammerhead pushing a ray to the ocean floor.

Another conversation he initiated was about the anticipated age difference between him and the potential audience. He wondered about this, and the other students in the focus group elaborated on the concern.

- 47 Henry Jim, do you know if its going to be fifth graders? Fourth graders [in our presentation]? (as Henry hails Jim, Jim is trying to get other group members re-seated)
- 56 Jim No, I don’t know.
- 1:01 Henry Does the teacher, does Mrs. McWilliams know?
- 1:04 Jim She probably does know, so we can probably find out.

Some of the performers in the focus group expressed a sense that the older children were not as desirable an audience. Henry not only asked about the audience’s age, but also found an opening to share his thoughts about having been in the audience a year ago as a first grader:

- 5:24 Henry I heard it’s going to be fifth graders, like Mrs. Hunter’s room.
- 5:30 Jim Yeah, we’ll see who it’s going to be. I don’t think it’s//
- 5:33 Deanna I want to be with the kindygartners//
- 5:35 Jim I don’t think they ever did fifth graders before. I think the highest they did//
- 5:38 Henry They did first graders//
- 5:38 Jim First graders? //
- 5:40 Henry Because last year I went to that, and I was like “what are they talking about?” and it was like they were saying “blue whale” and “great white” and I’m like...//
- 5:49 Jim And you didn’t know anything they were saying?

- 5:50 Henry I'm like, what are you talking about. And I was just sitting there, and at the end I was having a good time because we got gummies (candy).
- 6:01 Jim Uh huh. So when they did it last year you were kind of bored? You didn't understand what they were doing?
- 6:07 Henry Yeah (that's right).
- 6:09 Jim So this, our presentation, we want to do it differently so that the little children like the first graders aren't bored.

The conversation came full circle. Henry started with concerns about fifth graders, and a good portion of his conversation centered on the age of the audience. While the performers never elaborated on why age was relevant, it takes little effort to imagine why second graders would be fearful about performing for older children. From a purely practical perspective, older children are likely to be more evaluative of younger children and may even have a better sense of competence. Pushing second-graders into an audience of fifth graders would involve a higher risk.

It was in this conversation about age that Henry embedded crucial information about his experience as an audience to these science presentations. He gave a short narrative about his participation as an audience member a year earlier. He related his confusion about the content of the presentation, noting the most memorable part of it was the candy served afterward. He agreed with my interpretation that he had not understood what the performance was about. Henry imparted a sense that performances like the one he was rehearsing could be confusing and boring to audiences. He was concerned that he would be confusing and boring.

He remembered being in the audience. It is important to note that *remembering* being in the audience demands a kind of narrative construction of the past event. Henry had to recall this experience over a year later and project it onto the upcoming performance. His prior participation as an audience in this same kind of performance

session may have been a part of how he organized his sense for what he should do as a performer this year. In the same conversation where he discussed his own competence and his fear of audiences making fun of him, he discussed how his past audience role was influencing his beliefs about audiences.

The important thing about Henry's concerns is that he verbalized them. He showed a tendency to initiate and pursue discussions about himself as a performer and about his potential audiences. This pattern of introspection repeated itself eight days later. On March 24, Henry forcefully injected another conversation about performance into a rehearsal. Because he was interjecting his comments while I was trying to direct Adam's part in the rehearsal my responses did not lead to more elaborate comments. Still, Henry bursts forth with a patch of talk about competence and audience that shows how important this kind of overt talk was for him.

| | | |
|------|--------|---|
| 4:01 | Henry | Jim...Jim! |
| 4:06 | Jim | Shhh |
| 4:07 | Adam | (recites his riddle, "I am a comb for the sea") |
| 4:20 | Jim | Okay, great...now, sit down... |
| 4:21 | Adam | (turns to go sit) |
| 4:22 | Henry | Jim! (Jim looks) |
| 4:25 | Henry | Um, Jim, when are we gonna do it to the classroom? |
| | Jim | Tomorrow. |
| | Henry | Tomorrow? |
| | Jim | Tomorrow, we're doing it for the whole class. |
| | Deanna | Yay! |
| 4:31 | Henry | I think that... |
| | Jim | The, the one that Adam just did, "I am a comb for the sea" [continues by giving suggestion for Adam's performance]. |
| 4:53 | Henry | Do...Jim! Remember when we // |
| | Jim | and then it'll be hard for them to guess, but it'll be funny [still to Adam]// |
| | Henry | did it for Tiffany's group? |
| | Jim | uh huh. |
| | Henry | I did it real good |
| | Jim | yep |
| | Henry | I think it was because I had an audience |

Jim I think it *is* better to do it in front of an audience, isn't it?
Henry 'Cause I did it way better than *any* /
Jim //and all the things like the questions and the riddles and things will
 be better for an audience, too...okay, Adam...

Here Henry explicitly noted his belief that it made a difference to him to have an authentic peer audience for whom he could perform. We had rehearsed in front of a small group of six once before, and we were on the verge of a dress rehearsal.

In parallel to the earlier discussion he talked about the quality of his own performance ("Cause I did it way better than *any* [emphasis reflects his own prosody]). He also showed some mild concern about the prospect of an authentic audience in the future ("[W]hen are we gonna do it to the classroom?...Tomorrow?"). Lastly, he reflected about the having performed for an audience in the recent past ("Remember when we...did it for Tiffany's group?"). The difference in this case is that his memory is of a past *performance* and not a past audienceship. Still, his talk suggests he was hoping to project his understanding of a past performance onto the upcoming dress rehearsal.

Putting these two discussions together shows that Henry was using the rehearsal time in more than one way to prepare for the performance. He did not simply practice his parts, but took a number of chances to explicitly discuss his potential audiences and himself as a performer. He was a leader in all such discussions, and pursued discussion of the audience relationship more doggedly than any other performers in the focus group. He had two opportunities to perform for authentic peer audiences during rehearsal time. He considered these when thinking about the formal performance. He had his memory of being an audience for this kind of formal presentation. He considered this as well. He also considered the potential effect of his prosody and gestures on audiences. If we may

assume his concerned discussion reflects internal thought about the same issues, then by the time of the performance Henry was well rehearsed in thinking about his performance as a social phenomenon.

Henry Shows Emerging Communicative Competence in a Formal Context

When Henry performed his riddle on April 2, he showed an ability to adjust his performance based on an understanding of audience. In the morning session he showed reticence to assume responsibility, but he made an interesting recovery with help from teachers and audience members. By the afternoon session he made a move toward independent competence at reciting the riddle. It is one thing to know that audiences make demands on performers. It is another to be able to change the quality of a text's delivery for an audience. In the afternoon session Henry demonstrated this responsibility.

The text of the riddle follows:

This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side.
They climb on in, find a seat,
And take it for a ride
(Answer: Bus)

During the two performance sessions Henry demonstrated two other important aspects of his development: the distribution of responsibility across involved parties, and the need for an authentic communicative context.

Henry's riddle was set as the fifth text in the presentation, and the first of three riddles. The first session was in the morning. I got the group in their positions, and the first audience came to the door. It was a third-grade class including a handful of Mrs. McWilliams' former students. As they sat down, she explained quickly that the audience

must treat the performers respectfully, and asked them to tell her what it meant to show respect. The children generated all their own answers, including “listen quietly” and other polite answers. Mrs. McWilliams was careful to mention that it was inappropriate to laugh at someone who forgot a line or misspoke, and generally set up expectations to protect the time-investment we had made in preparing the presentation. She wanted the performers to have as safe a context as possible.

When it came time for Henry to recite his riddle, he was the first performer after a transition from poem recitation to riddling. Adam marked the transition by setting up a card that read “Riddles” and by saying “Now we’re going to tell some riddles.” As Adam was finishing these words Henry was already standing to recite his riddle. He recited it quickly and almost inaudibly (listen to sound clip in Figure 19). Mrs. McWilliams asked him to repeat the recitation for the sake of audibility.

| <u>Clock</u> | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Speech</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 0:00 | Henry | This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, find a seat
And take it for a ride
Can anyone tell me the answer?
(two or three hands go up to bid for answer) |
| 0:12 | Mrs. McWilliams | You’re going to have to say it again, honey, I think
someone coughed. Say it again, loud. |
| 0:18 | Henry | This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, find a seat
And take it for a ride.
Can anyone tell me the answer?
(multiple hands go up to bid for answering turn) |
| 0:25 | Audience member | A school bus? |
| | Mrs. McWilliams | What’d he say? |
| | Jim | A school bus |
| | Other audience | A school bus |
| | Henry | (sits down) |

Figure 19: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Morning Recitation 1. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. Henry's first recitation of the "Whale/Bus" riddle in the morning performance session. riddle1rec1.mp3.

Henry's first recitation was barely audible. In the transcript Mrs. McWilliams mentions a distracting cough, and when listening to the sound clip we can hear that this small cough almost entirely overpowered Henry's voice and several words of the riddle text. Even with what sounds like a poor recording Henry spoke with low loudness³⁶. Through this first recitation he became progressively less loud and also progressively *faster*—eliding the last words into one fairly unintelligible mass. The sonogram below (Figure 20) shows that his speech was generally unintelligible from the background noise. The only distinguishable phonetic act is the punctuated moment on the right from the audience member's cough.



Figure 20: Sonogram of Morning Recitation 1. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 5.965 seconds.

This gave me the impression that he was hurrying to get through with his part so he could sit down—which he quickly moved to do once he had gotten an answer. But

³⁶ While "low loudness" may seem like awkward wording, loudness is the correct audiological term (see (Martin, 1991). Volume, the more common word, connotes to audiologists an amalgamation of sound elements. Loudness was technically the element of sound that Henry was adjusting.

because someone had partially blocked out his voice with a cough, Mrs. McWilliams was able to “repair” (Cazden, 1988) for Henry, asking him to repeat the performance because of the cough. But his voice would have been barely audible even without the cough.

His second recitation was louder, but he still did not take great care to use his voice to set apart each line in the riddle as a clue (see sonogram in Figure 21, and listen to sound clip in Figure 22). Immediately after this second recitation and after less than thirty seconds on stage, the riddle was promptly answered and Henry immediately sat down.



Figure 21: Sonogram of Morning Recitation 2. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 6.125 seconds.

Figure 22: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Morning Recitation 2. Henry's riddle. 4/2/98. riddle1rec2.mp3.

What confused me about this performance was that I knew how long it had taken the children to guess the riddle earlier in the year (more than twenty minutes). Yet an audience member had guessed the riddle immediately. I expected there would be a lengthy process with some hints before anyone would get the answer—if they got it at all. I followed up to find out how he got it so quickly by calling on Henry. I prompted him to ask the audience member how he had known the answer.

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| 32 | Jim
Henry
Audience member | Henry...Henry, ask him how he knew
(stands up again) How did you know?
Uh, you told me on the bus. |
| 41 | Mrs. McWilliams
Becky | (adults laugh loudly)
Henry, say the poem again, say it one more time
What'd he say? (meaning she didn't know what had prompted the laughter) |

Henry had a 'plant' in the audience—someone who already knew the answer! Beyond this fact it dawned on the adults present that the very place Henry had revealed the answer to his guesser was the same as the answer to the riddle—the bus! I laughed out loud, as did Mrs. McWilliams and other adults in the classroom. A professional author could hardly have better written such a literary coincidence (for Henry's full morning session, listen to sound clip in Figure 23).

Figure 23: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Henry's full morning session of the "Whale/Bus" riddle, including all three recitations. riddle.mp3.

But there was still another riddle. Why had Henry called on someone to whom he had given the answer just that morning? There are always multiple answers in questions of motive, but the data converge in a direction that helps us understand. For sixteen consecutive days Henry had performed the riddle in rehearsal for audiences who knew the answer—usually for me. He had received explicit instruction that I would not be participating in this formal performance, however, and that he would have to deal with a fresh audience. It would make sense for him to ensure someone else would be there in a supportive position on his big day. That is, the quick guess to the riddle may have been an act of collusion between Henry and his confederate. This gives us our first sense that Henry was distributing responsibility for competence across other people. Where I had

released some of my responsibility for the performance, Henry still brought in someone on whom he could depend to make the performance run smoothly.

Another possible answer is that Henry had told his friend by chance, or out of excitement on the bus that morning. Then in nervousness during the performance he picked out a friendly face from the crowd, without thinking this was contrary to the discourse of riddling. This would not have been strange, because he had been reciting the riddle for more than three weeks to me and the focus group. All of us already knew the answer to the riddle as well.

With either interpretation, we still have to deal with the fact that Henry's prosody—particularly loudness—suggests he was nervous or shy about his performance. His quick retreat to his seat suggests he wanted to have the performance over and done with. The second recitation showed a marked improvement in loudness, and thus in the audience's ability to understand the text. Far more students raised their hands after the second recitation than the first.

In true mimicry, some of the children joined the adults in laughing at the coincidental answer the guesser gave Henry. Becky, however, missed hearing when Henry's guesser said, "You told me on the bus." In reviewing the videotape I noticed Becky in the lower left corner of the frame turning her head to Deanna to ask what had been said. Becky's wonder is a fascinating window on what these young performers saw as competence. In this case it was important for Becky to find out what got the big laugh.

This desire to understand the big laugh extended further as Henry recited the riddle a third time. He did this again because Mrs. McWilliams asked him to repeat the riddle, just to make sure everyone had heard. In this recitation Henry showed the best

control of prosody of the three recitations in the morning session (listen to sound clip in Figure 24). Each section of the sonogram (see Figure 25) has clear peaks that distinguish Henry's words from the surrounding noise.

Figure 24: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Morning Recitation 3. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. riddle1rec3.mp3.



Figure 25: Sonogram of Morning Recitation 3. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 6.139 seconds.

The strange thing about this third recitation was that with the answer already out in the open Henry still had a number of people raise their hands to guess. He got a perplexed look on his face and called on Harald.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Henry | This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, find a seat
And take it for a ride. |
| Harald | (raising hand, only bid for answer) |
| Henry | (gives hand gesture to accept bid) |
| Harald | Uh, school bus? |
| Henry | (chuckles and smiles, along with chuckles from other audience members, Henry then nods)
How did you know? (quietly)
(pause) |
| Harald | ...um, uh...you told me on the school bus?
(group chuckles) |
| Mrs. McWilliams | Okay, (chuckle), next riddle |

Harald and Henry actually mimicked the exact “guessing” routine from earlier in the session. If Harald was mimicking the previous answer when he answered the riddle, Henry was drawn in by it and continued the exchange until the entire routine had been duplicated. After this performance most of the *children* in the audience laughed loudly, but the adults did not. Mrs. McWilliams chuckled briefly and quickly ushered the performance forward into the next turn. This was a key moment in describing Henry’s interaction with an audience. Why would they enact this second performance so carefully?

One reason might have been because so much emphasis was placed on being audible. The third recitation was Henry’s most audible version of the riddle. With Mrs. McWilliams and the audience voicing general concerns about audibility –audience members interjected comments like “Say it again, loud” and “What’d he say?”—Harald may have been joining in with Henry to make the *entire* repeated performance audible, including the answering routine. Where we can barely hear a word of what went on in the first exchange, Harald and Henry make the entire exchange quite audible for everyone in the audience. The pace was slower, the loudness higher, and the intonation more emphatic.

Another interpretation of why Henry and Harald pursued the whole routine all the way through follows from the big laugh that came from the original answer. Harald and Henry were both witness to the performance getting a huge belly laugh from several adults. They might have re-enacted the entire performance to see if they could figure out how they got this response. Naturally, this second performance fell on its face with the adults, but got laughter from the children, who were listening to the same text the adults

had laughed at only moments earlier. This entire section is a fascinating piece of mimicry. At the heart of the children's mimicry is a kind of problem solving. They were trying—by experience—to figure out what gets the laugh.

Becky overtly asked Deanna to repeat what had been said when the first laugh came, showing she wanted to know what had gotten this response. It seems Harald and Henry wanted to know, too, because they re-performed the entire sequence. This is well in keeping with Brady's (1984) understanding that children will explore a specific kind of performance by *participating* in performance events rather than overtly being taught about them. It was important for the children listening to the riddle to tacitly "get the joke" without having to ask why it was funny. The third recitation was a kind of mock-up to see if the same response would happen twice. There is no evidence that the children actually took the mimicry far enough to divine the meaning of the joke, but there was a joint contribution on the part of all the children in the audience to understand where the laughter had come from because they mimicked the audience laughter.

Revisiting the prosody for each of the three recitations in this performance session, we can see that the changes in prosody follow shifts in the quality of the performance context. In the sonogram of Henry's first morning recitation (see Figure 20 above), we can see Henry's voice almost blend into the broad band of background noise. For that recitation, we saw Henry quickly perform and then retreat back to his seat, showing the most shyness of the three recitations. In the sonogram of his second morning recitation (Figure 21) we can see each word start to define itself. This represents the recitation in which Mrs. McWilliams had asked Henry to re-perform so people could hear him. He responded directly to a request for loudness with a clearer recitation. By the third

recitation (see sonogram in Figure 25), each phrase in the riddle had its own distinct identity. The vocal quality of individual words shows up visually, standing out from the general noise of the group moving their feet, shuffling their hands, whispering, etc.

Mrs. McWilliams requested the third recitation as she had the second, but Henry showed signs of growing comfort in front of the audience after the second recitation had gotten such a hearty laugh. Henry's prosody across these three recitations showed a growing sense for an appropriate relationship between loudness, pitch, and stress when reciting for a large group of people. He was influenced by the laughter of the audience after the second recitation, and changed his performance to supply an audible, comprehensible display in the third recitation. He and Harald together made sure the entire performance was reiterated in this emphatic manner.

It was not only prosody that showed Henry's progression toward responsible performance, it was his distribution of responsibility across participants. Mrs. McWilliams offered Henry prompts that kept him from simply letting a less competent performance stand. She thus shared the responsibility. Henry's audience 'plant' who answered the riddle was also sharing responsibility for the performance. Finally, Harald led out in an exploration of why the original answer to the riddle was so funny, and Henry played a responsible part in this mimicry.

The entire morning performance was a kind of rehearsal. Henry performed the riddle three times in front of a high-risk audience without engaging in an authentic riddler/guesser relationship. He assumed some responsibility for communicative competence, but he was still very much relying on this performance session as a kind of practice. He needed this, because the rehearsal sessions had given him little sense for

what this kind of audience might be like. He needed a fresh, authentic audience for a trial run of the riddle.

Henry Independently Transfers Communicative Competence to a New Performance

With a kind of scaffolded increase in competence during the morning performance session, Henry entered the afternoon performance session with higher confidence. In the afternoon session Henry showed a desire to test the riddle on an authentic audience of guessers. The general dimensions along which we saw Henry progress during the morning session stayed constant, with qualitative changes in how they appeared. Prosody was still an important part of demonstrating his communicative competence, but his use of emphatic prosody was unprompted in the afternoon. He also showed a qualitative change in how he distributed responsibility for the performance—becoming more independent. In addition, he demonstrated in a different way his need for an fresh, authentic audience. Where in the morning session he used the authentic audience to create a kind of staged rehearsal with his friend as the designated answerer, he seemed to want to preserve his control of the more improvisational audience in the afternoon.

