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Authority and Preschool Disputes: Learning to Behave in the Classroom

Conflict is commonplace in teacher-centered preschool classroom activities. It is negotiated both verbally and nonverbally, often fading rather than resolving in the interactive moment. The teacher or aide steps in to define what is right and wrong, thus acting to mediate conflict and taking up the position of moral authority. When she does not step in, children may invoke her authority in this regard. Children have a variety of responses to teachers' judgments. When children disagree with teacher/aide's assessments of the conflict, they tend to continue the conflict nonverbally until their attention is diverted and they are reabsorbed into classroom activities. They may also directly refute the authority as long as they use humor to suspend classroom rules. Ultimately in this study of preschool children's conflict, the highly structured teacher-directed preschool context directs notions of "right" and "wrong," of morality, as a core function of classroom conflict talk for American preschool children. [preschool, disputes, classroom, authority, conflict]

Studies of interaction have historically focused on cooperation and agreement as overarching goals of conversation. Conflict, insults, arguments, debate, critique, dispute, and other types of conflict talk have been treated as special cases of interaction rather than as constitutive of social interaction, with some exceptions (e.g., Brenneis 1988; Brenneis and Lein 1977; Grimshaw 1990; Meyer 1992; and others). However, as the articles in this issue show, conflict talk occurs globally, in a wide variety of situations, across age groups, can be used for anything from interpersonal to political purposes, and is as integral to social interaction as is cooperative talk. Conflict is expressed in culturally appropriate ways, involving culturally negotiated notions of "right" and "wrong," of "conformity of rules or right conduct" or moral behavior within particular interactions (Goodwin 2007; Kyratzis 2004), and is tied to situated activity systems (Goffman 1967) or interactive contexts (such as peer-play groups or teacher-gated interactions).

Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik underscore how children learn about right and wrong, moral reasoning, and so on through routine social interactions (2007:5). Within the daily routines of families, children learn "to think and feel in ways that resonate with notions of morality that relate to social situations, specifically to expected and preferred modes of participation in these situations" (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2007:5). Similar to the study of families, preschool children who are just beginning to learn how to talk in school-appropriate ways learn how to express conflict through the daily routines of the classroom.² Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) identified conflict talk among preschool children as culturally Italian and American. For Italian children, doing conflict, being absorbed in the conflict itself serves as a core cultural communicative style; whereas, for American children conflict talk is more often used to identify, and work toward the resolution of problems. As in families (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik

2007), in the flow of preschool interactions, each set of children was developing a certain competence and social knowledge of how to engage in, and what to do with conflict talk.

Of the studies on “conflict talk” among young children, we know little about how interactional contexts may affect the acquisition of conflict talk by preschool children, such as conflict talk in peer-governed or teacher/aide-governed interaction.³ “(T)he nature, direction, and resolution or non-resolution of disputes are closely tied to the interactive contexts within which they occur and to the peer culture of the children involved” (Corsaro and Rizzo 1990:24).

The focus of previous studies of conflict talk among preschool children has primarily been on the various activities in peer-governed playgroup settings (Kyratzis 2001a, 2001b, 2004; Kyratzis and Marx 2001; Sheldon 1993). This study looks at conflict among students in the highly structured teacher-gated classrooms rather than in the more frequently studied situations of play. *Teacher-gated* refers to the interactive context in which teachers lead classroom activities, exercising their authority to enforce or ignore rules and transgressions by students. In this context, teachers⁴ give approval and permission for children’s participation within group talk, providing moral socialization as they judge the children’s behavior as “right” or “wrong” for appropriate classroom comportment.

This study is part of a larger study of how children learn culturally appropriate ways to talk in the classroom.⁵ The data come from 10 preschool classrooms in Southern California with up to 24 children in a single class ranging in age from 3 to 5 years old. Most classes were matched for age and numbers of boys and girls. All of the teachers and aides were female. There were two phases to the research. The first phase occurred over one summer in two classrooms in an upper-middle-class school district-run preschool. Both classrooms were in one location. The second phase involved a year-long study of eight classrooms in a nonprofit, private preschool serving mostly low-income families.⁶ Two of the eight classrooms were part of a State program that provides free half-day preschool to qualified low-income families. The eight classrooms were in four different locations within one city in Southern California.

