Ventriloquation in Discussions of Student Writing: Examples from a High School English Class

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This study examines discussions of model papers in a high school Advanced Placement English classroom where students were preparing for a high-stakes writing assessment. Much of the current research on talk about writing in various contexts such as classroom discourse, teacher-student writing conferences, and peer tutoring has emphasized the social and constructive nature of instructional discourse. Building on this work, the present study explored how talk about writing also takes on a performative function, as speakers accent or point to the features of the context that are most significant ideologically. Informed by perspectives on the emergent and mediated nature of discourse, this study found that the participants used ventriloquation to voice the aspects of the essays that they considered to be most important, and that these significant chunks were often aphorisms about the test essay. The teacher frequently ventriloquated raters, while the students often ventriloquated themselves or the teacher. The significance of ventriloquation is not just that it helps to mediate the generic conventions of timed student essays; it also mediates social positioning by helping the speakers to present themselves and others in flexible ways. This study also raises questions about the ways that ventriloquation can limit the ways that students view academic writing.

Ventriloquation

Bakhtin's applications of voicing and dialogicality to the study of the novel have been widely understood to describe the heteroglossia inherent in all utterances. According to Bakhtin, "the living utterance [. . .] cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). As a specialized type of voicing, ventriloquation occurs when a speaker speaks through the voice of another for the purpose of social or interactional positioning (Wertsch, 1991; Wortham, 2001a). Bakhtin (1981) described the situation as follows:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment

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> of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (pp. 293-294).

The concept of a third voice that inhabits or speaks through the voice of the speaker is a helpful illustration of ventriloquation. In the case of a tutor or teacher, ventriloquation may be evident in the use of direct or indirect speech to speak through a distant authority (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999) or collective voice (Hermans & Kempen, 1995). By speaking through formulaic expressions or aphorisms, the teacher is linked to a specific time and location in the history of academic literacy (Bakhtin, 1986).

Goffman's (1981) insight that traditional speakers and hearers occupy multiple roles simultaneously during interaction contributed to our current understanding of voicing. Voicing, including ventriloquation, can add an "astonishing flexibility" (p. 147) to the possibilities for positioning speakers relative to their interlocutors:

> . . . we represent ourselves through the offices of a personal pronoun, typically "I," and it is thus a *figure*—a figure in a statement—that serves as the agent, a protagonist in a *described* scene, a "character" in an anecdote, someone, after all, who belongs to the world that is spoken about, not the world in which the speaking occurs. And once this format is employed, an astonishing flexibility is created. (Goffman, 1981, p. 147)

According to Goffman, even the use of the first-person pronoun allows the speaker to refer to the self that was—a hypothetical "figure" distinct from the current speaking self. But he took another step by asserting that second and third person pronouns allow the speaker to go even further to create other figures:

> One can see that by using second or third person in the place of first person we can tell of something someone *else* said, someone present or absent, someone human or mythical. We can embed an entirely different speaker into our utterance. For it is as easy to cite what someone else said as to cite oneself. (p. 149)

Through ventriloquation, speakers reveal aspects of their ideology, beliefs, opinions, views, and attitudes (Wortham, 2001b, 2001c). They may introduce evaluation of a person, object, or utterance, or they may highlight a main point or point out something that is instructionally significant. Since ventriloquated speech is often in the historical present, the utterances possess an eyewitness quality (Chafe, 1994). The speech represented may not necessarily be verbatim, or for that matter even real.

This interactional positioning may not always involve a conscious choice on the part of the speakers. The words that they choose to ventriloquate provide evidence of how their local meanings are shaped by larger institutional contexts

(Hanks, 2000). Thus, when commenting on a piece of writing, the speaker's use of discursive moves may mirror the ideology of that larger institutional context, reflecting "an artful way of speaking that sets up or represents a special interpretive frame within which the act of speaking is to be understood" (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 73). Mertz noted, "the structure of classroom discourse mirrors the ideology it seeks to impart at the same time as it directs attention to aspects of text that are ideologically significant" (1996, p. 231).

Research on talk about writing (e.g., Cicourel, 1992; Dyson, 1994; Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1996) has already established the multimodal nature of literacy acquisition. How writing is discussed, whether narrative, description, questioning, or critique (Wells, 1990, 2002), results in writing being understood in distinct ways. These insights have broad implications for the study of talk about writing. The joint position statement by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English asserts:

> Just as we construct meaning for texts that we read and write, so do we construct "readings" or interpretations of our students based upon the many "texts" they provide for us. [. . .] The language of this classroom assessment becomes the language of the literate classroom community and thus becomes the language through which students evaluate their own reading and writing (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1994, p. 11).