In logistical arrangement the afternoon session was nearly identical to the morning session. The visiting audience was from a third grade class, and there were about twenty-five of them. There was an assortment of adults in the room as well. Yet the afternoon session from the beginning was an entirely different event from the morning session. The audience set a responsive tone when several members audibly said “cool” after Adam’s introduction of the riddling portion of the session. Henry himself treated

this performance event differently from the start. In his physical approach he took more time (several seconds as opposed to his overlap with Adam's introduction in the morning. He also confidently swung his arms, casually tucked up inside his sweatshirt sleeves, as he came to stand in front of the audience. He was not in a hurry this time. His manner was patient and confident.

| <u>Clock</u> | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Speech</u> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1:29 | Adam | (sets up card with word "Riddles" on it)
Now we're going to do riddles |
| 1:33 | Audience (1 or 2 members) | Cool! |
| 1:40 | Henry | (stands and plays with sweater arms confidently, looks at particular audience members, recites)
This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, find a seat
And take it for a ride. |

In this session his first recitation of the riddle showed strong attention to prosody without any prompting. Loudness was not an issue at all. In fact, he carefully enunciated each line of the riddle the first time. Compare the sonogram of his first afternoon recitation to his second morning recitation (see Figures 26 and 27 below). Even when prompted to repeat the riddle he did not show as much control of prosody in the morning as he did from the first moment in the afternoon. Henry entered the afternoon performance session much more sure of his ability to manage audience and prosody than he did in the morning.



Figure 26: Sonogram of Afternoon Recitation 1. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 6.461 seconds.



Figure 27: Sonogram of Morning Recitation 2. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 6.125 seconds.

In the afternoon session he directly addressed his guessers by name (or by the word 'you'), where in the morning performance he had simply pointed—even to the friend to whom he had given the answer on the bus.

| | | |
|------|-------|---|
| 1:42 | Henry | Can anybody tell me the answer?...uh...Mike |
| 45 | Mike | Uh, the shark was going out for a ride? |
| 47 | Henry | ummm... |
| | | (claps hands together, smiles, turns eyes to index Jim) |
| | | ...you want me to say it again? |
| 52 | Jim | Yeah, say it one more time |

After the first guesser got the answer wrong, Henry did not simply move on. Rather, he expressed his own sense that performing the riddle again might help his audience. He did

not receive a prompt from Mrs. McWilliams or me. He *asked* whether he should say it again. This was radically different from the morning, where he waited for prompts before he changed his performance. In this afternoon session he actively pursued his own hunch that re-performing the riddle was the most appropriate thing to do.

This demonstrated that he had taken a new level of responsibility. Where in the morning session the distribution of responsibility was marked by dependence, the distribution of responsibility in the afternoon session was marked by Henry's independence. He was making the decisions in his mind, and merely using me to confirm them. Henry took the initiative to be the director of his own action with respect to his audience. He showed a growing sense that he knew what a director would ask him to do. He did not blankly ask "what should I do?" Nor did he simply perform the riddle again. He was in an interesting space between authority and independence. Along with his physical signs of comfort, the fact that Henry now took responsibility for directing his own performance showed signs of a breakthrough into performance.

His second recitation of the riddle text on this afternoon was the best of both the morning and the afternoon sessions with respect to prosody (listen to sound clip in Figure 28). In general terms of fluency, Henry's performance was good for all the recitations during this afternoon performance. But for this second performance he was more emphatic in his prosody. That is, we can see how the pattern of his speech fits the emphasis of the individual clues in the riddle. If Henry were reading or reciting the riddle for the first time, he may not have known that the last two lines of the rhyme constitute *one* clue, and not two:

They climb on in, and find a seat
And take it for a ride.

Figure 28: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Afternoon Recitation 2. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. riddle2rec2.mp3.

“This whale eats mostly people” is one clue. So is “Its mouth is on one side.” But the last two lines are one clue. Without an understanding of what the audience needed to solve the riddle, it would be intuitive to set each line apart from the other. But in this recitation we can see in the sonogram³⁷ three distinct groupings that match the three units of clues (see Figure 29).

The first grouping of peaks corresponds tidily to the first seven syllables in the first line. These peaks are followed by a pause. The next group of peaks is also followed by a distinct pause. The last two lines, however, are not broken up by a distinct pause. They are spoken as a prosodic unit. While we see what looks like a pause just before the last peaked area on the right, this area of the graph shows Henry elided the unstressed two words “for a” just before the stressed word “ride.” This recitation, at about seven and a half seconds, was the longest of the six recitations in these two performance events. Henry was much more careful about emphasizing each clue.

³⁷ While the sonograms from the second riddle performance look similar to the first three, they are not comparable. The video setup for the second performance was different from the first, so the baseline quality of the sound is different. While it makes sense for me to compare recitations within a performance, comparing sonograms across performances is not appropriate on all counts. What I look for on the sonograms is the distinctness of prosodic features, i.e., rhythm, pauses, loudness. Loudness is one of the features of sound that changes with each setup of the video camera, because of the positioning of the microphone with respect to performers. So, while direct comparison of sonograms across performances is not a good idea, analyzing the sonograms for salient prosodic features is appropriate. Comparing *conclusions* about each performance is then the method for discussing differences in performances.



Figure 29: Sonogram of Afternoon Recitation 2. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 7.596 seconds.

In terms of the discourse of riddling, Henry connected his prosody with a sense for the audience's needs. They needed clues to be able to guess. He gave a recitation with prosody that emphasized the clues to demonstrate that he wanted the guessers to attend to them. Unlike the morning performances, Henry was ready to help the group engage in genuine guessing.

| | | |
|------------|---------|---|
| 53 | Henry | This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, and find a seat
And take it for a ride.
Can anybody tell me the answer?...Alex |
| 2:01
07 | Alex | umm... (long pause)
(other hands go up) |
| 14 | Henry | Do you want me to call on some one else or do you want me to come back to you? |
| 17 | Deanna | Call on Michael |
| | Alex | No...um...come back |
| 21 | Henry | (points to audience member) |
| 22 | Guesser | Killer whale? |
| 23 | Henry | No, but good guess |
| | Deanna | Call on Michael! |
| 25 | Henry | (points to a child out of video view) |
| | Guesser | He eats all the people? |
| 28 | Henry | No, but good guess |

After a stretch of time for guessing, Henry found that Deanna and Adam were giving clues behind his back. When he realized this, he turned around and hushed them. He was confident in his own ability to perform the riddle and that he was giving good enough clues just by saying the riddle correctly. Deanna's clue-giving and Henry's sanctions against it are emphasized in the transcript below:

| | | |
|------|----------|---|
| 29 | Deanna | Call on Michael, call on Michael!
(Deanna and Adam both begin hailing audience members and giving clues.) |
| 30 | Henry | Michael. |
| 31 | Michael | He eats...he eats, um... |
| 38 | Henry | (turns and sanctions Adam for giving clues) Don't! |
| 40 | Deanna | (gives hand motions for steering wheel) |
| 42 | Michael | Oh! He driiives...Oh! He liives...He lives innn... |
| 3:03 | Deanna | (loud whisper) Tell them that this is not a real whale |
| 06 | Henry | (to Michael) Do you want me to come back to you? |
| 07 | Guesser | Is this in the Great Lakes? |
| 08 | Adam | No// |
| | Deanna | //(whispered loudly) This is not a real whale |
| | Jim | (hailing Henry with his eyes) |
| 09 | Henry | (returns eyes to Jim) |
| 10 | Jim | Say it one more time |
| 13 | Henry | This whale eats mostly people
Its mouth is on one side
They climb on in, find a seat
And take it for a ride. |
| 18 | Audience | (many eager hands go up)
(Adam and Deanna more eagerly give clues behind Henry) |
| 24 | Henry | (turns around and sanctions them with a look) |
| 28 | Jim | Shhh |
| 30 | Deanna | (continues to give clues, but quieter) |

Deanna and Adam's prompting the audience provides a parallel to the morning session, when Henry prompted his guesser before the performance. Deanna gave clues to Michael, an acquaintance of hers, whom she called by name, and his guesses seemed like he was accumulating clues as he went: "Oh! He driiives...Oh! He liives...He lives innn...." She then tried to signal Henry to call on *her* plant. But Henry did not want to go

that direction in this session. He sanctioned against Deanna and Adam twice, once by hushing them and once by giving them a strong look. He really believed his audience should be able to solve the riddle the way he recited it, and he tried to keep the discourse of this performance *away* from the collusion that marked the morning performance. He was thus demonstrating his independence again. He wanted responsibility to be distributed between him and his guessers, not between him and a group of helpers.

Henry's desire for independence was emphasized all the more when I asked him directly to recite the riddle a third time. I wondered if hearing the clues another time might not help the struggling guessers get the answer, and perhaps alleviate some of the prompting that was going on behind Henry's back. But I may have been meddling. In listening to the sound clip and looking at the sonogram we can see that this was the *shortest* of all the performances (see Figure 30 below, or listen to sound clip in Figure 31).



Figure 30: Sonogram of Afternoon Recitation 3. Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. 5.289 seconds.

Figure 31: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Afternoon Recitation 3, Henry's riddle, 4/2/98. Recitation 3. riddle2rec3.mp3.

In the sonogram we can see the last words of the rhyme, “take it for a ride,” were nearly inaudible. The clarity of the pauses between clues is also much less distinct by comparison to the second afternoon recitation (see Figure 29 above). Henry gave less attention to distinguishing each clue in this final recitation. Even though the peaks on the sonogram show more attention to clarity than in the morning performance, this third recitation is the least emphatic of the afternoon session. Because he failed to distinguish the clues, it stands to reason that he was thinking less about communicating clues to an audience.

Why did he relinquish responsibility on this last recitation? The afternoon session shows a pattern of responsibility inverted from that of the morning session. In the morning he began with low responsibility and then progressively grew. In the afternoon he began with strong prosody, made a good showing of independent control, and then abdicated responsibility in the final recitation.

He certainly believed his performance was adequate for its purpose, because he repeatedly sanctioned against his group members who were giving clues. If the audience ‘plant’ in the morning performance seemed like a cheap magician’s trick, this afternoon performance showed Henry’s new desire to perform the trick with more conventional tools. My prompt for a third recitation was like asking him to show them the clues. I believed Henry’s audience would probably need this kind of re-emphasis. Henry did not. His final recitation showed that I had taken the responsibility away from him. He was performing it for me, not for his authentic audience.

Essentially, I had usurped responsibility for the performance³⁸. Where he had shown a strong desire to maintain responsibility for the session, I jumped in as an authoritative adult and took some of the responsibility from him. This was not a bad thing. I had to bring Henry's riddle session to a close so that the rest of the performance could proceed in a timely manner. In the big picture of the performance session my move was necessary to maintain a pace across performers. This move also helped confirm the thought that Henry wanted to actively manage the performance by himself. He would not use responsible prosody when the performance was in my control.

Whatever might have happened had I let the guessers go on guessing, Henry's afternoon performance session shows us a good deal about his development as a performer. He increased in his willingness to take responsibility for a display of communicative competence. He wanted his guessers to assume *their* role as authentic co-performers and offer their display of communicative competence by interpreting the rhyme and discovering the answer. His sanctioning of the clue-givers in the background also showed his desire to shoulder his burden of responsibility for the relationship between performer, text, and audience. In the end, I violated his sense of responsibility by forcing his hand and making him lay the clues out one more time. He responded by speaking them two seconds more rapidly than he had in the previous recitation, and with little emphasis on the clusters of clues. In a subversive way, this final recitation proved that he had begun the afternoon performance with a new sense of responsibility.

³⁸ My wresting the responsibility from him was not 'damaging' to Henry in the long run. He performed responsibly many times across the school year.

Henry's History as a Performer Showed How He was Ready to Grow

Henry's success in the large group context can be seen as a variation on the theme of performance because he had been performing all year long. The presentation on sharks and whales was a small moment in an otherwise full year of performances. In the previous chapter I outlined his history with storytelling. He also had a lengthy history of performing rhymes for the small group. The diagram in Figure 32 below illustrates the isolation of the formal performance situation relative to Henry's history in small group performances.

Without this kind of history, pushing Henry toward the large group would not have made sense. Because he perceived the large group performance with such trepidation, he needed to figure out how to see it as a mere variation on his already rich past as a performer. He had knowledge about audiences, prosody, and performance that he could bring to bear in the large group. But he had to figure out how to transform it for the new context.

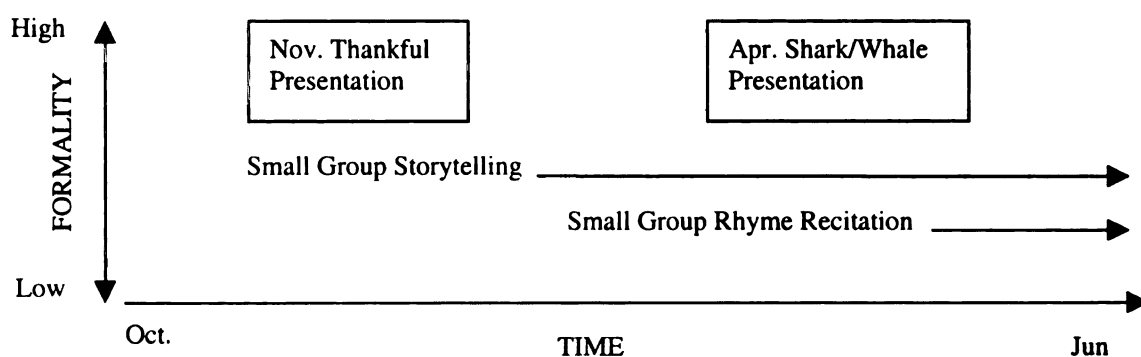


Figure 32: Henry's performance history. The two formal presentations (in November and April) were isolated points in the school year, while Henry's storytelling and rhyming spanned months.

He also had ample time to figure out how the formal context might pose unique problems. In his discussions about audience during the weeks of rehearsal he openly considered the risks of older, more evaluative audiences. He also considered his own past audienceship in a similar situation from the previous year.

Henry's history of contemplation on performance and of participating in small group performances was the constant in his school year. His work in the formal performance punctuated and played on this existing history.

In putting the pieces together and seeing the importance of what Henry did with his riddle, we can gain special insight by looking at his academic history. His first grade teacher marked on his report card a deficiency in Henry's ability to 'retell' a story. It is unlikely that his first grade teacher gave him the thorough history of opportunities to tell and retell that he received in the study during his second grade year. In fact, almost as soon as the year began he showed willingness and ability to improvise on traditional material. By the end of the year I also had collected examples of Henry retelling traditional stories in the small group. Beyond mere opportunity, we helped Henry manipulate the dynamic of risk/comfort. The playful and intimate nature of the small group lent itself immediately to Henry's ability to manipulate story material.

During the course of the study I also saw Henry make strides in his manipulation of story material in written language. This became most apparent when I compared the free writing in his journal to a story based on Mercer Mayer's "Little Critter" character. As with his storytelling, Henry in his writing showed that he needed material to work with. The open-endedness of journal writing did not help him compose. He openly

manipulated structures available from Mayer's book series to his advantage in making his assigned "Little Critter" book.

One of the main things we can see in Henry's written story is his familiarity with these books. In an interview on literacy, he mentioned that one of his main reasons for wanting to learn to read better in first grade was so that he could read the Little Critter books. By January of second grade he had already devoured the series and was moving on to a new interest (reading informational books about animals). This interest seemed to transfer to his writing of his own Little Critter book. The same was not true of his journal.

There are twenty-four entries in Henry's journal. Nineteen of these entries are short statements about things Henry did or things he liked, such as:

I like school and lunch. (8/25)
I like 4 wheelers. because there cool. I like dirt Bike. (8/26)
I love my mom. I like my mom. She is nice [nice]. (9/2)
I'm getting a new [new] bike. (9/8)
I like rain [rain] because [because] it's cool because you can play. (9/17)
I like Christmas because you get presents and you can play in the snow. (12/5)
I went [went] to apple sportsplex [Sports Plex] to rollerblade [rollerblade]. (5/4)

The only departures from this journal formula came when Mrs. McWilliams gave Henry specific material to work from, such as a social studies or science unit. There was no consistent progress in length or depth. There was virtually no voice involved at all—only mere reporting.

It took a project with more history to it for Henry to exert himself to write a more sophisticated text. During the month of May Mrs. McWilliams assigned all the children in the class to work on a Little Critter book. They were to play on the concept of daily childhood life in the same manner the titles of Mayer's books do: *Little Critter Sleeps Over*, *Just a Bad Day*, *When I Get Bigger*, or *Just Go to Bed*. Henry incorporated his

personal interest in rollerblading with patterns typical of Mercer Mayer's books. The first similarity to Mayer's voice is on the second double-page spread: "It's a lot more fun when I take a friend with me." This kind of description of characters' feelings and moods is typical of these books, which explore the emotions of childhood (as in Mayer's title *Boy Was I Mad*).

A slight sentiment of frustration with the little sister is also a feature typical of the Little Critter series, where the main character is usually a little boy. In Henry's story this emerges in the fact that she gets too tired to participate as a skater—insinuating that she is too little to participate in 'big kid' activities.

When I Go Rollerblading
By Henry

When we go rollerblading I like to go to Apple Sportsplex.
It's a lot more fun when I take a friend with me.
My sister likes to skate too, but she gets tired a lot.
She sits with my mom on the side and watches us skate.
The snack bar has pizza "my favorite" and I'm hungry.
Mom gets us each a slice of pizza and a cold drink.
I've had enough to eat and the D.J. is playing a cool song.
So we head back to the rink for some more skating.
Before we go home my friend and I go upstairs and play some video games.
They also have lots of cool games that give you tickets to buy stuff.
It's been a great day for all of us but it is time to go home.
The End.

Another interesting breakthrough into responsibility for this story comes when Henry departs from mere reporting and goes into narration of events in present tense. The provisionality of "When we go rollerblading" is juxtaposed by the present tense of lines like "I've had enough to eat and the D.J. is playing a cool song." In addition, he refers to his mother as "mom" instead of as "my mom." This puts the narrator and narratee in a closer relationship, where relationships do not need to be specified (it is understood that

the narrator is talking about his own mom). Where his journal shows an unconnected string of likes and events, the Little Critter story gives us a much better sense for what made this trip memorable and interesting to him.

In terms of voice and depth of experience, this piece of writing was unprecedented for Henry. His journal entries were usually shallow, and if not they were strongly influenced by copying template texts. In composing his Little Critter story, he followed a pattern seen repeatedly in his verbal performances: He appropriated and transformed existing material to suit his needs. This material came from an actual experience of Henry's, that he alluded to in his journal entry of May 4.