In the district-run classrooms, both teachers and aides were monolingual in English. The teachers had some university training in child development. One was European American, and the other was Filipina-American. Most of the students came from families in the surrounding affluent neighborhood, with only one immigrant student from Jamaica.

In the nonprofit, private preschool, teachers and aides primarily came from Central America and the Philippines, and most were at least bilingual. There were some monolingual African American teachers and aides, and some bilingual teachers from Mexico, and one multilingual teacher from Palestine (educated in Scotland). The students were mostly from immigrant families from a wide range of places, including Samoa, India, Mexico, Central America, Latin America, a few African American students and one Caucasian student from the local area. Some students were not yet proficient in English and attended Spanish-English bilingual classrooms. Many of the students knew more than one language (although, not always the languages of their teachers).

We used ethnographic techniques, involving videotaping and following children throughout their day at the preschools, in play as well as classroom activities, to get a sense of children’s overall communicative competencies, and to have a sense of how various activities and interactional contexts may affect their behavior. The research focus in all of these classes was on teacher-centered classroom linguistic and embodied interactions that occurred during such routine school activities as “telling the news,” “sharing,” “talking about the calendar or weather,” and so on.

In terms of conflict, studying the teacher-centered classroom puts the teachers and aides into the position of the official authority over issues of “right” and “wrong” behavior of students (e.g., turn-taking, volume, uses of space). Teachers either assert

their own authority, or the children petition it. Ultimately, authority over right and wrong is a negotiated reality occurring both verbally and nonverbally within the context of particular interactions.

Ethnographic analyses reveal three key components to classroom conflict: (1) Teachers assert their own authority over right and wrong, without invitation from the children; (2) Children appeal to teachers' authority for intervention in deciding what is right and wrong; and (3) Children respond to teacher's assessments in a variety of ways including complying completely, complying verbally while continuing the peer conflict nonverbally, continuing to petition the teacher nonverbally while following classroom rules, and rejecting the teacher's assessment overtly.

Part of the classroom socialization process includes children exercising their own agency, their ability to permeate or bend a classroom binary opposition of right and wrong. Examples of this variety of responses by children include (1) compliance with the teacher's assessment (as in Example 1 below), (2) continue to petition the teacher nonverbally, while following classroom rules (as in Example 2 below with Adam and Alice), (3) compliance verbally with the teacher's assessment, but continue the conflict nonverbally (as with Herman and Petra in Example 3 below), and (4) overt rejection of the teacher's assessment (as in the shushing Example 4 below). Classroom conflicts rarely resolve immediately upon teacher assessments but instead fade over time with the students gradually disengaging in the conflict behavior and eventually reengaging in the broader classroom activities. In my data, the structure seems to follow this pattern: There is embodied or verbal conflict expressed among the children, the teachers/aides provide an assessment, various responses by children, and then a fading of the conflict as the children eventually are reengaged in the ongoing teacher-centered classroom activities.

Teachers/Aides Assert Authority Over Right and Wrong

In our data, when preschool children are sitting close to each other, they tend to initially try to handle their disputes directly with each other before appealing to the teacher. Sometimes they make their complaint public by yelling loudly enough for everyone to hear, and when they do, teachers usually assert their authority to resolve the conflict by publicly judging right and wrong in that moment as in the following two examples. The first example involves a conflict stemming from a distracted teacher taking a child, Emelia, and inadvertently sitting her down on top of another child, Talia. Talia complains to Emelia, and the aide intervenes. In this case, the aide responds by framing the experience as "an accident" and the children comply with the aide's assessment, immediately reengaging with the ongoing teacher-centered activity.

Example 1.