The question to be asked, then, is: What particular role does ventriloquation play in this process? As students master the special tool-kit (Wertsch, 1991) of social genres and languages required for participation in a literate classroom community, they must be able to ventriloquate through a speech genre, invoking its voice as their own. They may resist ventriloquating the voices of their teachers, or they may invoke these voices in the ongoing task of building and maintaining social identity. This process of ventriloquation has been specifically investigated among Asian women in diaspora (Bhatia & Ram, 2004) and ESL students negotiating multicultural identities (Hirst, 2003). Voicing more generally has also been observed in literacy activities, such as writers ventriloquating the diverse voices of their readership (Maynard, 1997) or voicing their own identities or perspectives in their writing (Ashley, 2001; Ashley & Lynn, 2003; Knoeller, 1998). But ventriloquation has not been explicitly investigated in the spoken discussions of student writing. Despite this gap in the research literature, a brief review of current research on discussions of student writing will illuminate how conversation analysis has contributed to a strong understanding of discursive structures in classroom interactions as well as in one-on-one or group tutoring. The work that I undertake here could not have been accomplished without the foundation of these earlier studies.

Ventriloquation and Speaking-Writing Connections

Much of the current research on talk about writing has relied on conversation analysis techniques that emphasize the social and constructive nature of student-teacher writing conferences and peer tutoring, frequently using topic of conversation as a unit of analysis (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Clark, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Olsher, 2002). Gere and Abbott (1985), for instance, noticed that the student writing groups they observed tended to stay focused on discussing writing. Freedman (1984) found gender and ethnic differences in the predominant topic of conversation: female and non-Anglo students preferred talking about logistics and procedures. Talk about writing has been assumed to promote apprentice-style learning (Dyson & Freedman, 2003), higher-order thinking skills (Ewald, 1999), revision (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997), and bilingual writing skills (Patthey-Chavez & Clare, 1996).

According to Vygotskian perspectives on learning, when writers interact with others to get feedback on their writing, they are actualizing the reader-writer relationship already implicit in the composition process. Writing entails appropriating a particular socio-cultural voice, learned through social interaction. Like the scaffolding metaphor, this learning is maximized when the interaction occurs in the learner's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), the theoretical space in which the student has comfortably mastered some aspects of the task, but can still benefit from assistance to move to a higher level of competence. This perspective on learning has prompted discourse analysis of the interaction that occurs during teacher-student and peer writing conferences, and has been useful for understanding how knowledge about writing is built up and understood (Sperling, 1994).

A number of studies in both L1 and ESL composition have examined the discourse of the writing conference (Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Walker & Elias, 1987). Researchers and teachers focusing on writing conferences have named roles for teachers and peers, such as editor, fellow craftsman, informant, and others (Cumming & So, 1996; DiPardo, 1993; Murray, 1979; Reid, 1994; Simmons, 1979; Sperling, 1995; Wilcox, 1997). Gender differences are one obstacle to effective talk about writing (Alvermann, Commeyra, Young, Randall, & Hinson, 1997; Black, 1998). Likewise, differences in ethnicity, class, personal history, or sexual orientation can impede effective interaction (Dysthe, 1996). Cultural differences in conversational turn-taking, deference for teachers, and expectations for involvement in an instructional encounter, among others, will undoubtedly have a significant effect on the variety of responses students will have during their writing conferences (Sperling, 1991, 1996).

Comparisons of conference discourse with classroom discourse patterns have shown significant transfer of interactional patterns from the large group to the one-on-one context. Cazden (1988) found that conferences held early in the semester,

for instance, consisted mainly of the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate patterns (I-R-E) frequently found in teacher-led classroom discussions (see also Mehan, 1979). Discussions recorded later in the semester did not follow this pattern. Instead, students began asking information questions or introducing new topics of discussion. The students also engaged in more backchanneling, a possible sign that they felt more comfortable about responding to the teacher in a "genuine discussion or dialogue" (Cazden, 1988, p. 66). Other conference research has yielded similar insights into the transfer of classroom interactional patterns to small-group or one-on-one interactions (Freedman & Katz, 1987).