The moment of transformation for this story occurred when I gave children in a small group session opportunities to verbally develop their ideas for Little Critter stories. Henry took this opportunity to tell about his recent rollerblading trip. He told it in the first person ("We went to Apple Sportsplex") and because the topic and setting were so familiar to the other members of the group it was an occasion for free association ("I went there for my cousin's birthday party last year!"). The story went all over the place, but the children kept talking about the sports complex and rollerblading for some ten minutes. Three elements from this conversation emerged in the final story: the snack bar, the video games, and the tickets. The opportunity to tell the story verbally had at least some impact on the depth of the story.

However, I did not coach Henry any further in writing the story. The "Mercer-Mayerness" of the story was something I can only attribute to his own attentiveness to story elements. In his appropriation of the Barbie Shark material and the Three Billy Goats Gruff he showed this same tendency to focus in on certain key elements as

‘material’ to use when making up stories. He borrowed the idea of a shape shifting shark for one story, and he keyed in on the conflict between the big billy goat and the troll(s) in his improvisation on the traditional tale. In the same way, he seems to have discovered the personal tone of the Little Critter stories and imported this into his writing.

With his extensive background of participation in the small group, Henry showed progress in his sophistication in both verbal and written language. His movement to the large group in verbal performance was a major accomplishment for him, and his work in writing stories was also a large breakthrough. His history as a verbal performer in the small group in every instance gave him opportunities to progress. He showed progress in composing both written and verbal texts.

What Can We Learn From Henry about Development of Communicative Competence?

Henry’s performance helps us think about a number of aspects of performance necessary for his growth. First, he demonstrated a tendency to independently pursue discussion about his own competence and about the audience dynamic. His rehearsal phase before the performance was important mainly because he used it to talk about performance. His recitation of the riddle remained virtually unchanged during the rehearsals, changing dramatically only when he faced an authentic audience.

An ‘authentic’ audience was one for whom the communicative aspect of the performance was fresh. They were people who had not heard the riddle before. They would make true attempts to guess the riddle, as Henry and others had done weeks earlier. Authenticity would likely be different for other kinds of performance. In storytelling, for example, repetition of familiar material gave performers opportunities to

increase their responsibility by emphatic prosody at key places in the story. The same was true of singing. An authentic audience is one for whom participation is more than perfunctory. It is easy to find performance for the sake of performance in the classroom. We often perform just to demonstrate that we *can* perform, not to communicate with literary text. Word-calling is a manifestation of the inauthentic, perfunctory performance. By the afternoon performance of his riddle, Henry demonstrated a desire to work with an authentic audience. He led up to this through his rehearsal phase, and by practicing the riddle in front of a formal audience in the morning session.

He showed some hesitation to assume responsibility for the morning audience, preferring to distribute responsibility across knowledgeable audience members and teachers. This was less authentic, because he was not engaging in riddling as a communicative performance as much as a demonstration that he could do his part. But once he had experienced some competence in his morning performance, he then attempted to centralize the responsibility on himself in the afternoon. His assumption of responsibility involved an awareness that without a 'plant' in the audience, and without prompts and cues from teachers, he would have to be the one that provided his audience with enough information to make a guess. To this end he used emphatic prosody to highlight each of the clues in his riddle.

His prosody in each of the sessions showed that he knew how to adjust his prosody to sound more competent. But in the morning session this adjustment was highly guided by prompts. In the afternoon session he managed his prosody in the first two recitations without prompting. He gave himself a prompt by asking me whether he should perform the riddle again. His prosody in the afternoon session was strongly tied to his

knowledge of the communicative function of the riddle. Emphatic prosody showed the audience where each of the three clues were in the text.

Authenticity also seems to have been a concern in Henry's writing. In his journals he did not trust the open ended approach as a kind of communication. But when he melded his verbal narration of a rollerblading trip with his interest in Mayer's Little Critter character books, the result was an extended piece of writing with a strong element of personal communication between narrator and narratee.

These analyses do not give us a definitive answer for why Henry grew as a performer, but they give us a sense of what we need to monitor in creating performance opportunities for growing performers. We need to help students engage in conversations about their performances. Henry showed independence in talking about his performances—past, present, and future. For other students we may need to initiate these conversations. We also need to help students gain a sense for the communicative purpose of the performance they will put on display. Riddling was an established kind of performance in Mrs. McWilliams' classroom. It was not difficult for Henry to know what the communication should look like.

We also should consider that novice performers may need to distribute responsibility across teachers and other knowledgeable participants, working toward a gradual assumption of responsibility in risky contexts. Finally, we must arrange authentic audience contexts for our performers. Henry's continued performance of the riddle in rehearsals became increasingly inauthentic. It was when he encountered two fresh audiences on April 2 that he showed a remarkable spurt in his responsibility for making the riddle a display of communicative competence.

Each of these aspects of Henry's performance helps us get a sense that the teacher's role in designing performance contexts involves actively managing social contexts. In an ideal classroom we would hope that *many* performers could experience the kind of growth Henry did.

CHAPTER 6

Teaching Prosody in Performance

Competent communication in performance depends on responsibility to audience.

This responsibility is both indicated and enabled by control of prosody. Prosody must be **c**onnected to meaning or it becomes a mechanism for mere histrionics. From Henry, **B**ecky, Ariel and other performers analyzed above we can see that they discovered this **c**onnection in an oblique and tacit way. One of our hopes was to help children in the **s**tudy make a more direct connection between prosody and meaning.

Along with creating variations on the theme of performance and increasing the **n**umber of verbal performance opportunities, I also wanted to help the children hear **d**irectly how and why voice matters in literature. This connection between prosody and **m**eaning is among the strongest concepts in this study because it touches on competence **i**n **r**eading and writing as well as in purely verbal performance.

But we cannot expect that all children in a classroom will take the initiative to **b**reak new ground in their communicative competence. Because Mrs. McWilliams and I **i**mmersed her class in performance, and recorded as much as we could, we found *some* **p**erformers monitoring and controlling their prosody during performances. However, **w**hen performers take tacit control over prosody (as Henry did with his riddle) we cannot **b**e certain they *know* what it is they have done. To help performers actively control **P**rosody and meaning we had to devise ways of directly modeling and demonstrating the **c**onnection between the two.

Because this area of instruction is discussed so little in the literature, I had to **devise** appropriate methods for teaching prosody in performance. These methods had to **be** both comprehensible to the students and make explicit the connections between **prosody** and meaning. I also hoped to do better than teach decontextualized skills. So I **worked** with Mrs. McWilliams and with colleagues at the university to find ways of **leading** children directly into performances with meaningful prosody.

The “Vygotsky Space” is again a useful heuristic for discussing our hopes for **learning** and development. If we introduced isolated prosodic skills and asked students to **practice** these, we would have no guarantee that competent communicative performances **would** emerge in the publication process. Part of the problem with direct instruction in **the** Vygotsky Space is that the responses children give are connected to the task at **hand**—skills practice. As with instruction in reading and writing we have no sense for **how** skills will transfer to authentic textual interactions unless we work these authentic **contexts** into learning of skills³⁹. Ideal instructional methods for verbal performance **would** thus involve authentic performances, just as instructional methods in reading need to **involve** reading ‘real books.’

Only a small number of instructional routines are known to be effective for **increasing** oral reading fluency. Repeated reading (see Samuels, 1979) both individually **and** in pairs, choral reading, and ‘simultaneous listening and reading’ (SLR) are methods **commonly** reviewed (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 2000)⁴⁰. The latter two methods are **variations** on one theme: following a competent model. Repeated reading is also a theme

³⁹ The method of ‘guided reading’ is an instance of this approach, which plays on Pearson and Gallagher’s (1983) notion of gradual release of responsibility.

on which we might expect to see teachers enacting a number of variations. The entire family of instructional strategies seems to rest on these two themes: repeated performances and following competent models. Certainly there must be more.

Vacca, Vacca, and Gove (2000) note that oral reading routines often become perfunctory demonstrations of word recognition, as with the frequently cited 'round robin' reading groups. The authors insist that "children learn to become fluent in an environment that supports oral reading as communication" (p. 201). Instructional strategies involving repeated reading and following competent models are written up so as to emphasize meaning (e.g., Johns & Lenski, 1997, pp. 107-139; Cunningham, et al, 2000, pp. 96-102), yet any of these might easily become just as mechanistic as round robin reading.

During the study I found that students often viewed repeat performances of a text (whether verbal or written) as meaningless exercises unless we were careful to arrange an authentic audience context. This was true of Henry's rehearsals of his riddle, where he consistently avoided responsibility. Only when he perceived the audience as authentic did he repeat the riddle more meaningfully. Inversely, Shane was once asked to repeat a remarkably emphatic read-aloud performance so that I could hear it (he had already performed it with emphatic prosody for Mrs. McWilliams and the class). Instead of repeating his masterful performance for me, he reverted to his typical word calling voice. He may not have perceived the repetition as authentic communication.

Likewise in choral recitations and singing students often blended their voice into the background, distributing the responsibility for making the performance a competent

⁴⁰ An even smaller number of routines are known to be effective for increasing silent reading fluency. Vacca, Vacca, & Gove (2000) cite only the silent sustained reading (SSR) method, which involves little

display to a small number of 'leaders.' Instructional strategies based on the themes of repetition and following models offer students *opportunities* to grow, but do not necessarily encourage them to take direct responsibility for supplying meaningful prosody.

A primary object of this study was to create communication in performance. This orientation toward communication helped us develop two instructional strategies emphasizing the communicative function of prosody. The methods developed should be of interest for teaching both oral language and literacy, because the guiding principles behind them are relatively novel in literacy and language arts education.

In the previous chapters I examined the ways children developed in more or less an "immersion" context. Because they developed knowledge by participation it was *tacit* knowledge. I also wanted to create situations in which the students could examine performances *explicitly*. As with all language education there were certain participants who were more prepared for their immersion in performance. These students naturally grew as verbal performers. But there was extreme variation with regard to who grew in which performance contexts, with which genres, and how much. Explicit instruction should be a way of leveling the playing field—of making concepts and processes available for those who are less prepared to perform as well as for those who are Prepared⁴¹.

For the first method we used texts that absolutely needed emphatic prosody in order to be interpreted and then worked with the students to decide what kind of prosody to use when performing those texts. The second method involved removing prosody from

direct instruction in the performance of the text.

familiar text with a computer, and then coaching the students to supply appropriate prosody. I considered these methods successful because they helped students think and talk directly about both meaning and prosody. They also helped students *compose* text with meaningful prosody.

Instructional methods were arguably the most difficult aspect of the study to develop. First, there was little existing practice to rely on for teaching communicative competence in oral language, and second I had to develop the methods while I participated in the classroom's emerging performance community. In the early months of the study I tried methods of instruction that proved less effective. Yet it was the process of trial and error that led to discussions out of which the more effective methods emerged. It was only when we developed ways of keeping prosody and meaning in a dynamic relationship that the teaching became more successful.

From Participant Observation to "Arranged Natural Context": Passive versus Active Methods of Instructional Design

It is an old mistake that those who see a miracle will be so dazzled by the sign that they will refuse to see the organizing principle that created it. Farmer Zuckerman in *Charlotte's Web* read the sign "Some Pig" in the spider's web and took it literally: "There can be no mistake about it. A miracle has happened and a sign has occurred here on earth, right on our farm, and we have no ordinary pig." His wife replied astutely, "It seems to me you're a little off. It seems to me we have no ordinary spider" (White, 1952, p. 80). Still Zuckerman and all the rest ignored this observation and invested their energy in the

⁴¹ For example, in emergent literacy instruction we often begin instruction by explicitly teaching children about books and print concepts because some children do not have this background.

pig. As with pigs, so with prosody: It was easy for me to stare myopically at the sign of **competence**—prosody—yet overlook the principles of meaning that demand its use.

Early in the study I used video viewing sessions and audio listening sessions to **demonstrate** prosody to the students. Viewing sessions have been a useful method for **prompting** research subjects to reflect directly on their thought processes (Erickson, 1992). I believed if I let the students see and hear how they and other children used their **voices**⁴², they would gain knowledge about prosody and communicative competence. In **addition** to the viewing sessions we also discussed prosody immediately following live **performances**. Both methods involved getting the students to reflect on the prosodic **qualities** of actual performances.

One of the central problems to this approach was that I often predetermined what **prosody** was important in the performances discussed, but left the floor open for the **students** to notice any and all prosodic features they heard on tape. When students **listened** to tapes they often noticed prosodic features other than those I focused on. For **example**, I chose one clip because the reader spent a good amount of time word-calling (**listen** to sound clip in Figure 33). I wanted to see if the students could notice word-**calling** and if so how they would describe it. After stopping the clip I asked my question:

Jim: Okay, let's stop right there, and I want to ask you if you notice any of the different things that she does with her voice...Mary?

Mary: She...um...she speaks loudly and, um, sometimes she might speak slowly and then fast.

Jim: So you noticed she speaks loudly almost all the time and sometimes she slows down and sometimes she speeds up?

Mary: Mm hmm (yes).

⁴² I used clips from the video series produced by the Center for the Study of Reading, which contained **extended** segments of children reading aloud.

Figure 33: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Girl reading from *Cloudy, With a Chance of Meatballs*. harlem1.mp3.

Confusing means with ends is often a danger in skills instruction. My preconception about this video segment was that word-calling was the main thing to notice, Mine was a negative evaluation. But Mary saw *loudness* as a positive prosodic contribution of the reader before anyone had a chance to say anything. Because I was open to any and all prosody, students might have noticed any nuance at any point in the segment. I focused on prosody as an end unto itself, not as a means to communicative competence.

The question I used for guiding viewing sessions and other performance discussions was “what did performers do with their voices?” The students showed a remarkable propensity for isolating prosodic features and naming them in their own words. They talked about pace in terms of slow versus fast voice. They talked about voices going up and down. They discussed the way performers “stretched” words, as in “the papa bear’s chair was *tooo* hard.” They described character voices. And they also frequently returned to the term “enunciation,” which Mrs. McWilliams introduced to them in the early weeks of the school year. They became focused on the technical features of prosody. But I also wanted them to know the purposes for prosody, and was chagrined when I felt I was merely introducing them to a new set of isolated, componential ‘skills.’

After the first two viewing sessions I held a discussion with students about why people change their voices. Mrs. McWilliams and I guided them through a list of general reasons, including “to make people laugh,” “to make people feel something,” and “to help people pay attention.” We made clear the fact that prosody is connected to

communicative purpose. But the list was a list of generalities that did not show students how to connect meaning to prosody. We had not given concrete models and had not given students chances to supply these kinds of purposeful prosody to practice texts.

While these sessions did not yield all the outcomes we hoped for, the students did learn to explicitly discuss prosody and performance. They knew how to talk about enunciation, clarity, and loudness. They used their own words to describe the up and down, stretching, and chopping of words. It was remarkable that they were so ready to provide their own terms for what they heard in people's voices. These early sessions oriented students to prosody and performative aspects of speech. By December they actively discussed performances in performative and prosodic terms. The following table (Table 8) is a tally of the kinds of comments students made after a storytelling session on December 10. The comments counted were either oriented to content of a performance or to the *way* a performer delivered it. In the row titled "Comments about performance" I tallied the number of performative comments and split them up by whether they were given by adults or students. There were three adults present and nineteen children. The children gave two comments about performance for every one comment from an adult. The total comments about performance (24) outnumbered comments about content.

| | Deanna's
Telling | Margaret's
Telling | Sharon's
Telling | Alyssa's
Telling | Mrs.
McWilliams'
Telling | Adam's
Telling | Becky's
Telling | Totals |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Comments
about
performance | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 24 |
| | 1a, 3s | 2a, 3s | 1a, 2s | 1a | 1s | 3k, 1s | 2a, 4s | 8a, 16s |
| Comments
about content | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 10 |

(a=adult-initiated comment, s=student-initiated comment)

Table 8: Kinds of comments made by students and adults when discussing a storytelling session.

Performative comments included talk about whether performers spoke loudly or clearly enough, the way they paused, and the way they stretched certain words. Also a number of “sound effects” were used during this storytelling, and the students noticed these: “snap!” for the breaking of the baby bear’s chair; a scream for when Goldilocks woke up and saw the bears. In short, students discussed performative aspects of speech with only a little guidance.

But these comments still did not reflect much of a connection to meaning. The students tended to rely on an “I like” mode of talk about text because we had not shown them how to talk concurrently about prosody and meaning. Comments such as “I like how you enunciated” or “she stretched the word ‘cold’” were interesting demonstrations that they could attend to prosodic contrast, but these were merely ways for them to describe what had happened—not to interpret it. The comments did not show that the students knew *why* prosody was important for a performance.

It was late in the year when Mrs. McWilliams learned she needed to ask explicitly what *effect* certain prosodic choices created. Her performance of “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” was well rehearsed. She knew precisely where she made dramatic changes in prosody and why she did so. It took her careful knowledge of the prosodic needs of an individual text to bring the discussions of prosody and meaning together. Following one performance of the song she turned the conversation to prosody, and then guided the students to talk about the effect of the prosody.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Trey: | Um, and you stopped at that place when you/ |
| Mrs. McWilliams: | At one point I stopped, and I put my hands like--you know when you have a guitar and you’re going like this (picked up strumming rather forcefully again, then |

stopped suddenly—demonstrating what she believed he had noticed). It's really—what did that do, what did that do for the song, do you think, Trey?

Trey: It got everyone's attention.

In the same discussion of Mrs. McWilliams' song performance three other students seemed to make the connection to meaning, because Mrs. McWilliams was asking what the changes in voice *did for the song*.

Alyssa: When the storm came, the guitar got louder.

Becky: And it got softer when it was um, a sadder part or something.

Troy: You stretched some words...It made...it made...it made it make sense.

This was a remarkable shift in the approach to discussing prosody. Instead of merely noticing isolated prosodic elements the students were noticing how Mrs. McWilliams' prosody corresponded to the meaning of the text.

Through this discussion we learned two things about how to connect prosody and meaning. First, we learned it made a difference to have someone who knew their text very well. Mrs. McWilliams' knowledge of this song made it so that she could guide students in discussing the effect and meaning of emphatic prosody. Because so many of the viewing sessions and live performances involved the students' earliest performances of the year, we had been viewing prosodic choices made 'extemporaneously' and not deliberately. For example, when Shane told "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" the first time his control of prosody reflected his ability to adjust the text spontaneously but it did not reflect a concerted effort to match prosody to the meaning of the text. Because Mrs. McWilliams knew her text so well, she had deliberately chosen her moments of emphatic prosody. She knew why the prosody made the text make sense, and how to perform the song so that it meant something.

Second, we learned that when we asked about the *effects* of specific voices at specific places in the text the students were still obliged to notice prosodic variation and discuss it in their own words (as they had so frequently done before), but now they were also obliged to discuss what that precise change *meant* to them. The question “what does it mean when the performer changes her voice like that” showed us that the question “what did she do with her voice” had been too shallow.