- (1) Talia: Eight:::
- (2) ((Emelia who is helping the teacher count, steps back with the assistance of the teacher who is holding her arm and guiding her to sit down on top of Talia))
- (3) Aide: It's almost (XXXX) boys and girls.
- (4) Talia: Hey, uhh, why you PUSH me? ((question directed at Emelia))
- (5) Aide: It was an ACCident, um, Talia.

In Line 5 the aide transforms the event by offering in Goffman's (1971) terms, a "remedial interchange." By telling Talia that this is an accident, the aide takes the originally offensive act and provides an account for it, ultimately minimizing its effects on Talia. By framing the event in this way, the aide provides resolution to the conflict. Neither child comments any further, nor do they carry on the conflict non-verbally. The children comply completely with the aide's formulation of this event, and immediately reengage in the ongoing classroom lesson.

In this example, the aide linguistically constructs her authority as a classroom reality through her uninvited assertion and adjudication in Line 5, but this construction would not be successful without the students' compliance. The girls defer to the aide's authority, and in so doing, they give in to her external authority to both define their conflict and its resolution. In this case, conflict resolution becomes part of the sequence as they subsequently engage in the ongoing lesson.

Compliance with teacher intervention into conflict is only one of several possible responses by students. Another is to challenge the teacher's assessment and resolution of a conflict as the next example illustrates. In this next example, Adam and Alice are vying for the next turn to tell their news. Their news can be anything from having brushed their own hair that morning, to having received a pair of new shoes. In this activity, children raise their hand to petition the teacher to choose them to give their news. Once they have given their news they can leave the carpet to eat their snack at the table. In this example, there is a dispute about who gets to have the next turn to give their news.

At the start of this sequence, there are five children left, two girls (Gemma and Alice) and three boys (one of whom is Adam). The two girls are the only children raising their hands. In fact, they have both been raising their hands for some time. Gemma has raised her hand more consistently than Alice, but both have been following the classroom rules to raise their hands to petition the teacher for the next turn at talk.

The transcription sequence in Example 2 starts with Gemma having just been called on to give her news. As Gemma is selected, Alice puts her hand up again, vying for the next turn at talk. Alice has been raising her hand through the several minute sequence, has been looked at by the teacher several times during this "telling the news" sequence, but has yet to be called on. She is sitting diagonally to the left of the teacher. Adam is sitting behind Gemma, a straight line of sight for the teacher. As Adam starts to fidget by wiggling his left knee (while sitting in a legs-folded position) and engages the teacher's eye gaze, the teacher tells him that he will be next.⁷ This occurs in Line 8. The teacher selects Adam without his having to raise his hand. There is a conflict between the overt rules (to raise one's hand for a turn to talk) and the actual practice in the classroom, and Alice objects nonverbally. Not only does Alice raise both of her hands at this point, in a punctuated fashion, but she also starts to move closer to the teacher, continuing her nonverbal attempt to get a turn to give her news. This nonverbal resistance to the teacher's alignment with Adam, while simultaneously continuing to comply with the handraising rule, leads to verbal conflict in Lines 9 and 10. In Line 9 Adam rebukes Alice's nonverbal attempt to take his turn at talk and yells at her, "You no. I suppose be next." In Line 10, he follows with the counter of, "no. not you." In Line 11, the teacher reminds Adam of the classroom rule that they are taking turns and then privileges him by giving him the next turn at talk by saying, "what IS your news."⁸ In this moment, the teacher essentially tells Adam that his handling of the conflict was "right". In other words, Adam did have the next turn to talk even if he was not raising his hand, and rebuking a fellow student's attempt to talk next. Through this action, the teacher reinforces the importance of in-the-moment interaction, while solidifying her ultimate authority to ignore, or modify the classroom rules of engagement. Consider the following transcript.⁹

Example 2.

