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Horowitz, Rosalind (Ed.) (2007). *Talking Texts: How Speech and Writing Interact in School Learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

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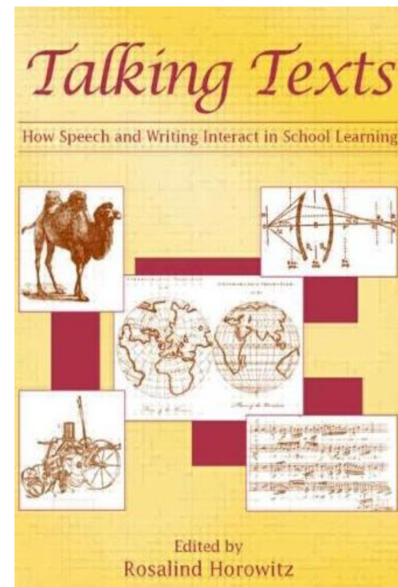

At every level of scholarly practice and inquiry, the oral and the written emerge, mingle, intertwine and become activated to generate new knowledge in a carnevalistic symbiosis. This is the core message of Rosalind Horowitz's anthology, which sets out to guide its readers through the educational repertoire, pronouncing the message that, although the previous century praised the written form of the language, since the 1990s, largely with the development of Speech Communication as a scientific pursuit of its own, it is now time for the oral to take precedence. *Talking Texts: How Speech and Writing Interact in School Learning*, elicited, edited, prefaced, co-authored, and compiled by Horowitz, is an impressive volume of nearly five

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hundred pages, strongly underlining the argument that speech is a prerequisite to writing. Horowitz posits "oral discourse as central to the creation of knowledge" and asks "how oral texts can be successfully interconnected to written texts" (p. xi), in an attempt to help learners who may not seem to respond to the traditional reading-writing approach to accruing knowledge. At the same time, the book addresses the issues of "agency and academic identity" as the ultimate goals of education.

Rosalind Horowitz is a professor of discourse and literacy studies in the College of Education and Human Development, University of Texas at San Antonio. Named as a distinguished alumna of the University of Minnesota, she has served as a visiting scholar to Russia and at the University of Toronto. She recently was appointed to the executive committee of the International Society for Speech, Writing and Context.

The contributors to the volume represent a wide selection of distinguished scholars with an interdisciplinary and international set of backgrounds, mostly in North America but stretching through Northern Europe and Israel to Hong Kong and Beijing, no doubt reflecting Horowitz's global networks. The authors' expertise ranges from Communication Studies and Practices, Linguistics, English, Education, Human Development and Psychology to History, Theology, Literature, Journalism, Visual Arts, and Music. The potential audience of Talking Texts extends from professionals of pre-school education to every level of teaching up to tertiary education.

The book is divided into four parts, each with unifying themes, and consists of a total of 20 chapters. Part 1, containing two chapters, is concerned with Creating Discourse and Mind. Chapter 1 is an introduction written by the editor, which, while presenting the other 19 chapters and their authors, draws together important issues concerning the dynamism of talk. In this chapter Horowitz discusses text and talk across the curriculum, illustrating the use of oral communication in different disciplines and suggesting differences between the various disciplinary domains.

Although Rosalind Horowitz's view of talk and text is highly academic in its approach and references, she has made every effort to render her theory applicable to real-world teaching, where "hybrid forms of communication" are a necessity (p. 23). She introduces the texts contained in the collection that truly engage in dialogue with their contributors' thoughts, topics, and arguments. Furthermore, this is one of the most thorough and well-referenced introductions to any scholarly

work that I have come across, testified to by its more than 10 pages of references drawn from discourse research all around the globe.

The second chapter, co-authored by Horowitz and David R. Olson, tackles talking texts and offers an interesting "Camel study" as an illustration of the learners' long and arduous path towards the use and crediting of sources in writing. The authors note that evaluation equates to judging the source (p. 66). Yet evaluation may also be understood in a wider sense as attitudinal marking; hence, using an evaluative 'speech act verb' (also termed 'reporting' or 'referring' verb) in citing oral or written discourse can be regarded as an act of evaluation (cf. Thompson and Hunston 2000). Horowitz and Olson also comment on the inaccessibility of a great many scientific/disciplinary texts (p. 57), which makes one wonder what would happen to school learning if all texts were to be adapted to students' own experiential world. The same problem has been recognized with reference to unauthentic, reconstructed texts in foreign language teaching materials (see, e.g., Ventola 1987; McCarthy 1991; Stenström, this volume).

The theme of Part 2 is Child, Adolescent, and Family Discourse: Everyday Conversation as Text Outside of Classroom Contexts. Amy Sheldon in Chapter 3, titled "Talk is Text", provides an interesting report on her study of 3 to 5-year-olds, and their varying capacities to produced gendered talk and to use "language to their own social advantages" (p. 107). In Chapter 4, titled "Teenage Talk in London" and drawing on the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT), Anne-Brita Stenström points out that the content of teenage chatting consists of more grammatical words than lexical ones (a ratio of 3:1), which Halliday (1989) called "dynamic and intricate" and supporting, rather than real discussion with arguments for and against (pp. 127–128, 130).