In Hymes’ (1975) description of competence he outlined three aspects of understanding meaning in performance: interpretability, reportability and repeatability. When students in the study noticed prosodic features in performances they were able to ‘report’ on them by description. They could also ‘repeat’ parts of the performance that had incorporated special prosody, such as the “snap!” sound effect in tellings of “The Three Bears.” But with all the prosody the students noticed there was no evidence they had *interpreted* the text until Mrs. McWilliams pushed them to make the connection directly. At the same time, their ability to ‘repeat’ the prosody was mere mimicry. I hoped less for mimicry and more for students to create their own performances using emphatic prosody. The best models for instruction in performance should help performers and audiences achieve a good balance of understanding across all three categories. Participants in a community of performers should have opportunities to grow in interpreting performances; they should grow in their ability to talk explicitly about performance; and they should grow in their ability to create their own performances.

Our desire for interpretation, explicit talk about performance, and creative composition led us to develop the two methods outlined earlier in this chapter: (a) the method of finding texts that absolutely needed emphatic prosody in order to be

interpreted, and then working with the students to decide what kind of prosody was meaningful; (b) the method of using technology to ‘remove’ prosody from familiar text, and then coaching the students to supply appropriate prosody. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to discussing participants’ responses to these two methods.

Teaching Prosody Works Best With Texts That Need Prosody

To teach the connection between prosody and meaning, teachers need to know the comprehension demands of the texts they use in modeling and discussion. The demands of texts themselves partially dictate the competent use of prosody. Some prosody is dedicated to audience management, but one of the ways of managing audience is to give them help in comprehending the performance by means of prosody.

There are some texts for which prosody makes almost *all* the difference in interpretation. These texts are good examples for demonstrating the connections between prosody and meaning, because the absence of emphatic prosody leads directly to a loss of meaning. For this study we worked primarily with three such texts. Two were nursery rhymes: “Little Bo Peep,” and “There was a man in our town.” The other was A.A. Milne’s poem “Forgiven” from the collection *Now We Are Six*. Before discussing in detail the actual performances with these texts, I will take each text in turn and demonstrate how emphatic prosody creates meaning not otherwise there in the texts themselves.

Little Bo Peep, as a typical nursery rhyme, is usually understood in terms of pure content. Any audience or reciter can discover the concept that Little Bo Peep is a shepherdess and that her sheep are lost. Understanding this content places low cognitive

demands on participants of a recitation of the rhyme, especially if they have the typical illustration in mind—as most people do with the popular nursery rhymes (Erekson and Heckmann, 1996). But at the discursive level, this rhyme is actually a dialog between two other characters *about* Little Bo Peep, who does not actually have an active role in the text. This fact can only be emphasized by prosodic variation, because the default singsong prosody for nursery rhymes completely overwrites the text. Consider the singsong recitation given by a four-year-old preschooler in Figure 34.

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep
And doesn't know where to find them
Leave them alone and they'll come home,
Bringing their tails behind them.

Figure 34: Sound clip (use CD ROM). A singsong recitation of "Little Bo Peep" by a four-year-old preschooler. belapeep3.mp3.

With the kind of prosody typical of nursery rhyme recitation, there is nothing to show that the first two lines are spoken by one character, and the last two lines by another. This is an example of a text where character voices may be necessary, because the discourse markers we expect in written language (he said, she replied, etc.) are not present in this text⁴³. Separating the first half from the second half by character voices is one way of helping people comprehend this short text.

In addition, the affective attitude of each of the characters is missing in the singsong recitation. The first speaker is reporting something that should seem urgent, and the second speaker is dismissing the concern. We have voices that can demonstrate these attitudes. When the children and I performed and discussed this rhyme below, part of

⁴³ Transitions between characters are often left unmarked in poetry, where the shift in voice is supposed to be given in performance. See, for example, Goethe's "Mailed."

their work was to come up with the most appropriate affective voices for making the text mean something sensible. Without emphatic prosody, a good portion of the meaning of this rhyme is simply missing.

The second rhyme, “There was a man in our town,” is seldom represented in popular collections and there is no typical illustration to guide interpretation. Some versions of the rhyme read as follows:

There was a man in our town
And he was wondrous wise
He jumped into a sticker bush
And poked out both his eyes.
And when he saw what he had done
Then thought his clever brain,
“I’ll jump into another one,
And poke them in again.”

Children respond immediately to the gore of the man having his eyes poked out, and to the nonsense of his poking the eyes back in again. But this text operates largely on an irony hidden by the singsong melody of rhyme recitation. This is the irony of the man being called “wondrous wise.”

This irony is generated at two places in the text. The first is when he pokes out his eyes, and the second is when he thinks he can poke them in again. The first action openly contradicts the meaning of wise, and the minimal nature of the text leads us to wonder whether he actually jumped in on purpose. The second part of the rhyme becomes even more ludicrous, with the man’s silly proposal contradicting both the words “wise” and “clever.”

Sarcasm and other forms of irony are also commonly given by particular voices in speech. In this rhyme, we also have a stretch of character speech that can be used to emphasize the irony—i.e., we can make the man sound the way we believe he should,

given the irony of the text. For young children, the target audience for nursery rhymes, we can demonstrate a fairly sophisticated kind of figurative language by means of prosody. When I performed this rhyme with participants in the study, the work was again to apply voices that helped the rhyme mean what it needs to mean.

The third text used in this study examined for its demands on comprehension was Milne's (1927) "Forgiven." Eliot Singer introduced this text to me as a favorite example of a text that needed to be performed with certain voices to create an interpretation. Like nursery rhymes and much children's poetry "Forgiven" could be performed with a singsong prosody that would obscure meaning instead of revealing it.

Forgiven

I found a little beetle, so that Beetle was his name, 1

And I called him Alexander and he answered just the same.

I put him in a match box, and I kept him all the day...

And Nanny let my beetle out-

Yes, Nanny let my beetle out- 5

She went and let my beetle out-

And beetle ran away.

She said she didn't mean it, and I never said she did,
She said she wanted matches and she just took off the lid,
She said that she was sorry, but it's difficult to catch 10
An excited sort of beetle you've mistaken for a match.

She said that she was sorry, and I really mustn't mind,
As there's lots and lots of beetles which she's certain we could find
If we looked about the garden for the holes where beetles hid-
And we'd get another match box and write BEETLE on the lid. 15

We went to all the places where a beetle might be near,
And we made the sort of noises which a beetle likes to hear,
And I saw a kind of something, and I gave a sort of shout:
"A beetle-house and Alexander Beetle coming out!"

It was Alexander Beetle I'm as certain as can be 20
And he had a sort of look as if he thought it must be ME.
And he had a sort of look as if he thought he ought to say:
"I'm very, very sorry that I tried to run away."

And Nanny's very sorry too for you-know-what-she-did, 25
And she's writing ALEXANDER very blackly on the lid.
So Nan and Me are friends, because it's difficult to catch
An excited Alexander you've mistaken for a match. (p. 50)

Overall, part of the meaning we need to discover in this rhyme is what Milne is trying to say by titling the poem, "Forgiven." He implies a relationship of trust has been both violated and repaired. The reading of the poem should lead us to a sense for how this happened. The question of offense and forgiveness provides a basis for talk about text with the poem, but it is via the quality of the performance itself that the answers emerge.

This poem is a much more complex example of the way prosody helps generate an interpretation of a whole text. The individual moments at various places throughout the poem add up to an understanding of the relationships between the three characters: Christopher Robin, Nanny, and Alexander Beetle. In particular, there are nine moments in the poem where prosody indexes the nature of the relationship.

1. In the first stanza, Milne guides the reader graphically with an ellipsis to suggest a pregnant pause.

I put him in a match box, and I kept him all the day...
And Nanny let my beetle out-

2. The successive repetition of the words "let my beetle out" in lines 4-6 builds up to an emotional climax in line 7.

And Nanny let my beetle out-
Yes, Nanny let my beetle out-
She went and let my beetle out-
And beetle ran away.

The performer must choose whether to simply read the repetitions the same or if the voice should represent an emotional buildup. The latter choice can be used to help

audiences understand how the character views the action. The understanding of the violation of trust begins to emerge. The circumstances are not yet clear, however. These unfold in the remaining stanzas.

3. In lines 8-11 Christopher Robin narrates his interaction with Nanny about the mishap.

She said she didn't mean it, and I never said she did,
She said she wanted matches and she just took off the lid,
She said that she was sorry, but it's difficult to catch
An excited sort of beetle you've mistaken for a match.

In these lines Christopher Robin is quoting Nanny's words. Since Nanny never actually narrates any of the poem, these are the only lines where her voice and character can break through. In this light, this stanza may be an appropriate place to insert a kind of character voice for Nanny. This is not to say we insert a character voice simply because we can (this tends to be a popular fallacy about character voices). Rather the prosody in these lines can help us give the sense that just as losing a bug can make a child frantic, a frantic child can make an adult frantic. The narrator's report of Nanny's lines should give us a sense for how she felt when she reported the mishap to the dismayed boy. This vision is not available from the words alone. It must be created subtly through prosody.

4. Following this report of Nanny's excuses there is another buildup to an emotional climax. In lines 16-19 the story shows Christopher Robin and Nanny out searching for the beetle:

We went to all the places where a beetle might be near,
And we made the sort of noises which a beetle likes to hear,
And I saw a kind of something, and I gave a sort of shout:
"A beetle-house and Alexander Beetle coming out!"

Pacing is one of the ways prosody can help performers build up to the last line in the stanza. For example, slow reading with pauses in the middles and at the ends of the first two lines can create a contrast if we speed up the pace considerably on the last two lines. The last line being in quotation marks suggests an occasion for a character voice, and the reader may easily demonstrate the character's sense of exuberance or excitement at this point with emphatic prosody.

5. But the following line implies some doubt that the beetle was the right one.

It was Alexander Beetle, I'm as certain as can be.

Whether it is Nanny or the reader who expresses doubt that one can go outside and find the same beetle captured earlier, the narrator feels some need to vindicate himself. This defensive stance can be delivered by appropriately emphasizing the word "Alexander," as in "It was *Alexander* Beetle, I'm as certain as can be."

6. Following up on this defensive line, the narrator continues by imbuing human characteristics on the beetle they have found.

And he had a sort of look as if he thought it must be ME.

In this line we can emphasize by prosody the relationship between the beetle and its captor. The image is one of the happily escaped beetle wincing to see the child return to fetch him back. We can give the sense that the beetle does not want to be caught, but that it did not intend to offend Christopher Robin ("And he had a sort of look as if he ought to say / I'm very, very sorry I tried to run away").

7. The meaning of the title begins to come clear here, where both Nanny and the beetle have somehow violated Christopher Robin's trust in them. In the final stanza, Nanny's sorrow matches that of Alexander Beetle. The forgiveness is shown in the fact

that the narrator replaces the name of the act (which was repeated three times at the beginning of the poem) with the appositive “you-know-what-she-did.”

And Nanny's very sorry too for you-know-what-she-did,
And she's writing ALEXANDER very blackly on the lid.

When “you-know-what-she-did” is read as a kind of private aside, we can get the sense that Christopher Robin does not want to dwell on Nanny’s past mistakes.

8. In addition, Nanny takes steps to ensure the mistake doesn’t happen again. She not only writes the word “beetle” on the lid, but she does so “very blackly.” This shows Christopher Robin’s reconciliation with Nanny. The word “blackly” is invented. Enunciating the blend “bl” unusually in this case can help accentuate the act.

9. Finally, the last two lines can express a kind of lightheartedness that compiles the entire sense of forgiveness. By prosody a performer could accentuate the lightheartedness in marked contrast to the disappointment, tension, and excitement that pervade the rest of the text. It is a resolution.

These nine moments illustrate how prosody can bear a good portion of the burden for interpreting a more lengthy text. The attitudes of characters are entirely tied up in how their narration or speech is rendered in prosody. If performers do not aptly illustrate these moments with prosody, it would be difficult to amalgamate an overall interpretation of the relationship between the characters. The poem has a unity that depends on our understanding the relationship between all three. Milne does not openly tell us how they feel toward each other (there is a marked absence of affective terms through the whole poem). We are left to infer most of this information. Asking the question of what kind of prosody is most appropriate in this poem is inextricable from the question of what it means, and ultimately *how* it means.

These texts were wonderful examples to lay out for the children in the study because they clearly demonstrated how meaning could easily be glossed over without careful attention to emphatic prosody.

With Texts That Need Prosody, Children can be Shown How to Connect Prosody and Meaning

Each of the three texts examined above depends on emphatic prosody for its interpretation, and when we led the performance sessions with these texts we were careful to lead the discussion about prosody directly toward interpretation. The students' responses in the discussions yielded two important practices for connecting meaning and prosody: they gave 'titles' that illustrated the meaning of prosody, and they supplied alternate prosody to create new interpretations of the texts.

To incorporate a full range of understanding we had to engender both these practices. When the students talked *about* prosody and meaning it did not necessarily mean they knew how to use prosody to make text meaningful. Conversely, if they only *supplied* prosody to texts we were never sure if they explicitly understood what skills they used when creating meaningful performances. Interpretation is at the heart of much literary activity⁴⁴, and other aspects of understanding can work towards interpretation (see Figure 35).

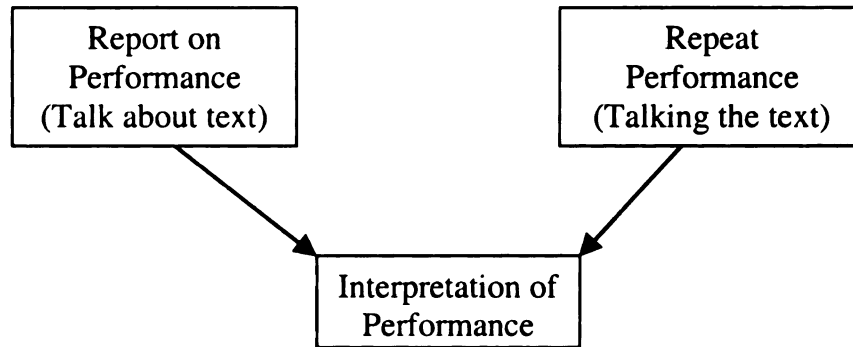


Figure 35: Performance and interpretation. Different ways of dealing with text can lead toward interpretation (based on Hymes' (1975) model of how people understand cultural actions).

When Eliot Singer performed “Forgiven” for the class he guided the students to describe and explain (i.e., report on) the meanings prosody gave his performance. When I performed nursery rhymes I guided the students to actually perform (i.e., repeat) the texts with prosody they felt was appropriate for the meaning. Both approaches helped the students reach interpretation.

At first it was difficult for them to leave behind the purely technical terms we had used for describing prosody from the beginning of the study. When Eliot Singer asked the children what it meant when he changed his voice, they offered generalities such as “you made your voice go higher and lower,” or “you sort of raise your voice, like high, and like sort of loud instead of silent,” or “you said it like it was real.” They generally ignored the connection to meaning, using the routine for description that had become familiar to them. Eliot noted that when he had performed the poem for other classes in other schools that students quickly moved toward the interpretation of the voice instead of technically describing prosody. Our early ‘scripting’ for discussing prosody perhaps laid a

⁴⁴ Even participation in nonsense play requires an understanding that the text is not supposed to make sense. This is still interpretation.

foundation for talk about performative aspects of language, but the discussions of specific passages of literature helped us make the connection to meaning more directly.

The point of this kind of instruction is for the teacher to ask questions that create bridges from prosody to meaning and from meaning to prosody. Prosody describes the form of language and meaning describes the function.

The first strong move toward meaning came when Eliot began to ask what his voice meant at *specific places* in the text. He focused first on lines one through four (listen to sound clip in Figure 36) and asked what his voice meant when he spoke those lines the way he did.

And Nanny let my beetle out-
Yes, Nanny let my beetle out-
She went and let my beetle out--
And beetle ran away.

Figure 36: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Eliot Singer's performance of the second stanza of Milne's "Forgiven." ranaway.mp3.

Mike responded to this line of thinking by saying, "You sort of make it—made it sound like characters." But this was still a generality, and did not describe anything *about* the characters. So Eliot (who knew the meanings of his character voices were mostly attitudinal) followed up more directly: "How is Christopher Robin feeling?" This question led to a generative response from students:

Mike F.: Well, he's feeling bad, because, "Nanny let my beetle out!"
Eliot: So what am I doing there. What is my voice sounding like I'm doing when I did that? (points at Becky)
Becky: Me?
Eliot: Yeah.
Becky: Um, I think because Christopher Robin is sad, you made him whine.
Eliot: I make him whine because he's sad.

Mike took pleasure in mimicking Eliot's "sad" character voice (listen to sound clip in Figure 37), but we could not be sure his repeating the text signaled an interpretation. Becky, however, provided an interpretation of the prosody when she labeled it with the terms "sad" and "whining." In her own words she described and explained the prosody in a way that we knew she was interpreting it. The words "whining" and "sad" are laden with denotations and connotations not available in purely technical descriptions like "your voice went up and down."

Figure 37: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Mike responds to Eliot Singer's question about prosody by mimicking his performance. mattmimic.mp3.

Eliot repeated the text to re-emphasize the "whining" voice. He then asked a question to confirm meaning: "Is that kind of a 'crying' voice?" At this point Margaret brought the interpretation full circle by laughing and pointing back to Mike, "It's like Mike's face" (referring to his facial gestures when he mimicked the sad, whining voice). She used facial gesture as another point of reference for the meaning of the prosody.

The attitudes of the characters were central to the interpretation of this poem. But Eliot's performance did not end the possibilities for interpretation. Other voices could signal other attitudes. Eliot opened the floor for students to suggest alternate ways Christopher Robin might have felt in the poem—ways not yet performed. They suggested a "mad" or "angry" voice for Christopher Robin's feelings when the Nanny let the beetle out. One student also suggested the voice might be "scared," frightened, or worried for the beetle. For each of these attitudes Eliot re-performed the initial stanza of the poem with a different prosody (listen to sound clip in Figure 38).

Figure 38: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Eliot Singer's "angry" re-performance of the second stanza of Milne's "Forgiven." beetlemad.mp3.

Students gave titles or labels to a good number of voices that pointed to attitudinal meaning: whining, sad, excited, scared, happy, and angry. And because they were talking about the characters' attitudes Eliot was then able to help them arrive at an understanding for why the poem was entitled "Forgiven."

He asked the students directly whether the voices they had tried suggested Christopher Robin believed the nanny let the beetle out on purpose or not. They gave answers on both sides of the issue. This was where they began to exercise a higher level of interpretation. With the "sad" prosody and the "worried" prosody it was not clear that Christopher Robin blamed the nanny for letting the beetle go. With the angry voice blame was more clearly the motive in speaking.