Other studies have given attention to critical perspectives on talk about writing. Lea and Street (1998), for instance, conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 13 staff members and 26 students at two British universities regarding issues of authority and disputation of knowledge in academic discourse. Students responded that although they were aware that different courses have different requirements for academic writing, it was often difficult for them to gauge the essential differences and to write accordingly. Their writing assignments rarely made such implicit expectations accessible. For their part, teachers and tutors were comfortable with identifying and using the aspects of text that are considered essential for marking them as members of their respective discourse communities, but they could not articulate these details to their students. And although many claimed to know what successful writing looked like, they were unable to explain concepts such as "critical analysis" to the researchers or to their students. Lea and Street concluded that learning to write in the academy is a process of adapting to a social world with its many competing forms of knowledge-creating and knowledge-sharing.

Examining the roles of control and knowledge played out by teachers and students during writing conferences and theorizing from a social reproduction view of schooling, Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) suggested that new pedagogies actually change very little when laminated onto the existing structures of schooling and customary teacher/student exchanges, what they called the "dominant interpretive framework." Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo concluded that while critical theories may reveal the roles of schools in perpetuating current power distributions, they have not done enough to show how these processes actually maintain power imbalances. The authors suggested that microanalyses of teacher-student interactions might help to clarify these processes. Other studies have observed that children who have learned different ways of being literate at home are unfamiliar with the interactional patterns of academic literacy (Gutierrez, 1995; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). Differences between formal and informal collaborative writing among high school students also help to illustrate ways that participant status, writing task, and access to knowledge mediate authority (Shuman, 1993). Studies of the co-construction and self-construction of identity by students (Leander, 2002; Wortham, 2000, 2003a, 2003b), of teachers responding to curricular

reform (Leander & Osborne, 2008), of the dynamic emergence of genre in early literacy development (Kamberelis, 1999, 2001; Kamberelis & Scott, 1992), and of group work in college writing classes (Frazier, 2007) have also made productive use of microanalytic approaches to discourse analysis.

These efforts suggest that the study of academic literacy should be undertaken as primarily a micro-analysis of interaction strategies. They have also helped to solidify a methodological foundation for micro-analysis of naturally-occurring discourse that relies on sequences of interaction (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005). Such an analysis can yield insights into implicit forms of classroom interaction that will not be immediately apparent, but can confer advantages on those who are familiar with them (Macbeth, 2003). This review demonstrates that although our current understanding of talk about writing has yet to examine interactional strategies for ventriloquation, an investigation into ventriloquation in discussions of writing will build onto established work, and will likely open new questions for the study of talk about writing.

Research Questions

In order to investigate ventriloquation in discussions of student-written texts, and thereby expand the theoretical base for constructivist approaches to talk about writing, I considered how the participants used ventriloquation while discussing model papers. The following research questions guided my investigation:

1. How did the teacher and the students employ ventriloquation to represent their views of the student essays?
2. How did the teacher and the students differ in the ways they ventriloquated themselves and other participants, both real and hypothetical?
3. For what possible reasons did the teacher and the students employ ventriloquation in this context?

To address these questions, I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in a senior English class, collecting episodes of focused discussions of essay models that were intended to help students prepare for an essay examination. These episodes all occurred during a unit on Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* during the spring of 2001.

Design of the Study

In 2001-2002, I studied the discourse resources used in two writing assessment contexts: students preparing for an essay exam and raters preparing to score the exams (Samuelson, 2004). I will report on the results of the first context here. I examined spoken data from the high school English class, where seniors were preparing for the Advanced Placement English Literature examination. I used complementary

ethnographic and linguistic methods to examine situations in which the teacher and her students expressed their opinions about samples of student writing.

Setting and Participants

A Senior Advanced Placement English Class at President High School

President High School was a large comprehensive public institution, located on the urban fringe of a major metropolitan region. It did not offer charter, magnet, or Title 1 programs, although a performing arts academy attracted some students who might otherwise have gone to private schools. In 2000-2001, approximately 20% of the student body qualified for free lunches, a proportion far below that of many urban schools.[1] President's campus was a cluster of freestanding buildings surrounding a large quadrangle: a snack bar, a multipurpose room, two gyms, a new swimming pool, a two-story classroom building, administrative offices, and a row of temporary classrooms painted and landscaped to look permanent. The campus was nestled alongside a neighborhood of ranch-style homes. Given the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic nature of the city, President served a diverse student body that included White (40%), Asian-American (23%), Hispanic (22%), Filipino (10%), and African American (3%) students at the time of the study.[2]

The Teacher. Jean, the head of the English department at President, was a white teacher with over twenty years of teaching experience. She had been active in the local chapter of the National Writing Project as a teacher-consultant[3] and had participated extensively in rating sessions for essay examinations. In addition to these professional activities, she was pursuing a doctoral degree in literacy education. I selected Jean's classroom because I hoped to capture examples of fairly typical discussions of writing. Since she was not attempting an innovative approach to writing instruction, her class was ideal for the fieldwork that I proposed.