Chapter 5, by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, addresses dinner talk as a framework for "pragmatic socialization", that is, the talk children learn as family members. This is a very middle-class concept of sociable talk, and it is easy to see that the

shortage of this type of “intergenerational” socialization, which has become the reality for increasing numbers of children in the era of television and other electronic media– if not outright deprivation and poverty–will result in poorer opportunities in their education. Finally, Robert J. Bayley and Sandra R. Schecter, in Chapter 6, tackle the question of immigrant children’s preferred assimilation to English-medium education and their parents’ wish that the children retain their native language and culture in a situation where bilingualism is often considered only a transitional phase. Their case study reveals the different strategies used in parents’ attempts to support the learning of English and/or Spanish, attempts that are primarily dependent on the parents’ own command of English.

Part 3 of the volume, under the title of Exemplars of Forms of Talk and Their Evolution Inside of School Contexts consists of another set of five papers that consider talk within school and provide innovative teaching strategies within a theoretical framework of social constructivism. The first article (Ch. 7) is a contribution by a team made up of Kim T. Nguyen-Jahiel, Richard C. Anderson, Hung Hom, Martha Waggoner and Betty Rowell, who examine the use of “literature discussions to reason through real-life dilemmas”. The method described in this case study is termed Collaborative Reasoning (CR), which is used in the teaching of critical reading and thinking skills at an elementary level. CR refers to discussions in which students take the lead and suggest their ideas about and solutions to problems, with the teacher assuming the role of supportive facilitator and provider of scaffolding, rather than as an interpreter with his/her own view. This procedure resembles critical reading in a constructivist classroom.

In the same spirit, in Chapter 8 Isabel L. Beck and Margaret G. McKeown consider the issue of moving the burden of thinking in literature teaching to the students themselves with a technique called “Questioning the Author”, which demands more careful consideration than is usual of issues read in texts. Their conclusion is that, at the end of the day, the teacher is indispensable in proper meaning-making through the monitoring and subtle directing of students’

discussion work. Chapter 9, by William M. Saunders and Claude Goldenberg, in turn, introduces another interactive method, termed Instructional Conversation (IC), into English language learners' literature classes. Guided by their comparison of IC-based and traditional, teacher-led instruction, the authors conclude that, as regards the generation of higher-level thinking, IC far outperforms the traditional approach.

The topic of Chapter 10 by Douglas J. Hacker and Arthur C. Graesser is the role of dialogue in reciprocal teaching, i.e., scaffolded instruction, and naturalistic tutoring. The aim of reciprocal teaching is that "learning becomes intentional, ... self-regulated, and active" (p. 257). They raise an interesting question that asks what it is exactly that makes one-to-one tutoring more effective than group tutoring, and distinguished five major collaborative strategies that were applied most frequently in collaborative conversation: pumping, prompting, splicing, hinting, and summarizing. Although one-to-one feedback has its obvious advantages, we should not underestimate the role of peer feedback in larger groups, since peer discussion can have a great deal to contribute, especially in the later stages of education.

In the final article (Ch.11) of Part 3, Esther Geva presents an interesting discussion and several studies investigating the use of conjunctions in school children's oral language and reading. Conjunctions are indispensable in organizing texts into logical wholes. She rightly points out that this is a largely uncharted area of discourse analysis. As Geva (p. 287) puts it, and as we know from previous studies, the use of conjunctions and other explicit discourse markers is of particular importance for weaker readers who may be unable to decode more implicit, logical connections in expository written discourse.

Part 4, Developing Talk that Interacts with Text in Domains of Knowledge, deals with domain-specific texts and their dialogue with talk. Chapter 12 opens with Joseph L. Polman and Roy D. Pea addressing "transformative communication in project science learning discourse". The "learning paradox" caused by social constructivism and the "learning

by doing" ideology proves challenging when students' background knowledge is less than the new complex concept to be learned. Polman and Pea propose that the teacher should resort to scaffolding and to what Wertsch (1991) called "the intermental realm" and action as a solution (p. 298). Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development" is revived in transformative communication when the student is an active inquirer and the teacher an active guide (p. 301). Thus, the learning of science, for example, becomes possible in a discourse community of learners and guides with shared but asymmetrical roles.

Chapter 13 tackles the important role of talk in engineers' design, with Cheryl Geisler and Barbara Lewis suggesting how talk can remake the world. The authors contrast the social and natural sciences with the more humanistic sphere of design, implemented more often than not in collaboration. In their study, Geisler and Lewis discovered design narratives dealing with various aspects of the designers' assignment, including not only narratives about the end-users of their design but also various genres of written and spoken discourse. The authors propose a framework for a different kind of critical reading and for the teacher's role associated with it, which means that a mere synthesis of text and talk may very well be insufficient, with the implication that spoken and written discourse need to be considered from the point of view of their usefulness and acceptability.