Eliot: When I read it that way, angry, how do you think he feels?
Cary: Like she did it on purpose.

The interpretation followed the prosody (or attitude) each individual audience member believed was most appropriate.

The next point where prosody helped the students toward a unified textual interpretation was when Eliot asked about the voice of the beetle in the line "And he had a sort of look as if he thought it must be ME." Becky spontaneously recalled this line as a place where she heard emphatic prosody. Then when Eliot asked her "what am I trying to say with that voice" she replied that "Alexander [the beetle] doesn't want to get caught again." This interpretation put the beetle in a less than favorable relationship with Christopher Robin as well. This was an important step toward overall comprehension of the text. By the end of the discussion, both Becky and Margaret noted with relative ease

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that it was *both* the beetle and the nanny who were forgiven by Christopher Robin. All of this interpretation was reached by means of prosody.

The practice of putting “titles” to prosody was an important step for the students. Their purely technical descriptions of pitch, loudness, etc. were labels for linguistic features, and did little to help them reach an interpretation. But titles like “uh-oh voice” or “whining” or “an excited voice” helped students understand the communicative function of prosody for a particular piece of literature. For the poem “Forgiven” prosodic understanding was inextricable from the interpretation of the text as a whole.

In the discussions about the nursery rhymes students also supplied attitudinal titles, such as “excited” and “upset.” For the rhyme “There was a man in our town” they supplied a “dummy” voice for the character. But the most astute title I found was when I asked about what my voice meant when I sarcastically said “There was a man in our town and he was very wise.” Laurie replied that it meant “Yeah, right. Like he’s really really wise.” I found it remarkable that a second grader could come up with a title for irony. We referred to the “yeah, right” voice repeatedly to show irony during the rest of the school year.

The significance of titling prosody is that the students were simultaneously reporting on the performance and showing a specific interpretation of it. They gained a discourse for talking about performative aspects of speech, and thus made gains in their ability to *report* knowledgeably on performance. It is not the act of ‘titling’ itself that is important. Titling could easily become another perfunctory routine. The teachers involved had to have specific comprehension goals in mind in order to lead students to give titles to the prosody that made the most difference for interpretation of the text.

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Because we elicited the prosodic titles for the purposes of enhancing interpretation we avoided mere technical labels for features of prosody. We also avoided discussions of prosody that were irrelevant to the interpretation.

The appropriate way to lead students to explicit interpretation is by knowing the potential for meaning in an individual text before performing it. That is, there is no set of prescribed questions that will surely guide students to interpret all texts. “What does it mean when I change my voice” is a good starting point. But in this session Eliot had to follow up doggedly to get at the students’ interpretations of *this* text. It was by guiding them to examine purposeful prosodic choices at very specific places in the text that they ultimately reached a holistic interpretation at the textual level.

Eliot could not have done this without foreknowledge of the text, or without a text that needed deliberate prosody for access to textual meaning. Eliot was aware beforehand of the relationships between the characters and their attitudes toward one another. With this knowledge he composed follow-up questions that elicited interpretations from the children. As he led the discussion through prosody toward interpretation Eliot was using an approach that led from “reporting on performance” toward “interpretation of performance.”

I also wanted students to become competent performers of texts. This meant that I wanted to guide them to supply appropriate prosody to texts that needed it—to start from students’ ability to “repeat performance” toward their ability to “interpret performance.” Eliot had already supplied a number of prosodic variations on the poem “Forgiven.” It was exhausted. We had to turn to new texts for which students could supply original voices.

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Like “Forgiven” the two nursery rhymes, “Little Bo Peep” and “There Was a Man in Our Town,” depend on prosody for their interpretation. Without emphatic prosody the broader meaning of these rhymes gets swallowed up in the typical singsong rhythm. The method for the rhyme sessions was inverted from that of Eliot’s performance. I began the sessions by indirectly pointing out the meaning of the rhymes and then asking what voice would be most appropriate for that meaning.

For the lines “There was a man in our town, and he was very wise” I simply asked, “True or false?” Students were easily able to answer “false” and justified their answer by directly saying that it was not wise to jump into a sticker bush. When I asked them how I should say the lines so that it would mean he was not wise, Todd provided a sarcastic voice. His response was mostly inaudible to the class, so I repeated the voice with strongly emphatic sarcastic prosody (listen to sound clip in Figure 39). It was with this prompt that Laurie titled the voice a “yeah, right” voice.

Figure 39: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Jim's performance of "There was a man in our town" with sarcastic prosody, interpreted by Mike and Laurie. 2yeahright.mp3.

Figure 40: Sound clip (use CD ROM). One student's interpretation of "There was a man in our town" with a 'dumb' voice. 6emmettdoof.mp3.

The other piece of prosody that makes a difference for this rhyme is the quality of the man’s voice when he utters the lines “I’ll jump into another one, and poke them in again.” Knowing the man was not wise, students easily supplied a “dumb” voice (listen to sound clip in Figure 40). I suggested an alternate voice, that of an erudite person with a British accent, and demonstrated it for them. But they seemed to take much more pleasure in the “dumb” voice. At the end of the discussion, we performed the rhyme

chorally as a group, using the voices we had decided on (listen to sound clip in Figure 41). It was the only time I remember hearing *all* the students in the large group perform a choral recitation with prosody that signaled they were responsible for the meaning of the text.

Figure 41: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Whole-class performance, with emphatic prosody, of "There was a man in our town." 7stickerchor.mp3.

They were equally responsible for the voices in "Little Bo Peep." For this text I guided them toward the fact that the rhyme is in two parts, and that each part is spoken by a different character. They were able to grasp this interpretation much better when we clarified that the character of Little Bo Peep does not narrate any of the text of the rhyme, but the narrators are two other people talking *about* Bo Peep and her sheep. They completed the interpretation by deciding what the voices for each of the two characters should sound like. In discussion the students determined that the first voice would have to sound either surprised, sad, or depressed. When I asked people to perform with these voices, two versions emerged as popular: Alex's dejected voice, and Adam's sad voice (listen to sound clip in Figure 42).

Figure 42: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Three students' performances, with emphatic prosody, of the lines "Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep, and doesn't know where to find them" (performers include Cary, Alex, and Adam). 3emelaar.mp3.

For the second character in the rhyme, it was also Alex who provided a voice that illustrated the character's attitude. I gave the class a hint at how it might be performed by repeating the line "Leave them alone and they'll come home" with a singsong prosody, but with a dismissive hand wave. Alex picked up on this meaning, and added the

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interjection “aw” to the beginning of the line to better show the character’s dismissive attitude. While the students did not find a title for this voice as they had done with so many others, they did notice that Alex had added a word. A title for prosody may not always be on the tip of our tongue, so it is important that we offer opportunities for students to supply prosody, or ‘voices,’ that show their understanding of the text.

Both these approaches (the ‘report’ approach in Eliot’s performance of *Forgiveness*, and the ‘repeat’ approach in the nursery rhyme performances) were grounded in texts that are meaning-laden. There are innumerable texts existing for which prosody is important but does not necessarily lead to an interpretation at the text level. When we read novels we do not need to make every passage of dialog into a melodrama. Not every character needs a special voice between every set of quotation marks. We need to consider what difference emphatic prosody may make for the meaning of a text as a whole.

The brevity of the nursery rhymes alleviated some of the burden of accuracy. There were no students in the class who had difficulty memorizing typical four to eight line nursery rhymes. By allowing them to do their performances with texts that were arguably below their level, we ensured they would be able to spend ‘capacity’ on something besides word recognition or memory. This idea is akin to the practice in reading instruction of letting children return to familiar books below their level. Because it may take less cognitive effort to work with such texts, readers/performers can spend more time experiencing the pleasures of literature.

It was important that we found texts for which prosody made a great difference. Prosody does not bear the same burden in all of A.A. Milne’s poems in *Now We Are Six*. Nor does it bear the great burden of meaning in all nursery rhymes. The texts we chose

for demonstrating the connection between prosody and interpretation clearly *needed* emphatic prosody so that audiences (and performers) could arrive at an interpretation of the text. For “Forgiven” prosody made the difference in whether students understood who was forgiven and why. For “There was a man in our town” prosody made the difference in whether students understood the irony of the verse. For “Little Bo Peep” prosody made the difference in understanding the fact that the verse is a dialog between two people, and in understanding the quality of that dialog.

Prosody can be Taught by Taking It Away from Texts That Need It

When I performed the nursery rhymes with the students, I found that the ‘singsong’ prosody typical of nursery rhymes had the effect of taking the meaning out of the text (or of hiding it). Because the rhythm was almost mechanical it kept reciters from considering emphatic prosody. While the singsong rhythm is certainly part of the enjoyment of nursery rhymes, if a text means more with emphatic prosody we should not let the conventional rhythm stop us from achieving increased textual pleasure⁴⁵. The singsong rhythm was thus useful because it allowed for an alarmingly stark contrast in meaning when we *did* supply emphatic prosody. The absence of emphatic prosody in conventional nursery rhyme recitation was an important instructional discovery.

We discovered another way of technologically ‘removing’ prosody from texts, and then allowing students to demonstrate that they could supply appropriate prosody. Towards the end of the study I sat near David Pearson at a technology demonstration. Part of the demonstration involved the use of the speech module, a standard feature on

⁴⁵ See Introduction chapter (p. 33) for a list of Nodelman’s (1996) list of pleasures experienced in the interpretation of literature.

the Macintosh computer. The demonstrators showed that the speech module could read back a student's writing. The purpose of the technology demonstration was to show how the speech module could help in proofreading. But David cast an eye at me when we heard the sound of the voice in the speech module. He pulled me aside and said it was as if the speech module took the prosody *out* of the text. It was then a quick step to design what I came to call the "Beat the Computer" contest.

The contest was another way of helping students arrive at meaning via prosody. The method was simple. First, I entered on a notebook computer passages of familiar texts they had performed throughout the year. Second, I had the speech module read the text aloud. Third, I asked students to offer a performance of the same text—one they believed was 'better' than the computer's. Last, we turned the judgment of competence out to the group, who had to justify their decision based on what they heard. The primary emphasis in this activity was to elicit the students' tacit sense of prosody by asking them to perform. But by asking the audience to make a judgment we engaged them in demonstrating explicit knowledge as well. By design the "beat the computer" game deals directly with both the *report* (talk about text) and *repeat* (talking the text) aspects of understanding verbal performance.

First, the audience members made general comments about the computer's inability to communicate. While these comments were not specific to the meaning of the texts performed, those who made the comments consistently discussed the *communicative* aspect of the prosody and not merely the isolated prosodic features they talked about in discussions earlier in the year. During the "beat the computer" session they spoke about whether or not they could understand the computer.

Second, for at least one performer the contest helped her talk directly about places in her text where prosody made a difference to its meaning. She supplied prosody the computer was unable to supply, and addressed the difference in meaning between the two performances.

Among students' criticism of the computer's speech were its speed, clarity, and comprehensibility. Trey, for example, in justifying his vote for the first performer over the computer said, "I could understand her better." Becky said she voted for the human performer "Because I couldn't understand the computer." But the computer pronounced each word quite carefully, with definite onset and rime. Becky clarified that the computer seemed to "stop" between each word. This is a true criticism of the computer speech module. Because it cannot attend to phrases as meaningful units, it cannot elide phonemes, provide a series of unstressed syllables, or otherwise "collapse" speech to create a native-sounding flow.

Other feedback focused directly on the fact that the computer sounded strange. Trey for example, noted that "the computer sounded weird." Henry said that "it was going fast and had a funny voice" and he then demonstrated by saying "because it was like 'dut dut dut.'" Later in the session, Henry justified his vote for Bruce by saying "he didn't do it with a funny accent [like the computer's]." Henry spoke comparatively, noting the human performers did not do the things that made the computer sound strange. In general, the computer's *lack* of appropriate prosody was easy for students to recognize.

Some of the responses focused on specific words⁴⁶ the computer spoke strangely. Denny, for example, noted two specific words he could not understand when the

⁴⁶ Even though this study tends to focus on prosody in larger units, it is still important in single words. Stress, duration, and loudness within syllables is an important part of recognizing spoken words.

computer spoke them: “I couldn’t hear what some of the words were, like ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly.’” The fact that he knew which words the computer had spoken poorly showed that he listened for the same words when the human performed the text. He did hear and understand what the words were, but he knew they *sounded wrong*.

While none of the above responses focused on comprehension, they all focused on communicative competence. The important thing about this is that it was the students’ spontaneous response to the game context. The basic rule I gave for the game was that the audience vote for the performer who they believed was better:

Now, the way we’re going to judge who beats--the computer or the person, whoever wins, the computer or the person--is that you guys are going to have to tell me what the person does better or what the computer does better. So when we’re done, you’re going to vote whether or not someone--the person or the computer--won, and then I’m going to ask you to say why.

Within this loose set of rules I found that I simply had to ask why individual audience members voted as they did, and their judgments of who was ‘better’ were focused on understandability and whether the speaker sounded ‘native’—i.e., on communication. Earlier in the year when audiences discussed prosody they had shown little indication that it was directed at them. But in this session the students seemed to take the computer’s lack of emphatic prosody as a lack of responsibility to them as listeners. This is true. Whatever algorithms go into generating computer speech, they cannot take into account the demands of an audience. For the students, comparing human speech to the computer’s non-communicative speech was a key method for helping them express what was previously at best a tacit understanding of the communicative function of prosody.

In Becky’s case, she also came to focus on specific passages of her text for which she believed her prosody made a difference. She spoke a passage from the “Barbie

Shark” story, familiar to her from her storytelling in the Shark and Whale Presentation in April (see a full text of her telling in appendix). She performed the passage twice: once reading it aloud, and once performing it from memory.

During the read-aloud she called words up until the last line of the story, “What’ll it be, Bubba?” For students the way this line was performed was important, because it had become a kind of chorus. The audience expected the performer to pause in order to allow them to recite the line with the lead performer. The line was also spoken with emphatic prosody. The word “be” gets a noticeable rise in pitch in Becky’s performance. The computer spoke the line with a *normal* prosodic tune (see Chapter 2 for a review of terms such as ‘emphatic’ and ‘normal’ prosody). In the computer’s performance the word “be” was lower in pitch compared to surrounding syllables (listen to sound clip in Figure 43). Students reacted to this familiar refrain as one of the funniest parts of the story. The image of the character—Al Gore in a waitress outfit—certainly contributes to the comedy, but it is this very image that gets emphasized by the careful prosody. When the computer spoke the same line, it did not leave the pause before the line. So the students did not chime in and perform with it. The computer also did not speak the line with emphatic prosody, and the students started to criticize and correct its pronunciation of the line.

Figure 43: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Computer's reading of lines from the "Barbie Shark" story. watlitbe.mp3.

As we spoke about the performance, Becky made a remark about another line in the story that showed her understanding of what had become expected for this story from audiences. The line reads: “And he fell down. Bam! A new hole in the roof, a new hole in

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the ceiling.” Becky noticed that the computer did not set the word “bam” apart as a different kind of illocutionary act. Sound effects are almost like a way of “quoting” sound, and they are meant to be understood with this intent. By contrast, the words surrounding the sound effect are supposed to be taken as a kind of report, such as “I *declare* to you that he fell down and that he made a new hole in the roof and ceiling.” The two are thus different kinds of speech acts, and should be ‘marked off’ by emphatic prosody. Obviously, Becky did not know how to analyze illocutionary force. But when I asked her how the line was supposed to be performed she immediately supplied the correct prosody (listen to sound clip in Figure 44). She emphasized the word “bam” by pausing briefly before it, resetting the pitch to a high note, and stressing the word. This had the effect of separating it from surrounding speech.

Figure 44: Sound clip (use CD ROM). Becky's supply of emphatic prosody to the sound effect, "bam," in contrast with the computer's reading of the same line. beccabam.mp3.

In this case it is also the absence of emphatic prosody that created the learning moment. Becky was able to demonstrate both explicit and tacit awareness *at the same time* by supplying prosody she believed was *better* than the computer's. It was tacit knowledge because she supplied the answer by performing. It was explicit knowledge because she gave it in direct comparison to the computer.

Becky's recognition of the prosodic needs of these lines did not help her create a global interpretation of the text. Perhaps there was no global interpretation of this text. But she understood well the effect of performing certain lines in a certain way for a certain effect. She knew that the story had developed a set of performative expectations

by being performed so many times in the class. The sound effect “bam” and the choral repetition of the last line were both part of these expectations, and these points in the text were the ones Becky recognized as having prosodic needs.

One of the results of the “beat the computer” game was that students were able to describe what was *not* emphatic, meaningful prosody. In addition, performers like Becky were able to defend their prosody as better by showing how they believed certain lines were supposed to be performed. The computer served as foil against which we could play our sense of what English prosody should sound like.

What We Learned from the Two Methods of Teaching Prosody

The “beat the computer” game would likely be most effective if it were part of an orchestrated curriculum. The game would be very effective if it were combined with the method used for discussing “Forgiven” and the nursery rhymes. This would mean we would need a bank of texts that could be used to demonstrate the connection between prosody and meaning, and that these texts could be demonstrated by people (as we did with the poems and rhymes) or by the computer (as we did in the game).

The students in the “beat the computer” session could have talked more directly about the connections between prosody and meaning had the texts been well examined beforehand. This means that in an ideal teaching situation, performers in a class should be familiar with texts that demand prosody for their interpretation. Then these texts should be used to initiate the ‘beat the computer’ game. This would be a more effective demonstration, because the computer’s more or less empty prosody would still violate the performers’ general sense of what sounds right in English (as was true in the game

described above). But the computer's lack of prosody would also violate the performers' sense for what the text is supposed to *mean*. With the "beat the computer" method prosody could be discussed in terms of both general and specific comprehensibility.

The principles behind most existing methods of instruction in oral fluency are repetition (as in repeated reading) and following competent models (as in choral follow-along, or the SLR method). I have articulated here two new principles for designing instruction. The first is to carefully plan to guide students to *interpret* texts by means of key prosodic moments in a performance. The second is to present texts with emphatic prosody *removed*. The basic contribution of these principles and the methods used is that they focus growing performers specifically on communicative competence in verbal performance. Repeated readings and choral follow-along may produce good results in terms of children's fluency, but they do not inherently engender explicit knowledge about prosody, audience, or other aspects of performance. To understand the goals of such activities, students need explicit discussion of prosody and other performative aspects of oral reading (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 2000).

In an area of reading and language arts where methods of instruction are few we have not merely worked on the same principles as existing methods. Both these principles are equally well suited to work with printed and verbal texts. They provide a fine complement to the frequently cited methods of instruction in oral reading fluency because they are inherently communicative, each method being led by the question of what prosody would *mean* in performance. Performance theory helped us center on the question of how to best help children learn about prosody as communication. This

theoretical foundation helped us generate methods based on novel principles—principles which could arguably be used to generate other instructional methods.