- (1) Teacher: Gemma, what's new? ((Gemma has had hand raised from the beginning)) ((Alice raises her hand. Adam looks intently at Alice and starts to fidget.))
- (2) Gemma: (XXXX)
- (3) (0.9)
- (4) Teacher: And those are bEaUtiful. ((pointing to Gemma's shoes))
- (5) Gemma: Yes they are.
- (6) (2.0)

- (7) Teacher: I LIKE those ((*Gemma gets up and goes to wash hands*))
 (8) Teacher: ((*Adam fidgets and looks at teacher. Alice continues to raise her hand.*)) You're going to be next. Hang on. ((*looking at Adam. Alice raises both hands and moves closer to the teacher, then lowers one hand and puts it over her mouth while looking at the teacher*))
 (9) Adam: ((*Adam puts his hand up and yells*)) You no. I suppose be next.
 (10) **no. not you**
 (11) Teacher: Adam, we're taking TURNS budDY, what IS your news

As with the previous example, the teacher creates the conflict between the students. In this case, rather than choose the next speaker from the only student following the hand-raising rule to secure her the next turn at talk (i.e., Alice), the teacher responds to something outside of the classroom rules as a way of determining the next speaker. In this case, she responds to Adam's fidgeting, his position behind Gemma, and the mutual eye gaze between them upon Gemma's completion of her news. We know from other classroom studies that eye gaze may have an affect on teacher's choices of the next speaker (Swann 1998), but in this interactional sequence, the explicit classroom rule for achieving the next turn at talk is through raising one's hand. How this sequence plays out becomes an important moment in the socialization of these children in several respects—particularly in terms of how the interactional power can circumvent rules, and how children can assert their own agency in the negotiated interactions. By remaining silent, Alice complies verbally with the teacher's ultimate right to choose Adam as next speaker, but she simultaneously uses her body to both reject the teacher's move and to reinforce her right to be called on next. Alice forcefully uses the tools of the classroom, that is, hand raising and her ability to move closer to the teacher, to press her point in a way that creates a tension between she and Adam, to which Adam responds. But the teacher sides with Adam and continues to ignore Alice's attempts to follow the classroom norms. While Alice is the only child to raise her hand throughout the rest of this news-telling sequence, she becomes the last child chosen to give her news. In other words, the teacher chooses two more students after Adam to share their news rather than call on Alice who has dutifully been following the rule to raise her hand to gain the next turn at talk. There is no clear reason why the teacher does not call on Alice until the end of the segment.¹⁰

This is a powerful example of compliance and dissent in conflict negotiation between peers, and between students and teachers, within the teacher-gated classroom context. Moreover, it is a powerful example of how, despite the rules, the opportunities for children to participate and the children's adherence to the rules are completely subject to the teacher's perceptions rather than to what is actually occurring. Thus, the authority of the teacher can, and in this case does, trump the rules.¹¹ Children are learning that rules are subject to all kinds of interactional contingencies.

"Teacher, Teacher!": Appeal to Authority

There are lots of examples throughout the data where children appeal to the authority of the teacher to decide who is right and wrong. In the following example, the conflict involves two students, Herman and Petra. Herman accuses Petra of breaking classroom rules and appeals to the teacher to intervene. In the process of the interaction, Herman disengages with the rules and stops attending to the teacher. In the end, the conflict fades and both Herman and Petra attend to the teacher.

In this sequence, how the children hold their bodies and use their faces become as much a part of the conflict as what they say. Kendon noted how facial displays can "provide commentary and supplement to what is being said" for both speakers and listeners in interactions (1990:119). More recent studies have focused on embodiment as an essential part of communication (Goodwin 2000, 2007; Goodwin and Alim this issue).

In the example below, the children are sitting on a mat in front of the teacher. Petra is sitting at an angle, facing Herman, while also facing the teacher diagonally, rather than facing her from a straight on position. In Lines 1, 3, and 5, Herman complains directly to Petra that she is sitting incorrectly, and not facing the teacher, as she should. He tells her to “turn around.” When Petra does not comply with his directives, Herman appeals to the teacher telling her that “she won’t turn around”. See Line 7. When the teacher responds, she aligns with Petra, not Herman. In Line 8, she tells Herman that Petra is okay.