The closing six chapters deal with the domains of literature, religion, the visual arts, and music. In an innovative chapter (14), Peter van Stapele considers dialogue in drama and a novel method of instruction. He posits the argument that education is based on the understanding and telling of stories (p. 337), and subsequently, he describes a method of how, employing Austin's (1962) speech act theory, students might learn to analyze and understand dramatic dialogue and ultimately transform a play-script into a theatrical performance by means of a metalinguistic toolbox.
In the following chapter (15) David Ian Hanauer, in turn, considers the construction of meaning in poetry reading through group discussion in elementary school. He defines a

poem as "a hierarchically structured set of patterns of similarity and contrast" (p. 367). Thus, meaning in poetry is constructed through polysemantic reading and multiple interpretations of poetry. Hanauer illustrates his theory by recounting experiences from his teaching of poetry to primary students in which the reading, writing, and discussion of poetry was conceived as a source of motivation (p. 369). Accordingly, poetry presented as a problem to be solved by a discussion group, in the spirit of Vygotsky's ZDP, is the best guarantee for learning even at elementary level (p. 373).

Chapter 16, by Philomena Donnelly and Kieran Egan, continues with the theme of reflective talk, reminding the reader that oral cultures have generally preceded their written counterparts. Donnelly and Egan describe a Socratic structure, that is, a technique, termed "Thinking Time", that encourages young children to reflect on language and discuss different types of texts, the teacher's role remaining that of facilitator. Their paper stands out from the otherwise uniformly formal academic style of the volume and their exemplification would have benefited from some pruning.

Chapter 17, in turn, is quite different, a philosophical essay, in which Jacob Neusner takes the unprepared reader on a journey through antiquity, starting from Socrates' contemplations and Plato's dialogues, to the teaching of the Talmud. He considers the Talmud a most powerful exercise in written thought, its discussions embedded in dialectical arguments, "where 'talk about texts' finds its most appropriate case in a text that is meant to stimulate talk" (p. 398). The chapter provides an interesting, although somewhat abstruse, analog to previous chapters and their ways of conducting discussion.

In Chapter 18, Brent Wilson discusses visual artwork as a prompter for turning art into spoken discourse. He describes an approach termed discipline-based art education (DBAE), used to elicit collaborative discussion and interpretation of the meaning of artworks in school. In an experiment comparing the quality of art interpretations by DBAE and non-DBAE student cohorts, he found that the specific

teaching of visual art interpretation had a positive effect on students' discussions. Interestingly, Wilson concludes that the DBAE approach has implications for any type of criticism across the curriculum – even scientific writing.

Jeanne Bamberger, in Chapter 19, provides a new perspective on talking texts in a case study recording young students while they discuss their musical perception. Bamberger's theoretical background dealing with ways of making sense of texts derives from two concepts of reflection, that is, map-making and path-making. She compares these to Dewey's prior (1929) notions of "temporal qualities" and "temporal order", respectively. According to Bamberger, these different modes of reflection are discernible in school performance, either as a more conventional ability to manipulate symbols (path-making) or as a more creative and inventive approach to order (map-making) (pp. 439–41). She concludes with the recommendation that through exploration of the ways learners interpret texts, teaching should encompass "collaborative conversation" rather than merely the transfer of a conventional curriculum.

Proceeding to the final chapter of Part 4, the reader finds another, now retrospective summary of the preceding chapters, underlining the importance of talk in texts that are talking and talked about. Carl H. Fredriksen's postscript functions as a review of the whole volume: he suggests that "by conceptualizing 'talk about text' as a type of situated classroom activity, we can better understand and analyze how talk and written texts interact in specific learning situations" (p. 465). As regards future research in the field of "talking texts", he suggests three avenues for exploration. There is a need, he claims, (1) to produce more detailed analyses of classroom discourse across the curriculum with special attention to cognitive, interactive, and situational processes; (2) to determine effective discourse for scaffolding purposes; and (3) to trace such classroom situations that consistently develop students' cognitive, communicative and social skills (p. 477).

To conclude, it is difficult to find anything more negative to point out, in critical terms, in this volume edited by Rosalind Horowitz's, than a harmless lapse into "this century" when the 20th century was meant after the turn of the millennium (p. 56). And perhaps another, if I try hard, namely the spelling of my own surname in a few references. But all in all, this is an excellent book that, hopefully, will become worn with use as it passes through many hands at every level of academia. Many of the chapters address similar themes and topics, yet their different solutions concerning research projects and studies make the anthology interesting reading even for instructors and scholars already thoroughly familiar with social constructive learning (and teaching) methods. In addition to their relevant contents, most chapters in the volume are exemplary in their rhetorical structure, mostly complying with the Swalesian CARS model (Swales 1990: 141), with claims of centrality, discussion of previous research, pointing to a gap, and announcing the text structure. Moreover, the ample use of headings and subheadings renders the book highly readable. As a volume consisting of as many as twenty distinct chapters, it is an example of science reporting par excellence. As a teacher working in a university language center, and working mainly with postgraduates, I found that many of the instructional techniques and settings described in Talking Texts initially struck me as "foreign". On further reading, however, it became clear that the same methods can be used and applied at any level of education.

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