A teacher might choose a text for which prosody made the difference in interpretation and author ‘less effective’ and ‘more effective’ prosodic examples. For example, the familiar line from “Romeo and Juliet” (Act 2, scene 2) must be read with appropriate prosody to yield an appropriate meaning:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

This line could be rendered less effectively by emphasizing the popular misunderstanding of the word ‘wherefore’ (or it could be read less effectively with a more or less ‘blank’ prosody—as the computer does). Following a less effective example, which uses inappropriate prosody, a teacher could then re-read the passage with a ‘why’ prosody instead of a ‘where’ prosody to help students discuss the meaning of the entire passage (which involves Juliet’s emerging sense of conflict).

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.

By using less effective and more effective examples for this specific text a teacher could demonstrate both principles articulated above. First, the teacher guides the students toward a specific interpretation via *prosody*. Second, she demonstrates and emphasizes the connection of prosody and *meaning* by supplying contrasting less effective and more effective prosody in interpreting the text.

The texts used as examples in this study depended *completely* on prosody for their meaning. Other texts may not depend so much on prosody for interpretation, yet depend

on it at crucial moments (as in the Shakespeare example above). Researchers and teachers alike might consider evaluating and describing literature based on its need for prosody.

It is important to articulate the *principles* we used to create the instructional methods discussed above because as with many methods these might easily be used as mere routines. Students' success in discussing "Forgiven" and the nursery rhymes was due largely to the fact that we found texts where prosody made a great difference for interpretation, and that we thoroughly studied the texts before teaching them. The "beat the computer" method worked well because the computer's voice helped us demonstrate the problems created by lack of emphatic, meaningful prosody. The principles behind these practices are: (a) know the prosodic demands of texts and (b) be able to demonstrate appropriate and less appropriate prosody.

These principles do not replace those that exist and are frequently used, but are offered as a complement to the small number of known effective strategies for increasing fluency (which I have written about here in terms of responsibility). The instructional methods described above should be an important part of empirical study on teaching communicative competence for performances of both verbal and printed texts.

In addition, we must also return to the children's history. These instructional sessions were held near the end of the school year, after they had experienced many performance contexts and instructional contexts. It would be imprudent to assume these instructional methods could be effective without the time spent on performance. Students like Henry, Becky, and Mike F. seemed to have taken to heart the invitation I gave them at the beginning of the year to "help me figure out how children learn to do things with their voices."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Prosody in performance has always been important in everyday communication, but there has been little digestion of the concept for educators. I am optimistic about the value of the performative perspective for language and literacy education. In this study I have been able to use performance to think about two perennial problems in literacy and language education: (a) the widespread lack of an oral language curriculum in the United States, and (b) the definition and role of prosody in oral performances. I have been able to reconcile the sometimes competing social and cognitive schools of psychology.

The performative perspective can help us think about prosodic skills as *social and communicative* skills, directed purposefully at real audiences. My hope is that the performative perspective may help us avoid treating prosody as merely another component or factor in the reading process, and help us see prosody as an integral part of the communication process. Emphatic prosody is a manifestation of audience awareness, and is thus more than a linguistic concept or skill. It is a means of showing responsibility in a social, cultural, and historical system of rights and duties.

As educators we want to help students gain communicative competence in verbal performance. While we know that there is social risk involved in verbal performance, there are important communicative functions that must be developed verbally: "Students who read aloud for an audience are subtly learning several things. They are learning how language is used in written text; they are learning how to communicate to an audience; and they are learning how to interpret text" (Johns & Lenski, 1997, p. 128). When texts

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are not printed children can still learn much about using language, communicating to an audience, and interpreting texts through verbal performance.

These communicative goals are important with or without print. The neglect of fluency in the study of literacy (Allington, 1983; Stayter & Allington, 1991) is part and parcel of the general neglect of oral language in regular education (Corson, 1984; Buckley, 1995). Thus, while this study focuses primarily on oral language, the implications touch on an area of reading—fluency—that has long posed difficulties for researchers and practitioners.

I have laid out a set of constructs and categories from the performative perspective. These should be useful for future study and practice involving verbal performance. Because so many of the terms used in analyzing the data come from performance theory it will be useful in this concluding chapter to frame the findings in educational terms. Having learned what I could from a year of verbal performance, I will outline below what can I have to say about teaching and learning. With a review of these findings I can then examine the broader implications for practice, for future research, and for development of theory.

What Teaching and Learning Look Like When We Take the Performative Perspective

First I will review the central facts of performance. We become performers when we put language on *display*. We arrange displays by defining certain people as audience members, and by positioning ourselves as performers. We enact texts using our own bodies, and thus we become part of the display. We become personally invested and put our self at risk. With our voice and gestures we show we either have or have not assumed

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responsibility for making our display a competent one. That is, once a display is arranged we either do or do not *break through into performance*.

A key area of linguistic knowledge we use when breaking through into performance is *prosody*—the music of language. It is by our use of patterns of pitch, rhythm, and loudness that we are able to create native-sounding, even emphatic speech (and it is by our violation of conventional patterns that we create odd-sounding, meaningless speech). Emphatic prosody accompanies *interpretation*.

We adjust our speech in response to audiences. Audiences may send overt or tacit signals of evaluation, they may overlap their speech with our performances, and they may participate openly with us in putting on a display. Competent performers know how to adjust their speech to manage discourse as well as to interpret the text at hand. This is performance. A vision for a performance curriculum follows from what we learned about the roles of teachers and learners in the study, which I will address briefly below in terms of assessment.

By investigating Henry's verbal performances I was able to consider the role of the learner in developing communicative competence. Based on experience with Henry and other performers, I believe ideal learners of verbal performance: (a) need to act as responsible audiences in multiple performance contexts where there is variety in text, genre, and audience; (b) need to perform frequently where they are already comfortable with text, genre, and audience; (c) need to participate in overt talk about performance, including audience and prosody; and (d) need to perform for authentic audiences in high risk situations, i.e., with less familiar genres and texts, and/or for new kinds of audiences.

This last item, performing for authentic audiences in higher risk situations, seems to describe the site for growth, while the former three serve as a kind of foundation for growth. Henry grew as a performer when we helped him assume responsibility outside his comfortable small-group storytelling context. But he needed to participate frequently in his favored context, and also needed opportunities to voice his concerns about audience. Ariel grew as a performer when we helped her move from total abdication of responsibility toward performing for the small group. Both of them grew when we helped them perform in situations they perceived as risky.

The space between comfort and risk was different for every student in the room. Because of these individual differences it appears one of the roles of the teacher is to assess students' sense of risk in various performance contexts. This demands at least the organizational variety we had in Mrs. McWilliams' room: one-on-one performances, small group performances, and large group performances. Individual differences also demand a variety of opportunities to perform with numerous texts in a number of different kinds of verbal performance. The small group storytelling situation emerged as a kind of base for Henry, who performed comfortably there. The same context provided an opportunity for risk and growth for Ariel, who was entirely against performing for the large group. Mrs. McWilliams added depth to all the organizational contexts by frequently inviting adults and children from outside the class to participate as audiences during performance times.

Where risk and safety are concerned, authenticity is also an issue. In this study when students perceived their performance as perfunctory they often lost interest and abdicated responsibility. When they perceived an authentic communicative purpose I

often found emphatic prosody. Henry, for example, was careful to create a 'safe' environment in his morning performance of his riddle. But being in front of a fresh audience made a difference for him, and rather than shrinking from responsibility when he could not arrange for 'safety' (by arranging a 'plant' in the audience to guess his riddle) he rose to the occasion and broke through into performance.

In a system that involves dialectics of risk/safety, and authenticity/artificiality, we want children to be supported to the point where they will take communicative risks. Risks may reside in a performer's perception of audience, text, genre or a combination of these. The student who is forced to perform without adequate support and preparation in audience awareness, text knowledge and without knowledge of kinds of performance may be set up for a public failure. The teacher needs to scaffold each of these areas of knowledge.

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) proposed a useful heuristic model for helping children assume responsibility for cognitive tasks. The model involves "gradual release of responsibility" from teacher to student through modeling, guided practice, and student application. For verbal performance teachers need to gradually introduce students to higher risk situations so that they will be able to assume higher responsibility for competent verbal displays.

Modeling involves providing demonstration of competent performance by adults and more knowledgeable students. Students participating in demonstrations act as audiences, but are also expected to give feedback on performances they attend. With the 'modeling' aspect of instruction teachers need to support students in developing an extended *history* of competent performance in existing areas of comfort (such as Henry's

small group storytelling). Student performers thus share responsibility with teachers and their peers for creating competent models of performance people can draw on, including themselves. The “gradual release of responsibility” does not emanate solely from the teacher, but is distributed across all performers who are able to supply a competent verbal display.

Learners involved in ‘modeling’ are also responsible for active audienceship. This implies not only listening and responding to performances but also participation in overt discussions about performances. It is in these overt discussions that students learn what to watch for in modeled performances. They must be shown what to attend to and how to discuss it.

Teachers must assume a fairly directive role in showing children how to connect meaning to prosody. Supplying appropriate prosody depends on monitoring the interpretation of a text. I found that with guided practice students in the study were able to interpret texts tacitly and explicitly by *supplying* meaningful variations on prosody in performance, and by *labeling* prosody after it had been given in performance. They were not always ready to do these things spontaneously.

Our methods of instruction were developed with the understanding that unguided development cannot be expected for every student in a classroom, and that serendipitous development (such as Henry’s) does not always help teachers plan. Directly connecting prosody and meaning through instruction helped students learn and develop based on professional plans. Students who do not intuit the relationship between prosody and competence can be directly shown through models and guided practice how that relationship works.

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The learning and development we observed were not inscribed on a *tabula rasa*. Each of the students in the study who “broke through” into performance, and who grew and developed as performers, brought something to the study. Henry came to the study “primed” for small group storytelling. Becky brought an overall eagerness to perform. Shane (and others) brought a desire to make people laugh. The roles of each of the children developed largely because they were ready for the opportunities they were given. At the same time, however, there were students like Ariel who only became ready to learn and grow during the course of the study.

The roles of teachers and learners outlined here should not seem strange to educators. The classroom organization and pedagogical practices are similar to those used every day for reading and language arts. Teachers who use ‘workshop’ approaches to language arts may already assess their students’ comfort in peer groups⁴⁷; in writing teachers may already use instruction in concepts such as audience and communicative purpose; and teachers may already provide forums for peer and teacher feedback. The most unique practical aspect of the performative lens is that teachers who hope to help children gain communicative competence are responsible for organizing *more opportunities for pure performative talk* (without print). The performance-oriented curriculum results in a noisy classroom.

What Assessment for Verbal Performance Might Look Like

With an understanding of what teaching and learning might look like from the performative perspective, one of the primary areas of practice that must be addressed is

⁴⁷ It is less likely that they keep *records* on comfort and engagement. Most informal inventories are still oriented to skill acquisition, not to cognitive processes.

assessment. Buckley (1976; 1992; 1995) has repeatedly noted that the oral language curriculum (for regular education) will continue to languish without an articulated assessment component. Among the most basic tools in a program of assessment is the informal, observational assessment. For reading we can find numerous published approaches to observational assessment (see Clay, 1993; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987; Rhodes, 1993). For oral language, however, the test battery is led by diagnostic measures (e.g., Bankson, 1990; Semel, Wiig, & Secord, 1995; Carol-Woolfolk, 1974).

For assessment to inform instruction, formal testing can never provide adequate evidence. Teachers need structured ways to monitor students' learning and development in the classroom. What follows is a simplified draft of a 'running record' that could be used to examine students' communicative competence with verbal performance. It is intended for observational assessment during verbal performances in a regular curriculum. The first items are fairly general, but the items near the end of the list are targeted specifically to riddling. Competence is different for different kinds of performance. Separate assessment items should be constructed for storytelling, reading aloud, singing, joke-telling, etc.

SAMPLE OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR VERBAL PERFORMANCE

Section I: Describing student's comfort performing verbally

- Student is willing to perform
 1. One-on-one for teacher or other adult: ___with help ___without help
 2. For/with a single peer partner: ___with help ___without help
 3. For/with a small group of peers: ___with help ___without help
 4. For/with a small group of peers and a teacher/adult: ___with help ___without help
 5. For/with a large group of peers and teachers: ___with help ___without help
 6. For a familiar audience, or for an unfamiliar audience? ___with help ___without help
 7. For an audience of peers or adults from outside the classroom: ___with help ___without help
 8. As a volunteer ____? When assigned ____? Neither ____?

Comments:
- Student seems most comfortable performing with/for the following people (list names below):
- Student has shown comfort performing the following kinds of performance (circle): traditional stories, personal stories, reading aloud, poems and verse, riddling, singing.
- Student has shown comfort performing (with print) (without print) (neither).

- Student has performed comfortably with the following texts (list or describe below):

Comments on student's comfort:

Section II: As an audience member (mark yes or no):

- When appropriate, does the student participate in the performance? ___with help ___without help
- When appropriate, does the student yield the entire floor to the performer? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student appear to listen to performances (be careful with this item to use a definition of 'listening' appropriate to children, and appropriate to the genre)? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student participate in discussing/evaluating performance? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student speak in specific terms about the text on display? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student speak about the meaning of the text? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student speak about the connection between prosody and meaning? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student provide "labels" in his/her own words for prosody that show he/she understands the meaning of prosody used? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student repeat or mimic meaningful prosody when talking about a performance? ___with help ___without help
- Does the student provide alternate prosody with meaning different from original performance? ___with help ___without help

Description of student's audienceship:

Section III. As a performer, the student

- Positions the audience appropriately for this kind of performance: ___with help ___without help.
- Orients audience to appropriate participation (co-performing, allowing for overlapping speech): ___with help ___without help
- Appears to know the text (verbal) or is fairly automatic with word recognition (print): ___with help ___without help
- Solicits prompts when appropriate: ___with help ___without help
- Speaks in meaningful phrase groups: ___with help ___without help
- Avoids precision-oriented voices (word-calling, sounding out): ___with help ___without help
- Uses emphatic prosody appropriate for meaning of text: ___with help ___without help (list examples: tone, character, comparison, emotion, and other meanings are expressed in prosody)
- _____
- _____
- Uses appropriate substitutions, circumlocution, or self-correction when miscuing: ___with help ___without help

Description of student as a performer:

Section IV: As a performer of riddles (genre-specific items), the student

- Appropriately positions audience as guessers: ___with help ___without help
- Orients guessers to this kind of performance (giving instructions on their role, giving hints as appropriate, specifying number of guesses, giving time limits, etc.): ___with help ___without help
- Knows the answer to the riddle: ___with help ___without help
- Knows the text of the riddle: ___with help ___without help, ___with print ___without print.
- Emphasizes clues, when appropriate, by prosody: ___with help ___without help
- De-emphasizes clues, when appropriate, by prosody: ___with help ___without help
- Understands the word-play or metaphor on which the riddle is based: ___with help ___without help

Description of student as a riddle performer:

At the beginning of the study I had to rely on common sense descriptions for people's willingness to perform, such as words like "shy." As the study progressed, I found such terms did not accurately describe individuals. Henry, for example, seemed "shy" at the beginning of the study. However, I found this shyness was limited to the large group. He would perform for the large group only if assigned, and if he had help. By April, however, he performed assigned texts *without* help. His willingness was provisional, so a blanket term like "shy" was inappropriate. Descriptions of students' willingness demand a more technical language than common sense allows. This does not mean descriptions cannot be written in everyday terms, it just means they have to be written in terms that will be accurately descriptive, and *useful* for teachers in making organizational decisions.

By the same token, audienceship needs to be assessed in more specific ways than with just the common sense question, "Is the student listening?" For small groups in particular, I found that students' overlapping speech was a kind of active listening. This may be counterintuitive for many classroom teachers, who are used to 'undivided attention' as model audience behavior. I also believe audiences should be engaged in direct talk about performances, demonstrating comprehension and interpretation. Audienceship represents perhaps the most important phase in acquisition of communicative competence. A student may develop a strong sense for what counts as competent verbal performance long before putting on displays for real audiences. It is as audiences that students who need to discover the connection between prosody and meaning can begin to learn about it. Even performers, when commenting on their own performances, do so partly as an audience.

The items in the performer's section of the assessment above cover three areas: audience management, prosody and interpretation, and knowledge of the text itself (the words). These items might be fleshed out with more specific assessment of prosodic features: the use of pitch, pauses, pacing, loudness, etc. But the usefulness of an ongoing assessment might decrease when teachers have to attend to too many items⁴⁸. As with teachers well-practiced in miscue analysis, I would hope for a time when teachers will be able to look at an item such as "Student uses emphatic prosody appropriate for meaning of text" and be able to describe pitch, rhythm, and loudness without having to mark specific items.

An informal observational assessment such as the draft example given above is perhaps the best step towards other types of assessment in oral language. The diagnostic tests that exist are most appropriate for determining need for special services, not for general communication in performance. In classrooms we want children to perform competently with specific genres of speech. We thus need specific assessment categories that help teachers of students in a regular curriculum individualize instruction for specific kinds of performance, specific texts, and specific social situations. The assessment given above is one way of generating a 'running record' or creating an ongoing profile of individual students' work in verbal performance. This kind of assessment, if used in the field, could help us arrive at descriptions of age-appropriate benchmarks for verbal performance. It would be ludicrous to develop standardized categories for assessment without thoroughly developing a successful working curriculum based on observational assessment. Reading has been observed and studied by psychologists and educators for

⁴⁸ I have often heard people complain that the minute detail of some miscue analysis systems keeps them from attending to the 'big picture' of students' reading. Assessments need to be expeditiously interpretable

the better part of the century. It makes sense that a wide variety of reading assessments should be available. This is not the case for oral language in education, the study of which is still in its infancy.

In the context of special education, an informal observational assessment may help teachers arrive at alternative remediations in literacy. Many students can receive special education services based on struggles with literacy. It would be worthwhile to discover whether these students understand the connection between prosody and meaning. We take it for granted that good readers internalize a voice, and are able to connect prosody and meaning silently. It would also be worthwhile to figure out whether a student's difficulties with reading are connected to some specific part of the social dynamic of performance.

What the Findings Mean for Teacher Educators

Because I hope that teachers would be able to quickly describe and assess students' use of prosody, the implications of this study for assessment lead immediately to implications for teacher education. First, teachers need to be able to effectively model the connection between prosody and meaning. And second, they need to be able to accurately recognize and describe how students use prosody. Neither of these teacher education needs was addressed directly by the study, but the study provides sufficient implications to suggest some teacher education practices.

Because teachers' understanding of prosody is largely a matter of interpretation, it makes sense to think about instruction in prosody as an integral part of teacher

to be useful in the classroom.

preparation in children's literature, as well as in literacy and language arts. The discussions of verse in chapters one and seven above are given in the spirit of literary criticism. It was the appropriate interpretation of texts (both tacit and explicit) toward which I directed instruction and modeling in the study. The traditional "classic" books often make prosodic demands on readers for access to interpretation. In Sendak's (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are*, for example, the line "[Max] sent the wild things off to bed without their supper" can be read with raised pitch on the word "their" to emphasize the parallel to Max being sent to bed without *his* supper at the beginning of the book (Sendak does not italicize). Emphatic prosody in this case actually points to parallels that pervade the text—which is a matter of literary interpretation.