Example 3.

- (1) Herman: TURN AROUND ((looking at girl who is sitting sideways with him in her line of sight, rather than facing and looking at the teacher))



- (2) Teacher: Okay? ((addressing the class of 12 children))
- (3) Herman: TURN AROUND
- (4) Teacher: If you re[cognize your name, what are you going to do?
- (5) Herman: [Turn ArOU:::::::::::::::::::::::::::::nd]
- (6) ((Boy turns to look at the teacher, girl looks up at teacher))
- (7) Herman: Teacher, she ((point at girl)) [won’t turn arOU:::::nd]



- (8) Teacher: [You are going to raise your hand.] She’s okay Herman. Thank you.

The teacher resolves the conflict in Line 8 by telling Herman that Petra is okay, but Herman is not satisfied. Similar to Alice in the example above, Herman verbally complies with the teacher's assessment but continues the conflict nonverbally, through his posture, facial expressions, and eye gaze. Petra also participates in the continued nonverbal conflict (see Lines 9 through 27 below). The children participate in a nonverbal duel. In Line 10, Petra shoots Herman a winner's stare, looking smugly at him. Herman scoots close to a friend, Alano, and lies on his back, looking at Petra with a hurt expression, but with a steady gaze (see Line 12). In Line 15 Petra cocks her head to one side. By Line 17 Herman disengages his gaze with Petra for a moment and reorients to the teacher and the ongoing lesson, then looks back to Petra to continue the duel. However, as is the structure of these classroom conflicts, the children will eventually be reengaged in the ongoing lesson. By Line 21 Herman is gaining solace from Alano by snuggling into his back and at this point closes his eyes. It is not until Line 24 that Petra disengages her stare at Herman, reorients to the teacher, and gives a smile.

The teacher is aware of Herman and Petra's continued nonverbal conflict but does not mark it. Instead, she asserts her authority by continuing her lesson without addressing their ongoing conflict. Note that classroom conflicts do not need to be resolved, but can simply fade as students reengage with classroom activities¹² as happens with this conflict. Eventually this conflict fades as the teacher diverts Herman's attention in Lines 22, 25, and 27 in her ongoing lesson.

- (9) Herman: *[(Hunches over, scoots toward another boy, Alano, sitting next to him)]*
 (10) Petra: *[(stares smugly at Herman)]*
 (11) Teacher: If you see your name raise your hand.
 (12) Herman: *[(scoots a little behind the boy near him, and lays against his back while continuing to hold a steady gaze on Petra with a hurt expression on his face.)]*



- (13) Teacher: Look at it really hard. (.)
 (14) Herman: *[(buries his cheek into the boy's back, continuing to stare at Petra with a hurt expression)]*
 (15) Petra: *[(Continues to give Herman a smug look, cocking her head to one side.)]*
 (16) Teacher: Okay.
 (17) Herman: *[(Looks up at the boy whose back he is on, raises his body up)]*
 (18) Herman: 'huh?'
 (19) Alano: (Alano has not changed his position. Herman continues to hunch over his crossed legs resting his chin on his left fist.)
 (20) Teacher: Who thinks they know

- (21) Herman: *[[Lays against the Alano's back again, and this time lowers his eyes as he buries his cheek and right eye into Alano's back while hugging him with his left hand.]]*
- (22) Teacher: whose name this is?
- (23) Herman: *[[Closes his eyes and rests on the back of the Alano.]]*
- (24) Petra: *[[Disengages her stare, and turns to look at the teacher, leaning back on her hands, with a slight smile on her face.]]*
- (25) Teacher: This is [Herman's name.
- (26) Herman: *[[He looks up at the teacher with a smile on his face, mouth open]]*
- (27) Teacher: Okay? Herman start recognizing your name. You're going to be going to kindergarten soon

