Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
Linguistics and Education 18 (2007) 1–23
Linguistics and Education
www.elsevier.com/locate/linged

Clandestine interactional reading: Intertextuality and double-voicing under the desk

Laura Sterponi *

Language & Literacy, Society & Culture, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, 5643 Tolman Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-1670, United States

Abstract

This article approaches reading as an ideologically grounded and institutionally organized activity. It examines children's clandestine practice of interactional reading in an educational context where individual silent involvement with text is the teachers' prescribed way of reading. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in second- and third-grade elementary school classrooms, I document the crafty ways in which children inject interactional reading into the terrain of the normative reading canon, where it thrives under the surface of prescribed classroom praxis. In addition, I examine how clandestine episodes of interactional reading unfold and identify characteristic ways in which texts are interactionally accessed and apprehended.

Through the analysis of reading practice, I aim to illuminate the interface between the sly mechanisms through which a certain *habitus* perdures, and the tactical operations that produce its clandestine transformations.

Keywords: Reading; *Habitus*; Children's agency; Clandestine activity; Intertextuality; Double-voicing

1. Introduction

Reading is no longer viewed as merely a psycholinguistic phenomenon. While decoding and comprehension, and their underlying neurological mechanisms, remain central topics of reading research, the socio-cultural nature of reading has also become a central focus of inquiry. Reading is a situated activity. As such, it can best be approached as a range of historically contingent, ideologically grounded, and culturally organized practices (e.g., Barton, 1994; Cook-Gumperz,

* Tel.: +1 510 642 0287; fax: +1 510 642 4799.
E-mail address: sterponi@berkeley.edu.

0898-5898/$ – see front matter © 2007 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.linged.2007.04.001

1986; Duranti & Ochs, 1986, 1997; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). In proposing in the early 1990s an approach to reading pedagogy informed by critical sociology, Alan Luke and Carolyn Baker cogently wrote:

> How people are taught to read, what it conventionally means to read, what and when and where people can and do read, the ways in which they read these things, why they read them, how their readings are used and heard, are not supplied by "cognitive processes" or by texts—they are provided in the social, economic, ideological, cultural and institutional fabric of a given time and place. (Luke and Baker, 1991, xiii)

Thus, learning to read is not *only* a matter of acquiring a set of cognitive skills afforded by neurophysiological maturation; it is also a wider process of literacy socialization through which children acquire a reading *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1996; Bourdieu & Chartier, 1985). Reading curricula and pedagogy propose normative definitions of involvement with text (Heap, 1991). Certain kinds of reading are authorized and promoted, while others tend to be neglected or even intentionally excluded.

In the past two decades, a number of studies have shed light on the ideological nature of the dominant reading *habitus*, detailing its multifaceted manifestations and pinpointing its mechanisms of inculcation and reproduction (e.g., Baker, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1986; Freebody, Luke, & Gilbert, 1991; Heath, 1983; Luke, 1992), but little attention has been devoted to the analysis of unofficial reading practices—that is, the surreptitious and inventive activity by which readers flout the rules of cultural orthodoxy (de Certeau, 1984).[1] This article responds to this neglect by penetrating the cracks of reading pedagogy and curricular classroom activities. In particular, I draw on an ethnographic and discourse analytic study of children's clandestine interactional reading in an educational context where teachers promoted individual silent involvement with text as the preferred way of reading. The study documents the crafty ways in which children inject interactional reading into the terrain of the normative reading canon, where it thrives under the surface of prescribed classroom praxis. In addition, this paper examines how clandestine episodes of interactional reading unfold, thereby revealing characteristic ways in which texts are interactionally accessed and apprehended. Particular attention is devoted to two prominent meaning-making procedures in clandestine interactional reading: interactional construction of intertextuality and double-voiced reading. My analysis demonstrates that these two procedures rest on an understanding of the author's intended meaning of the focal textual passage in order to then infiltrate other voices therein, thereby challenging its authority and deflecting in different ways its meaning (Bakhtin, 1981).

Methodologically and thematically, this study is inspired by and aims to follow the tradition of ethnographic studies of the classroom (e.g., Cazden, 1988; Cochran-Smith, 1986; Dyson, 1989, 1993; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Mehan, 1979, 1982; Philips, 1983), as well as of children's social worlds and peer culture (e.g., Corsaro, 1985; Dyson, 1989; Goodwin, 1990). In particular, it is in keeping with the work of (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999) by paying special attention to the *underlife* in the classroom and to the meaning-making practices of students other than those prescribed in the scripted curriculum.

[1] Gilmore's research on sub-rosa literacy activities of urban African-American elementary school children is a notable and inspiring exception (Gilmore, 1986).