Arnold Lobel's (1970) story "Spring" in *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, makes a similar demand. To 'get' the story (many children don't), readers need to understand that Frog tricks Toad by ripping off calendar pages to make him think it is May instead of April. This aspect of interpretation can be accomplished by the use of careful prosody before and during the line, "Frog tore off the April page, too."

Comprehension of Leaf's (1936) *The Story of Ferdinand* can also be augmented by prosody. One of the main comprehension demands in the story is the contrast between Ferdinand and the other bulls in the story (see Singer, unpublished manuscript). This contrast appears repeatedly in the line, "But not Ferdinand." Reading this line with emphatic prosody, such as stretching the words out and raising pitch on the word "not" can help point children to the fact that this contrast is basic to understanding the story.

It is likely that many of the books, poems, and songs generally accepted as 'quality' literature make similar prosodic demands. Teacher educators should help

preservice teachers recognize these moments in literature. The problems readers must solve when performing are not always solvable by looking at the words. Even if the words do provide sufficient information, emphatic prosody can provide a *direct* avenue to interpretation, without stopping to turn back to other pages or to ask questions. Teachers need to be taught how to read aloud in ways that make purposeful use of prosody⁴⁹.

In terms of recognizing and describing students' prosody, preservice and inservice teachers will need to learn to hear meaningful distinctions in pitch, rhythm, and loudness. I have had some success with preservice teachers through demonstrations involving the same texts outlined above (the nursery rhymes, Milne's "Forgiven," Sendak's *Wild Things*, Lobel's "Spring," and Leaf's *Ferdinand*.) In my own undergraduate courses I ask preservice teachers to do the same things Eliot Singer and I did when teaching participants in the study: i.e., to answer the questions of what prosody means, and what kind of prosody they could supply to give a text a meaning. I have also found it useful to demonstrate for preservice teachers the basic 'facts' of English prosody, comparing English to romance languages (such as French), which are metered, and tonal languages (such as Chinese), for which differences in pitch are primarily lexical. I believe preservice teachers need to know explicitly what it is they do musically when they speak everyday English. The old practice of putting one's hand under the chin to monitor the number of syllables is certainly insufficient. Teachers need to be taught to hear prosodic variation.

⁴⁹ At the same time, this is not an invitation to histrionics. We do not need teachers to be 'actors' of books. We need them to know when meaning must be delivered by prosody and not merely by the words.

Areas of Further Research Suggested by the Findings

Researchers interested either in oral language, literacy, or both may find use for the performative perspective and the categories that go with it. Because verbal arts, reading, and writing all have a performative aspect to them, the performative perspective should prove especially useful for those who believe in looking at spoken and print-based language processes as interrelated.

Mrs. McWilliams, for example, believed the character-based stories written at the end of the year by the children participating in this study were better than those written in previous years⁵⁰. During the study Mrs. McWilliams and I gave the students verbal performance time to develop the material they wanted to write for this assignment, but we did not provide them coaching in how to translate their verbal stories into written ones. The competent writing was largely spontaneous on the students' part. In addition, students from Mrs. McWilliams' class went on in the third grade to score higher on standardized writing measures than other students in the school. These pleasing side effects of the study suggest that it might be fruitful to examine a more direct connection between verbal performance and writing. The problem of oral reading is obviously one of performance, but the connection between verbal performance and writing may involve processes not elaborated on in this study.

One of the arguments in research on reading fluency is whether readers might read with automaticity in word recognition yet without comprehension. Nathan & Stanovich (1991), for example, have argued there is no evidence that word-callers with good reading rates lack in comprehension. Paris (1999), however, recently found that

⁵⁰ She had several years' worth of texts she had saved from the assignment, which was to write a character-based story using Mercer Mayer's "Little Critter" series.

students who word-called scored lower on a comprehension measure he administered. For the sake of understanding oral reading, it might be fruitful to pursue the question of prosody from the viewpoint of word-calling and other dyfluencies. A typical study might be arranged where groups of word-callers are identified and tested for comprehension. Among the population of word-callers who manifest difficulties with comprehension, a treatment of instruction could be given to a test group, monitoring gains in fluency and comprehension for the test group and the control group.

But the most important implications of this study for future research are about oral language. While fluency in oral reading is an abiding question in reading research, this study treats oral reading as a matter of verbal performance. This perspective itself is what demands the broadest attention. Because this study was exploratory, I was only able to begin to identify constructs and practices that seem best suited to a curriculum of verbal performance. For future research it would be ideal to conduct a study similar to this one, but where researchers could *begin* a year of teaching with the current findings in mind.

For example, the problem of instructional methods (as opposed to merely creating opportunities) was a difficult one to solve, and we did not arrive at the most successful methods until the end of the study. It was also easier to develop categories for assessment *after* the study was complete and the data analyzed. In a future study of design similar to this study, we would likely learn much more about learning, development, and teaching of verbal performance because we would know where to begin.

An important part of beginning any such study would be maintaining an ongoing list of books, stories, poems, songs, riddles, and jokes for which prosody can make the

difference in interpretation. The handful of texts reviewed here is a starting point, but certainly does not represent the body of children's literature. There is so much children's literature in our age, some of it making comprehension demands and some not, that one of the needs in the field of children's literature would be to identify texts where interpretation makes a difference.

Text-based research does not enjoy the respect in general educational research that it does in fields strictly oriented to literature and language. But the community of researchers in reading and language arts is often accepting of text-based approaches to research, because they are usually involved with children's literature. It is an important trend for educators to think about how we can use 'real books' for reading (without destroying the literary enjoyment available in these texts). The idea of an extensive database is a one of the directions this study forces us to look. We should create databases of 'real' literature that would make it easy to authentically demonstrate particular concepts of reading at different levels of sophistication. I probably would not use *The Story of Ferdinand* with seventh graders, and I probably would not use "Romeo and Juliet" with first graders. We need to identify books and poems at all levels where prosody offers keys to meaning.

Finally, this study has implications for the study of *silent* reading. This study suggests that prosody is central to competent performance in the public domain. In reading instruction one of the main goals is to help students become competent *silent* readers. This study at least implies the question of whether or not a student's success with verbal performance is related to their ability to read silently. Intuitively, we all know that there is a certain kind of internal 'voice' that we use for reading certain texts. Vygotsky

(1986) proposed that our public voices for particular purposes (he cites ‘egocentric’ speech that children use to direct their actions) undergo a kind of transformation when we appropriate them for use in the *private* domain. He found evidence that internal voices are less thorough, and more elliptical in nature. We have to wonder what evidence we might find that prosodic patterns undergo a similar qualitative change when they become internalized in silent reading. What role does an apprenticeship in oral reading play in a student’s ability to communicate as a silent reader (where the audience is the self).

Areas of theory affected by the findings

The business of interpretation is largely physical. Prosody and gesture are systems for interpretation, and each resides in the body. Patterns that govern our thinking may not be located only as representations “in the head,” as much cognitive science has led us to believe (Gavelek, personal communication).

For example, the “yeah, right” label Laurie used to identify ironic prosody was located in her body. She showed meaning by contorting her face and larynx in purposeful ways. It was in re-performing my tone with her own body that Laurie most appropriately defined the meaning of the verse. To define irony, she turned to her existing repertoire of meaningful voices. Mike did much the same when he mimicked Eliot’s ‘sad’ voice of Christopher Robin. He appropriated the attitudinal prosody with his own body—almost as if trying it on for size. He proved an astute mimic for a number of verses during the year, each time tacitly demonstrating that the mimicked prosody held keys to a verse’s meaning.

Thinking of knowledge as an embodied phenomenon has important implications for connecting the cognitive and social approaches to the human mind. While we cannot argue that the brain is *uninvolved* in knowledge, we have to recognize that there are important patterns of the mind that must be tied to the parts of the body we use to generate knowledge.

Knowledgeable use of prosody involves ‘training’ the voice box. I have found that my own success at learning foreign languages⁵¹ stems largely from seeking out models of prosody. I have begun my study of languages by listening to audio tapes and watching video tapes, then mimicking the voices I hear—and this is even before I have studied much vocabulary or grammar. It is in making my body (i.e., my vocal apparatus) mimic ‘native’ speakers that I begin to develop communicative competence.

We have all experienced the odd phenomenon of hearing our own voice in a recording. We are often shocked to think how our voice must sound to other people based on the odd sound we hear from the electronic speaker. While there is some distortion in all recording, we have to realize that when we hear our own speech it resonates throughout our own head as well as through our eardrums. We actually do hear a different sound than the people around us. We very much have to trust that our transformations of sounds will sound acceptable to a community of listeners, because we can only hear our own voice from the inside.

In Henry’s most competent recitations of his riddle, he relied on his everyday voice and mannerisms more than he had in rehearsals or in his first performance session. In doing so, he expressed confidence that the voice he used regularly for everyday

⁵¹ Such as Spanish, German, Lao, and Hmong.

communication was also sufficient for a competent performance of his riddle. In other words, when he felt it was appropriate he turned to his own body for intuitive patterns of competent communication.

The patterns of communication that reside in areas of the body have a distinctly social patina to them. We learn new ways of speaking and participating in performance largely as audiences—by listening to models, and then appropriating from them what we believe is competent. Harald and Henry's re-performance of the 'fixed' answer to the whale riddle engaged them in a process of figuring out what got adults to laugh. Becky's performances of "The Barbie Shark" strongly echoed (almost verbatim) the prosody I used in my models of the same story. The process of appropriating emphatic prosody is largely a matter of mimicry—of getting one's own body to approximate what a model has demonstrated.

It makes sense that over time and across space, many bodily patterns would become conventional. A raise of the eyebrow can suggest a number of things in the right circumstances, but the same gesture may mean something different in another culture. The same holds true for prosody—intonations, rhythms, and loudness. Even the different families of languages have evolved over time with respect to prosody. The lexical use of tones in Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese is certainly conventional, as is the meaningful use of stress-rhythm in English, German, and Norwegian. Still, a grammar of intonation has proved elusive (Coulthard, 1985). In this study we used the method of "labeling" to help children describe the meaning of prosody. Because of the number of elements involved in any prosodic choice, and because prosodic choices are linked to specific intentions, emotions, and texts it will probably be impossible to give lasting definitions

for prosodic nuances. But with guidance we can talk about what *effect* prosody creates in specific situations. We can develop plain ways of talking about the musical conventions of English, without trying to define them once and for all.

Cognitive psychologists have discussed ‘patterns’ of the mind in terms of schema (Anderson, 1977). The genius of schema theory is that it provides illustration for the flexibility of the human mind. But schemata are based on an electronic metaphor, and thus suggest that the structure of knowledge is only a matter of information processing in the brain.

Social psychologists have proposed that the structure for knowledge originates in the social world in the form of conventions, traditions, and trends (Gee, 1997). The genius of social theories is that they acknowledge the primary role of situated experience in the real world. Social aspects of action and thought cannot be treated as mere ‘factors’ in the development of the mind, because there is no such thing as a mind outside society.

The conflict between the cognitive, brain-centered psychology and the cultural, social-centered psychology should be resolvable. On the one hand it is obvious that any social structures involved in an individual’s psychology would disappear were we to surgically remove the brain. On the other hand, it is also obvious that a person with a normal-functioning brain would have little in the way of a mind if it grew up outside a social world.

So how is it that the brain and society come to understand each other? Some scholars have suggested we consider the body as the mediator between the brain and the world (Gill, 1993; Clark, 1997)—that is, the body in all its parts, not just the neurological system.

Vygotsky (1986) implicitly suggested this solution when he emphasized the power of mimicry in children's cognitive development. According to his experience, a child's social mimicry runs concomitant with the individual development of "pseudo-concepts." It is in the process of playing at making sounds that children begin to get responses from caregivers. These responses can lead children to use transitional concepts—not conventional words or speech—but concepts that can accomplish a kind of communication.

My daughter, between the ages of one and two years, developed a personal set of vocabulary words she used with her mother and me. She knew we understood her words, so she used them. This showed she was beginning to grasp the concept of the word. But it was when she began to interact with older peers that her speech became conventional. Mimicry—physical imitation—was a way of coordinating her social world with her individual mind. Her original word for yogurt, "domaki," involved the pseudo-concept that "when I make sounds people understand me" but did not involve a conventional sense for words. During the year, however, when she triangulated this pseudo-concept with older peers (three and four-year-olds) she found that she had to make the 'right' or 'accepted' sounds to be understood in the world at large. Her older peers were not as gracious with invented words as were her parents. From an impressive list of invented words, many not approximating English words at all, by her second birthday she had completely switched to conventional talk⁵².

⁵² This transition from invented language was complete with the exception of one grammatical phrase she developed then, and still uses today. She says "next by" instead of "next to." My wife and I are thrilled not to have lost every vestige of that remarkable time of her life. Hopefully our support of this single anomaly will not be a severe handicap in the future.

It was her *body* that mediated this knowledge, as she worked to produce sounds that would lead to communication. This is at once social and cognitive (see a model for children's appropriation of social patterns in Gee, 1997, p. 241). There is no doubt she was using her brain in the process of making meaning, but it was in manipulating her voice that mind and society came to an understanding. The patterns she used in this development originated in social interaction—she started with mimicry, then developed pseudo-concepts based on the social success of mimicry with her parents, and she finally arrived at conventional language by 'triangulation' with a broader speech community. She did not abandon the early concept of "when I make sounds they are words." She simply refined the pseudo-concept based on experience with slightly older peers.

Prosody is also largely a matter of mimicry. As mentioned above, in our society certain ways of talking come to be conventional, traditional, or even emerge as mere trends. The 'valley girl' intonation⁵³ used by countless adolescent girls across the nation was frequently modeled in the mass media throughout the 1980s and 1990s. A large number of girls must have perceived this as an effective, interesting, or entertaining way to speak with other girls, because it has been appropriated across geographical and social boundaries.

Mimicry of prosodic patterns originating in the mass media is not unique to adolescent girls. We will just as often hear grown men walking around mimicking Arnold Schwarzenegger's East German accent in "I'll be back" or the New York Italian "F'get about it" from Mafia films. We recognize the effect of these patterns of speech when we

⁵³ This intonation is characterized by almost every sentence ending in a rising intonation, as if it were a question.

hear them, and we appropriate them not only as ‘pop culture references’ but also as ways of mimicking ‘competent’ speech from valued media.

In learning and development of verbal performance we find learners appropriating modeled ‘musical arrangements’ of language. Ariel, for example, remembered and used the prosody of the “snap!” sound in her telling of “The Three Bears” more than three months after it originally had been modeled. She must have viewed that particular effect as competent, and held on to it as an effective way of rendering this story. Her sense for the effectiveness of the sound originated in her participation as an audience. But there must have been a kind of mental representation that developed, because she reproduced the sound *months* later. Both her brain and her social world were at work in learning how to use prosody to make meaning. Her body was the mediator between the two.

As each of us appropriates prosodic patterns from the world around us, we transform these patterns. Because each of us possesses a unique vocal apparatus, our knowledge is “as much a function of how we are put together as is what goes on in our heads” (Gavelek, personal communication). The site for the connection between the social world and the brain may reside in the parts of the body we use to mimic competent models of action. For the children in this study, their embodiment and transformation of prosodic patterns was the sign of growing ability and willingness to assume responsibility for displays of verbal competence.

Extending the Study Into a Research Program

The implications outlined above should put this study into perspective. While the constructs outlined in the findings of this study should be useful, I realize that the scope

of the study is small. Because what I have done in the study involves walking on relatively untouched ground, there is far more work left to do than has been done here. The various areas of implication might outline a thoroughgoing program of instructional development and classroom research. The elaboration of teaching and learning, assessment, teacher education, and textual evaluation will take considerable time and effort.

There are aspects of literacy, such as oral reading fluency, that can only be well understood from the performative perspective. The limited instructional strategies and academic definitions in research on fluency suggests that this problem can only be solved by bringing in a new metaphor to open up our ways of thinking about the problem (Bruner, 1990). Performance is the metaphor.

I am hopeful that the findings of this research will find their way to an interested audience of researchers and practitioners as I begin to digest them for publication. I hope to join literacy scholars such as Schreiber (1987), Allington (1983), Stayter and Allington (1991), Dowhower (1991), and Olson (1994) in calling students of literacy and language to consider that which is not visible in print, but which is necessary for our successful communication with it.

Prosody is one of the most sensible bridges between oral and written language. Educators have a wide variety of theoretical and methodological lenses at hand as the new millennium begins, and we are working in a period where methodological pluralism is accepted more than ever. The performative perspective should continue to be useful for giving us new ways to think about old problems.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Extended transcripts

Transcript: Henry's storytelling

October 23, 1997

Henry improvises a telling of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" in a small group performance session with the author, Mike R., and Troy.

| | |
|----------|--|
| Henry: | I just have, um, you could trick him and say, I just have <i>bones</i> in my body/ |
| Jim: | Yep, and Henry is pretty eager to get started with this, but another thing that I want you guys to do is that if you're going to be the performer [Henry], and Troy/ |
| Troy: | I want to be the goat/ |
| Jim: | and Michael and me are going to be the audience/ |
| Troy: | I want to, I want to <i>do</i> something, I want to be the goat |
| Jim: | What do you want to do? |
| Mike R.: | I want to throw this away! |
| Troy: | I want to be the goat. |
| Jim: | Okay, go ahead and throw your wrappers and stuff away right now, so we can get started. |
| Henry: | Um, Jim, can I do it...first? |
| Jim: | Yeah, you can be first if you want to go throw your uh, throw your wrapper away then we'll be ready. |
| Mike R.: | I'll be waiting. |
| | (8 seconds pause) |
| Mike R.: | I'm sitting by Jim, too. I'll cross under. |
| Henry: | Once upon a time there were three little billy goats. They were eating away and then they all ate it up. He said, we don't have enough food anymore, so the three little billy goats saw a bridge to cross and then a big uh troll came and then he <i>scared</i> 'em and then um then then then they all went across...no, the <i>giant</i> billy goat went across and leaves the little guy, the little ones and then they saw the troll. He pops up and then he said, and then the um the billy goat, the big billy goat said, "I challenge you for a fight." And then he, and then um/ |
| Mike R.: | No, that's what the troll says/ |
| Henry: | He went back and he and he um did his, um, his, scraped back his feet and then ran so fast that he shooted him..into space/ |
| Troy: | laughs/ |
| Henry: | and then they went across and they ate and they ate and then there was <i>another</i> bridge/ |
| Troy: | gasp/ |
| Henry: | and then they, then there was another <i>two</i> trolls now. That the troll got back, and then um he married ano--a girl troll / |

| | |
|----------|---|
| Troy: | laughs/ |
| Henry: | Then they try, they both did that and there was this um purt, there was this purty, um, goat and then the big goat married her and then um they all went across and then they um, and they're leading the little ones and, um, then the things popped up/ |
| Mike R.: | the trolls/ |
| Henry: | the trolls popped up and then they said, and then the troll said, "I challenge you again, with my wife, um, for a fight." And then, and then um the/ |
| Troy: | sigh/ |
| Henry: | mother and the father um scraped their feet. And then the other ones, they all came charging, but the big billy goats won, and then they lived happily ever after. The end. |

Transcript: Henry storytelling

March 19, 1998

Henry recites the whale/bus riddle in a rehearsal session for the "Shark and Whale Presentation." Audience members comprise the rest of the focus group: Dani, Becky, Deanna, Adam, and Shane.