Clearly, authority to define right and wrong in situations of conflict is a negotiated process that ultimately leads children to understand how to behave in school-appropriate ways. Not only do teachers discipline children, but children discipline other children, and in some cases appeal to the teacher to support them. In the previous example of Adam and Alice, the teacher supported Adam's discipline of Alice, perhaps because Alice chose to display her opposition to the teacher nonverbally. In this example, the teacher does not support Herman's discipline of Petra, and while the conflict also continues nonverbally (as with the previous example), in this case, the continued conflict is among peers rather than challenging the teacher's authority. In both of these examples, notice that the teacher's resolution to the conflict required compliance in the verbal channel in which the lesson was occurring but allowed for continued dissent in the nonverbal channel. In the case of Alice, though, she was essentially punished by not being chosen as the next speaker until she was the very last child on the mat, even though she was the only child raising her hand for inclusion in the "telling the news" activity. Herman and Petra, on the other hand, were both allowed to continue their nonverbal conflict with each other until Herman became engaged in the ongoing lesson. Eventually, in both cases, the children were reengaged in the ongoing classroom activity, thus maintaining the teacher's ultimate authority over classroom behavior while providing room within the classroom structure for student dissent.

In the next example, student dissent disrupts the ongoing lesson. In this case, Kevin rejects an aide's authority to tell him how to behave in the classroom by inverting their roles, trying to silence the aide by shushing her.

In this example, Kevin rhythmically hits Maria (another student) in the stomach during class recitation of numbers. He is sitting right in front of the teacher, but the teacher ignores his behavior. While Maria does not complain, the classroom aide (sitting at the back of the mat) eventually tells Kevin to stop hitting Maria. Kevin does not accept this reprimand. Instead, he "shushes" the aide (in Line 11), then "shushes" our camera (in Line 12). He shushes the two external authority figures that are monitoring his actions (Lines 11 and 12). He does not shush the teacher, as she is not monitoring him even though he is sitting directly in front of her hitting his fellow student. In that shushing moment, Kevin overtly rejects the aide's admonition of his behavior but stops hitting Maria. The response of the aide is interesting. When Kevin moves from shushing her to shushing our camera, the aide looks back at us and starts to laugh. In this moment, rather than following up on her original reprimand, the aide is amused (Line 13) and leaves him alone.

Example 4.

- (1) All: [4, 5,]
- (2) Kevin: *[[hitting Maria in stomach with each count of a number]]*
- (3) All: [6, 7, 8!]
- (4) Aide: [Kevin!]
- (5) Teacher: Vicente? [How many bowls we have here?]
- (6) Aide: *[[goes on hands and knees toward Kevin] Kevin,*

- (7) Teacher: [1, 2,]
 (8) Aide: ((in a low voice)) Keep your hands on your own body.
 (9) Teacher: [3, 4 . . .]
 (10) Kevin: ((turns and *meanly* looks at the aide and raises his index finger to his lips)) Shhhh!



- (11) Kevin: ((turns to the camera)) Shhhh!



- (12) Teacher: 7, 8, 9
 (13) Aide: ((looks back at us behind the camera and starts to laugh, looks at Kevin and *smiles* with an underlying chuckle))

Even though Kevin disputes the aide's authority to tell him he is wrong in this conflict situation, he stopped hitting Maria, resolving the immediate conflict. Kevin and Maria attend to the ongoing lesson.

Amusement at children's rejection of the teacher/aide's authority happened somewhat frequently in the data. What starts as a point of conflict (where the teacher expects compliance and the child explicitly rejects the teachers authority) can turn into a playful elaboration of a lesson where the offending student becomes the center of the teacher's attention in a way that can be enjoyable for the child while allowing the teacher to press her point without rebuke. When the situation becomes so funny that the teacher stops correcting the behavior, then the child can continue bending the

rules as long as the teacher continues to be amused. In this way, making the teacher laugh can buy some “wobble room” in the rules for classroom behavior. Humor becomes one of the interactional contingencies that can be used to subvert the established social order (Evaldsson 2002) and, in so doing, become one of the interactional contingencies of classroom conventions.

