



## Review Article

## Teacher as an orchestrator of collaborative planning in learner-generated video production

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## ABSTRACT

This article reports on a case study of teacher orchestration in the context of learner-generated video production. The study was conducted in a Finnish primary school, where four teachers implemented three video projects with their students. It investigated teacher scaffolding in the planning sessions of the projects, which involved creative divergent tasks in both group and whole-class settings. The videoed sessions were analyzed qualitatively to identify the types of discursive scaffolding. The study reveals the teachers' different approaches to supporting dialogue in group and whole-class settings. The findings suggest dominance and modest strategies in classroom dialogue, with the teachers occasionally adhering to traditional recitation to control the classroom talk. The study identifies scaffolding focusing on social interaction and collaboration in these divergent tasks referring to Mercer's (2000) intermental development zone. Considering the teachers' pre-project planning, the study emphasizes the tension emerging between learner-centeredness and teacher authority and freedom and structures.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the sociocultural approach to classroom education has gained footing, teachers are no longer considered mere transmitters of knowledge. Rather, teachers are encouraged to design learning situations (Kumpulainen & Wray, 2002) and provide scripts (pedagogical models) to guide interaction in both whole-class and group settings (Dillenbourg, 2013). The teacher is seen as an “orchestrator of learning” (Salomon, 1992) who creates a specific kind of intermental system among the learning community (Mercer, 2002) and scaffolds learner contributions in the interactive process of “teaching-and-learning” (Staarman & Mercer, 2010). The term “orchestrator of learning” appropriately describes the teacher’s role in the learner-centered learning model.

Nevertheless, teacher-centered instruction dominates in many classrooms (Lehesvuori, Viiri, Rasku-Puttonen, Moate, & Helaakoski, 2013), and group work is of little educational value due to the overly modest quality of discussion (Alexander, 2005). Although the Finnish national core curriculum (FNBE, 2004) entails a socio-cultural approach, spoken language, multimodality, and text production (Räsänen, Korkeamäki, & Dreher, 2015), few teachers seem to have been able or willing to utilize social practices and new media (Luukka et al., 2008). Consequently, children who have become used to consuming visual, interactive media and producing content in their leisure time may not become inspired by traditional instruction.

Hämäläinen and Vähäsantanen (2011) called for new ways, such as creative collaborative working methods, to promote 21st century skills required in the constantly-changing world (P21, 2015). Addressing this need, many researchers (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Butler, Leahy, & McCormack, 2010; Hakkarainen, 2007) have noted the pedagogical value of learner-generated digital videos (DVs) and digital stories (DSs) in diverse educational settings to enhance student motivation and creativity (e.g. Schuck & Kearney, 2006). Well suited for implementation in small groups, DV production offers various opportunities to learn and practice social skills and interaction (Robin, 2008). Hence, using these approaches could change the classroom dialogue and interaction.

This study examines two Finnish primary classrooms where the teachers had moved toward using new technology to produce video movies with their students. Focusing on teacher–student/s talk, it investigates how the teachers introduced an unconventional task to their students and scaffolded the students’ participation and dialogue to negotiate their jointly created movies. The teacher perspective on DV production has been neglected by researchers (Hakkarainen, 2007; Kearney, 2009,) just like divergent creative tasks implying multiple open-ended solutions (Rojas-Drummond, Littleton, Hernández, & Zúñiga, 2010). Hämäläinen and Vähäsantanen (2011) suggested that orchestrating collaboration in creative tasks requires a systematic examination in an integrated set of individual, small group, and class-wide activities. This study addresses these needs by shedding light on orchestrating classroom talk in whole-class and group settings. Aside from examining dialogue including features of scaffolding, the study also considers aspects related to pre-project planning. This article provides readers with experiences and perspectives to encourage them to employ DV production in a pedagogically meaningful way.

## 2. Revisiting teacher orchestration of collaborative classroom dialogue

The term “orchestration” has been increasingly used in contemporary educational research to describe the teacher’s role in coordinating classroom talk. Hämäläinen and Vähäsantanen (2011) claimed that the notion has been used in the literature almost synonymously with Bruner’s term “scaffolding” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Orchestration refers not only to the real-time management of people and activities but also to planning (Littleton, Scanlon, & Sharples, 2012). Sharples and Anastopoulou (2012) conceptualized orchestration as “orchestration design” (i.e. pre-designing the structure for learning processes) and “dynamic orchestration” (i.e. the dynamic management of a classroom with a flow between activities in different social settings). Design plays a crucial role in orchestration (Dillenbourg, Järvelä, & Fischer, 2009; Hämäläinen & Vähäsantanen, 2011), involving planned teaching activities (e.g. scripts such as individual brainstorming and pair conversations) (Mercer, Hennessy, & Warwick, 2010). Although orchestration has been more associated with computer-supported collaborative learning (Dillenbourg et al., 2009) and inquiry learning (Sharples & Anastopoulou, 2012), in this article, we employ the term in face-to-face settings.

Drawing from Vygotsky (1978), language, spoken and written, is regarded as a cultural tool to teach, learn and make meanings (Staarman & Mercer, 2010). Rather than sophisticated hands-on activities, it is the teacher’s and students’ talk around the activities that matters in teaching and learning to guide the development of learners’ understanding (Mercer & Howe, 2012). The teacher’s discursive scaffolding plays an important role in the dynamic orchestration of classroom interaction. Scaffolding, initially drawing on Vygotsky’s (1978) “zone of proximal development” that concerns individual development, is minimal temporal guidance to assist the learners’ progress (Wood et al., 1976) through a continuous, responsive monitor–analyze–assist cycle (Scott, 1998). The teacher provides spontaneous responsive interventions such as questions, feedback, and explanations (Fernandez, Wegerif, Mercer, & Rojas-Drummond, 2001; Mercer, 1995). The teacher motivates learners, guides their actions, directs their attention by highlighting critical features, and provides information and models (Wood et al., 1976). Furthermore, the teacher adapts the level of task challenge appropriately to the level of learner understanding (Fernandez et al., 2001; Van de Pol & Elbers, 2013) and fades scaffolding in response to the learner’s developing skills and growing independence. This necessitates a sensitive pedagogical relation (Van Manen, 1993). By moving from explicit content-related guidance (enhancing students’ knowledge) to more implicit process-related support that promotes learners’ active roles (Chiu, 2004; Lin et al., 2012; Webb, 2009), the teacher leads novices to gradually take more responsibility for their learning (Wood et al., 1976).

Along with the sociocultural approach to learning, the understanding of scaffolding has become more dynamic (Scott, 1998) and symmetrical (Fernandez et al., 2001). Scaffolding supports individual learners’ development and learning as well as facilitates whole-class dialogue and peer collaboration by prompting group interaction (Hämäläinen & Vähäsantanen, 2011). The updated

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