Introduction to transcript: At end of shark/whale practice Henry has asked for a turn to tell a version of a "Barbie Shark" story. Jim turns the floor over to him and orients the rest of the group to a storytelling situation. During the entire telling, Adam does things that the author took as aggressive moves to usurp the floor. Henry seems to act oblivious to Adam's distractions. This seems partially an artifact of my intervention as an audience member giving him 'undivided attention.'

| | | |
|------|-------|---|
| 9:08 | Adam | Did the barbie shark grow big when it put the outfit on? //or was it already big? |
| | Jim | //that's// |
| 12 | Adam | //or was it already big// |
| | Jim | that's a good question |
| | Adam | Cause the lobsters // |
| | Henry | //it's// |
| | Adam | are small and how could a big fat barbie shark fit in a lobster tank |
| 21 | Jim | it might have to get bigger// |
| | Henry | What if they have a// |
| 23 | Dani | //What if they had a big, big tank?// |
| | Henry | //big ol' thing that has to go like, they have to get a giant net and (makes scooping motion with hands over top of imaginary side of a tank) |
| 30 | Jim | Will you sit down there, Henry, when you tell, so we can be an audience (overlapping unintelligible talk), hurry because we've only got five more minutes |
| 39 | Group | Aaah! (as if shocked by the little time left) |
| 40 | Henry | One time there was a thing that was a barbie. it's called the barbie |

| | | |
|-------|--------|---|
| | | shark (Jim sits, Adam giggles) |
| 47 | Henry | One day it wanted to (cough) it lives in (cough) Meijer's tank (cough) it seen all kinds of people (cough) he was getting pretty hungry then he jumped out of his tank real quick and grabbed (cough) the fish right next to the tank// that fish |
| 10:05 | Jim | Adam! Come sit back in your chair. Dani, keep your feet off his (impatient voice) |
| | Henry | //and then he said I want some more and then he said, well, I'll go get some human |
| 15 | Jim | Right now (impatient, to Adam)// |
| | Adam | //I'm the barbie shark// |
| | Jim | If you're not in your chair you're getting a think sheet |
| | Henry | //and then he said I want some human now and he jumped out and ran all over and// |
| 20 | Adam | (falls over and knocks down chair) |
| | Jim | Adam! that's really distracting! |
| | Adam | Sorry, sorry |
| 25 | Henry | he ate everyone in the whole entire store. then there was more people coming, they said, "why ain't anybody leaving (cough) there ain't no (cough) There ain't// |
| | Deanna | //Ain't no// (mocking his use of 'ain't') |
| | Henry | There ain't no, it's no, it's no, uh, parking places. It was crowded there. And he ate every single one...one person. And they all have to park (pace slowed down) |
| 50 | | All across the street. Every body, like a lot of people and they come back and he hide behind the wall/ he came (chomp) snatched one, snatched another, snatched all the many people. Then// |
| 11:00 | Adam | //stupid// |
| | Henry | //everybody started coming and// |
| | Dani | //(laughs)// |
| | Henry | //he ate every th...person in the world. Then he went underwater, he ate every single living thing in the water// |
| 15 | Adam | //that's stupid// |
| | Henry | (cough) He looked in the sand and he was digging and digging and digging and he found everything in the world and he was the only one on earth. |
| 29 | Deanna | Hey, he didn't eat me. Why am I still here? |
| | Dani | Me too! |
| | Adam | Man, that's stupid. It's a cool |
| 34 | Jim | I like that story, I think it turned out pretty good |
| 36 | Adam | It sucked really bad// |
| | Dani | //(hailing Jim)// |
| | Jim | //hm? (to Dani)// |
| | Dani | (unintelligible) |
| 41 | Adam | //I can do better than that// |

| | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| 42 | Henry | //Then he..and then he, oh wait, I'm not finished. |
| 51 | | And then he used, um get, he wanted to eat some more but then he barfed all all those um sharks into the water and he barfed them out and all the plants and stuff and he barfed all the people into Meijer's and they were all scrunched up. There wasn't no room. People were like sitting on the ceiling and stuff cause there was so much people in Meijer's |
| 12:11 | | |
| 12 | | (people start coming in door) |
| | Adam | Y'all guys got sent back? |
| 13 | Jim | ok... |
| 14 | Henry | The end.. |
| | Jim | (letting children look in camera viewer) Ok, I'm gonna give you guys a chance one at a time... |

Transcript: Henry storytelling

March 23, 1998

Storytelling session during recess. Henry, Ariel, and Cary stayed in to tell stories with the author. Cary improvised a "cheese sticks" story. Jim told a version of a "Barbie Shark" story. We coaxed Ariel into telling "The Three Bears." When she finished, Henry jumped in with his own improvised shark story, incorporating several elements of Jim's original "Barbie Shark" story.

| | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| 12:21 | Ariel | ...and baby bear said, "who's been in my bed"... |
| 12:37 | | ...and she woke up and screamed and ran out the door |
| | Henry | The end! |
| | Cary | and broke her back and killed herself! |
| | Ariel | ok |
| | Henry | and broke her back and killed herself |
| 12:45 | Jim | cool |
| | | [overlapping talk, Henry sits up] |
| | Henry | Once upon/ |
| | | [overlapping talk, Henry bidding for floor] |
| 12:50 | Henry | Once upon a time there was this shark, and it was very magical. It could turn into almost anything that it wanted to. One day this du[de]...guy, the president, he went for |
| 13:00 | | a stroll in the park. Well, he went along the beach collecting shells and stuff and then the shark shranked a little bit, |

| | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| 13:10 | | every time it got closer it shrunk a little bit, and then it turned into a shell. And then he [the president] grabbed it and then |
| 13:20 | | when he got home all the guards were around him |
| | Cary | [talking to some one else at their desk to the side] |
| | | Like other different kind of presidents were talking to him |
| | Jim | Like from other countries? |
| 13:30 | Henry | Yeah and like army sergeants and like that and then they're talking around and then he said, um, they were going to trade shells, |
| 13:40 | | they like to trade shells, so then they trade one to a different president and he thought it was his so he traded it to another one, and then the last one was um, uh, George Washington [noise from hallway] |
| 13:50 | | Then he picked it up and he was like this one is the biggest and the bestest one. Then he went, he went to go wash it off at the beach and then he ju... and then the um, the magical thing |
| 14:10 | | The magical shark turned big and then turned (cough) then wash...then he's like "Aaah!" [returning people from recess, noise increases] |
| 14:20 | | with all his hair spiking up and then he swam back and then along the coast he turns into a pretty little girl and then...a purty little girl and then he was like, [teacher's voice] |
| 14:30 | | "Wa, wa, wa!" (laughter, repetition of the line from audience). Then he turned into him and he was like "I'm going to eat you" then like "Aaah!" And they ran and...The end (hand flourish) |
| 14:40 | Ariel | Now can I look in there? (in the video camera viewer) |
| | Jim | Yeah, just a sec... |

Transcript: Henry discusses audience

March 24, 1998

On the day before dress rehearsal Henry spoke about the difference of performing for an audience (as opposed to the rehearsal context we were currently in). By this point he and the focus group have performed these texts at least once for a fresh small group audience from inside Mrs. McWilliams' classroom. But everyone in the classroom had already heard Henry's riddle (while his 'informational' parts were new to them).

| | | |
|------|-------|---|
| 4:01 | Henry | Jim...Jim! |
| 4:06 | Jim | shhh |
| 4:07 | Adam | (practices recitation of his riddle, "I am a comb for the sea") |
| 4:20 | Jim | Okay, great...now, sit down... |

| | | |
|------|--------|--|
| 4:21 | Adam | (turns to go sit) |
| 4:22 | Henry | Jim! |
| 4:25 | Henry | um, Jim, when are we gonna do it to the classroom? |
| | Jim | Tomorrow |
| | Henry | Tomorrow? |
| | Jim | Tomorrow, we're doing it for the whole class |
| | Deanna | Yay! |
| 4:31 | Henry | I think that... |
| | Jim | the, the one that Adam just did, "I am a comb for the sea" [continues by giving suggestion for Adam's performance]. |
| 4:53 | Henry | Do...Jim, remember when we // |
| | Jim | and then it'll be hard for them to guess, but it'll be funny [still to Adam]// |
| | Henry | did it to Whitney's group? |
| | Jim | uh huh. |
| | Henry | I did it real good |
| | Jim | yep |
| | Henry | I think it was because I had an audience |
| | Jim | I think it is better to do it in front of an audience, isn't it? |
| | Henry | 'Cause I did it way better than any/ |
| | Jim | //and all the things like the questions and the riddles and things will be better for an audience, too...okay, Adam... |

Transcript: Ariel Storytelling

March 23, 1998

Storytelling session during recess. Henry, Ariel, and Cary stayed in to tell stories with the author. Cary improvised a "cheese sticks" story. Jim told a version of a "Barbie Shark" story. Jim, Cary, and Henry coaxed Ariel into telling "The Three Bears." This transcript largely reflects the period of convincing her to tell the story.

| | |
|--------|---|
| Henry: | Well, can I tell mine? |
| Jim: | Yeah. |
| Henry: | No, Ariel goes next. |
| Ariel: | mmm mmm! (shaking head to say "no") |
| Jim: | Um, do you know one that you already know, like "Little Red Riding Hood" / |
| Cary: | Make one up! / |
| Jim: | or "Goldilocks" or... |
| Henry: | Make one, make a "Little Red Riding Hood" one up. |
| Jim: | Which one do you think you know from reading it or hearing it before? Goldilocks and the Three Bears? |
| Ariel: | (nods) |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Jim: | Yeah, you can tell that one. |
| Ariel: | (moves toward a chair and sits down and looks out window) |
| Henry: | Did you find one? |
| Ariel: | Yeah. |
| Henry: | Okay...Okay...Okay, Ariel (arms outstretched, pleading). |
| Ariel: | (turns around to face Henry and Jim) |
| Jim: | I'm ready, I'm listening. |
| Cary: | Quick, somebody! |
| Ariel: | Wait, I don't know if I want to. |
| Jim: | You're shy, Ariel! |
| Mrs. McWilliams: | She is, but she's done a lot--she's really grown. |
| Jim: | Yep. She told "Three Billy Goats" when we went, too. |
| Mrs. McWilliams: | I'm proud of her. |
| Cary: | But now she won't tell one bit. |
| Mrs. McWilliams: | Well... |
| Jim: | But she knows it, she knows this story. |
| Mrs. McWilliams: | She doesn't like to have the focus on her. It makes her uncomfortable. |
| Cary: | Well, you've laughed at us before. |
| Jim: | But it's better that it's just us instead of the whole class. |
| Cary: | Yeah! |
| Henry: | Yeah! |
| Cary: | Or would you feel more comfortable with more people? |
| Ariel: | No! (giggles) |
| Jim: | Okay, so there were...there were ummm three bears, right? |
| Henry: | Okay. |
| Jim: | So there were three bears. |
| Ariel: | How does it start again? |
| Jim: | Umm |
| Henry: | Once upon a time. |
| Ariel: | Once upon a time there was a lit...this girl (giggle) named Goldilocks and there were three bears. One was named papa bear, mama bear, and baby bear (the story trails off into giggling). I don't want to... (giggles) |
| Henry and Cary: | (join in the laughing) |
| Ariel: | (inaudible) |
| Jim: | You're doing okay. They're just laughing with you, and having some fun. Okay. So there's Goldilocks, and there's a mama bear and a papa bear and a baby bear. And then what happens? |
| Ariel: | And then Goldilocks, umm, Goldilocks, she found a little cottage (pause) |
| Henry: | (laughs) |
| Mrs. | Don't be silly, Henry. |

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| McWilliams: | |
| Ariel: | I don't know it. |
| Cary: | And she found a little house. |
| Ariel: | And she found some... |
| Henry: | Porridge. |
| Jim : | Porridge. |
| Ariel: | Porridge. She found some porridge. |

Narrative description of the storytelling: Ariel continued the story from this point independently. Ariel described the bowls, using emphatic prosody for lines such as “Too hot” and “Ate it allll up.” She got stuck at transition to chairs after bowls. She stopped and self-corrected on who owned which chair. She used the “Snap!” sound effect, which was a prominently discussed feature of the large group tellings of this story back on December 10. She had no difficulty with transition to beds (except miscuing the word “chair” for “bed,” which prompted some laughter from audience. Ariel affected a high-pitched baby bear voice. After she narrated the bears’ examination of their chairs, two of Mrs. McWilliams’ former students entered. Ariel then got quieter and quit the character voice, and quickly ended the session as follows:

| | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| 12:21 | Ariel | ...and baby bear said, “who’s been in my bed”... |
| 12:37 | | ...and she woke up and screamed and ran out the door |
| | Henry | The end! |
| | Cary | And broke her back and killed herself! |
| | Ariel | Ok |
| | Henry | And broke her back and killed herself |

Transcript: Becky Storytelling

April 7, 1998

Becky’s debut telling of “The Barbie Shark” for a group of about ten students and Jim.

| Seconds | Speech |
|---------|--|
| pre | Jim: Which one do you want to tell, the one where it gets made, or the Bill Clinton one? |
| pre | Becky: Bill Clinton. |
| pre | Jim: Okay. |
| pre | Becky: Yeah! |
| 0-2 | Becky: Duhhhmm/
(audience laugh) |
| 2-6 | Does anyone know what the Barbie Shark is? |
| 6-10 | (pause) |
| 10-12 | The Barbie Shark |
| 12-14 | is (pause) |

| | |
|--------|---|
| 14-19 | a shark with a Barbie head where the sh |
| 19-21 | where where the head's supposed to be |
| 21-25 | (pause) and (pause) |
| 25-31 | and its fins in <i>front and its fins behind are parts from a G.I. Joe.</i> |
| 31-36 | (pause) mmm (pause) |
| 36-41 | Why, why do you think the Barbie Shark isn't like normal sharks? |
| 41-46 | (pause) |
| 46 | Because it does |
| 47-54 | The barbie shark doesn't live in the oceans, or streams, or rivers or anything like that. |
| 54-56 | It lives in the bottom |
| 56-57 | (pause) |
| 57-59 | of the lobster tank |
| 59-60 | (pause) |
| 61-62 | at Red Lobster |
| 62-68 | (laughs) |
| 68-71 | And sometimes it goes and visits its pals at |
| 71-72 | Meijer! |
| 72--75 | (laughs) |
| 75-76 | Meijer! |
| 76-85 | (laughing and side comments continue for 9 seconds) |

Transcript: Becky Storytelling

May 23, 1998

Becky's telling of a version of Jim's original "The Barbie Shark" for the whole class as a large group audience.

| Seconds | Speaker | Speech |
|---------|---------|--|
| 02-04 | Becky | Okay |
| 04-06 | | One day |
| 06-17 | | Okay, one day the Barbie Shark was sitting at the bottom of the tank at Red Lobster, and and the lobsters are sitting at the top of the tank looking around |
| 17-21 | | (pause) and <i>in</i> walks |
| 21-25 | | (pause) uhhh (laughs) um |
| 25-27 | | <i>Bill</i> |
| 27-43 | | Clinton, president of the United States, and right behind him, Al Gore, <i>vice</i> president of the United States. And they sit down, and <i>pick</i> up their menus and Bill Clinton starts to <i>droooool</i> . (laughs)/ |
| 43-44 | Adam | He started to drool/ |
| 44-45 | | (pause) |
| 45-51 | Becky | And all the lobsters said, " <i>Oh no he's going to eat us.</i> " |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| | | <i>Oohhh, aaahh!"</i> |
| 51-54 | Becky and chorus of voices | (laughs) |
| 54-63 | Becky | And they went up to the Barbie Shark and said, " <i>Barbie Shark, will you please help us? Bill Clinton's going to eat every single one of us?</i> " And the Barbie Shark says, " <i>Mmm, I'll see what I can do.</i> " / |
| 63-64 | Adam | He'll see what he could do. / |
| 64-73 | Becky | Bleeahhh, pukes out a waitress out fit, <i>blaht</i> , flips it on and <i>shushushush!</i> |
| 73-74 | Adam | He puts it on. |
| 74-78
78-79
79-83 | Becky | Goes over there and
(pause)
puts its G.I. Joe fin on the table and says, " <i>What'll it be, Bubba?</i> " |
| 83-84 | | (laughs) |
| 84-85
85-86
86-87 | Adam

Deanna | He said, " <i>What'll it be, Bubba?</i> "
(pause)
What'll it be, Bubba? |
| 87-88
88-89
89-97 | Becky | And
and
the barbie shark opened its <i>mouth</i> and Bill Clinton turns over and says, " <i>Aaah! Whitewater!</i> " jumps/ |
| 97-98 | Adam | He said, " <i>Whitewater.</i> " |
| 99-112 | Becky | And he jumps up, <i>bluuh</i> , through the roof <i>aaaannnd</i> into space, and then Al Gore looks over and then he says, " <i>Aaah! (laughs) Whitewater!</i> " / |
| 112-113 | Adam | He says, " <i>Whitewater!</i> " |
| 113-119
119-122
122-129
129-130
130-133 | Becky | and he jumps out of his chair, and then he jumps up <i>through</i> the ceiling, <i>through</i> the roof,
And <i>down</i> comes
And down <i>back</i> comes <i>Bill Clinton</i> right in his seat, picks up his menu and <i>starts to drool again</i> .
(pause)
And then, but Al, I mean/ |
| 133-135 | Adam | you mean Al Gore/ |
| 135-163

163-165 | Becky | And then, and then the Barbie Shark walks over, flips off the waitress outfit, hangs it up and tells the lobsters, "I fixed your problem." And then and then Al Gore, he came up a <i>liiiiitle</i> crooked, and <i>Bam!</i> New hole in the roof. <i>Bam!</i> New hole in the ceiling. <i>Shht!</i> Straight into the waitress outfit. He looks at his self, unhooks his self, and walks over to the table and says
" <i>What'll it be, Bubba?</i> " / |

| | | |
|---------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 164-165 | Chorus of voices | be, Bubba? |
| 165-167 | Adam | What'll it be, Bubba? |

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