Concluding Remarks

Children are learning how to handle conflict in the classroom, often looking to teachers and aides for validation that they are interpreting, understanding, and acting on the rules correctly, with conflicts more often fading than having a marked resolution. Sometimes children go to authority figures for help, and sometimes authority figures intervene without invitation. As teachers become involved in handling children’s disputes, the children may respond in a variety of ways. Ultimately, teachers define the validity of, and appropriate paths toward resolution for classroom conflicts, with some margin for student dissent and negotiation through verbal and nonverbal means. In addition to learning to subvert authority, children are also learning that authority is not always fair, nor do they always follow the rules. Children can assert their agency by rejecting teachers’ admonitions as long as they keep their actions in a nonverbal channel, or use humor to alter the rules.

As schools raise children to participate in adult society, preschool children are learning how to do conflict in context-appropriate ways to achieve cohesive social interaction. Children are learning the “rules of engagement” for expression of disagreements, and the various ways in which the rules can be suspended, enforced, or changed in process. The rules of engagement are learned early, as part of a process of socialization into a moral system, a process of learning “right” and “wrong,” but also how to effect one’s moral stance. Simultaneously, children are learning that power and authority trump rules, yet their own interactive power (e.g., through the use of humor) may trump authority. Ultimately, the routines of the classroom provide moral socialization, peer socialization, and socialization of authority negotiation in interaction.

Appendix Transcription Conventions

Data are transcribed according to a modified version of the system developed by Jefferson and described in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), with the following notation added.

Bold: Boldface indicate some form of emphasis.

Overlap Slashes: Double slashes (//) provide an alternative method of marking overlap.

Comments: Double parentheses (()) enclose material that is not part of the talk being transcribed, frequently indicating gesture or body position.

Problematic Hearing: Material in single parentheses (XXXX) indicates a hearing the transcriber was uncertain about.

Italics: Italics are used to distinguish comments in parentheses about nonvocal aspects of the interaction.

Clapping: Small x’s indicate a clap, e.g., (x,x,x,x) indicates four claps in a row.

Breathiness, Laughter: An h in parentheses (hhh) indicates plosive aspiration, which could result from breathiness or laughter.

Notes

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1. *Morality* defined as “conformity to the rules of right conduct.” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/morality>, Retrieved 7/29/09.

2. For work on even younger children, see Kidwell and Zimmerman (2006), and Lerner and Zimmerman (2003).

3. Maynard studied both the structure, and function of arguments among first-grade children in the classroom (1985a, 1985b) and argued that studies on conflict talk “are mostly formalistic and describe patterns in “uncontexted” fragments of talk (Grimshaw, 1990:324)” (1985b:207).

4. *Teacher* is used generically and specifically. When used as a generic, it refers to a classroom authority figure, whether a teacher or an aide.

5. While this work looks at conflict talk in the teacher-gated classroom setting, the previous work looked at the role of gender (LeMaster 2006; LeMaster and Hernandez-Katapodis 2002; LeMaster et al. 1998). Other studies that have looked at gender in the classroom include Eder (1990), Thorne (1993), Sadker and Sadker (1994), Lee (1996), Swann (1998), Farris (2000), Kyratzis and Jiansheng (2001), Julé (2004), and Kimmel (2006).

6. This work was supported, in part, by a Spencer Foundation Small Grant, 2000–2001.

7. Please see LeMaster and Hernandez-Katapodis (2002) for a detailed analysis of hand-raising and use of eye gaze.

8. See LeMaster and Hernandez-Katapodis (2002:228) for more details on this ethnographic situation which describes how children’s gender may be one of the keying (Goffman 1974) factors for teachers in selection of student participation.

9. This transcription has been modified from the previously published transcription (LeMaster and Hernandez-Katapodis 2002:228) to reflect refinements that better match the original audiovisual data.

10. For a more in-depth analysis of this sequence, see LeMaster and Hernandez-Katapodis (2002).

11. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for comments on this section.

12. Whether these conflicts are resolved, or may be sustained over time, cannot be known within a single interaction.

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