Like many veteran teachers, Jean did not espouse a single rhetorical stance. Her theory of writing pedagogy and assessment did not fit well into any single category (Hillocks, 1999, 2002). Some of her teaching approaches gave evidence of this. She invited students to engage in literacy practices that would foster discussion and encourage a life-long habit of reading and writing. The students kept logs of the books they had been reading for pleasure; they wrote poetry for submission to a local contest; and they created posters and artwork to illustrate important concepts in their readings. They developed their interpretations of *The Metamorphosis* by drawing pictures depicting their views of themselves in society. Later they blocked scenes from *Hamlet* and directed short performances in class. Class and small group discussions provided students with opportunities to consider how meaning was constructed through the language choices made by the authors.

Jean was fully aware of the importance of rhetorical stances and explained to her students that they needed to be aware of what would be expected in their test essays. She reminded them that the rhetorical stance of many tests could be

described as "current-traditional" (Hillocks, 1999, 2002). During one discussion of rhetorical differences between British and American essay styles, she gave the following synopsis of an introduction in American academic writing:

> . . . in the United States, this kind of academic discourse, you start the intro, it's all about context, a little bit of the prompt quoted [uc] and then boom, [uc] it's the judgment . . . (see Appendix A for Transcription Key).

While she adopted a variety of pedagogical approaches, when it came to justifying the benefits of learning to write in a current-traditional style, she asserted that mastering analytical literacy skills would confer significant advantages in college and beyond:

> I also know that if you can master the kinds of thinking and writing that I'm asking you to do now, that it will save you so much time as you continue with your academic careers, and I also know it will work, it will transfer [. . .] to other areas of your life, that might even include choosing the person you marry, buying a car. The kind of analytical thinking that I'm asking you to do has real life applications as well as ones for your academic career.

In order to model the style of writing she wanted them to emulate in their test papers, and in order to help her students achieve the purported rewards of this analytical style, Jean frequently presented model papers written by current and former students as examples. These discussions of model papers became a source of analytic episodes for my discourse analysis.

Jean's descriptions of writing frequently employed imagery of performance in artistic and athletic activities. Dancing, gymnastics, and figure-skating were favored metaphors, since all had strong artistic elements and required absolute control. She frequently emphasized that being able to write analytically meant being able to prepare for and deliver a convincing performance. In Jean's words: "So it's not about you having the answer, it's about you being able to dance the dance, you being able to show that you can think analytically on paper."

The Students. The Advanced Placement English class was larger than average for President, as it was Jean's policy to admit as many students as possible. In order to be admitted, students had to submit a writing portfolio containing both polished and rough writing samples, as well as letter grades received for all English classes; descriptions of accomplishments, interests, and career goals; and a list of books read for pleasure. The portfolio also included a timed essay written by the student at the end of the junior year. Students who were not admitted to Jean's class could still take an AP preparation class with a different, less experienced teacher. I observed some of Jean's colleagues commenting negatively about the toughness of these standards and the exclusion of students who could not meet them, but I was not

able to pursue a thorough investigation of this situation. The full diversity of the student body was not reflected in the make-up of the class: no African American or Hispanic students were enrolled in the class. I was not able to determine the precise reasons for their lack of representation. The African American population of the school only reached 3%, so the fact that they were missing from Jean's class is perhaps not so surprising. However, it is more striking that there were no Hispanic students in the class, as they made up 20% of the student population in the high school; my research did not examine what accounted for their absence from the class.

The students sat in two nested U-shaped rows facing the front of the room, which was crowded with Jean's desk, a worktable, bookshelves, and an overhead projector. All were seniors; many were previously-tracked honors students; others had never taken any honors courses at all.

During my second visit, Jean gave me some class time to invite the students to participate in my project. I explained that I was interested in the impact of testing on daily classroom activities. Indeed, although the class was ostensibly preparing for the AP, they were subjected to a large number of achievement tests, high school exit exams, and writing placement exams. Out of a class of 33, 19 students agreed to participate.

Marcia: A focal student. During my fieldwork, I selected eight focal students for a balance of gender and first languages (Mandarin, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Finnish, Russian, and English). Marcia was a first-language English speaker who emerged as a student whose discourse was particularly rich in ventriloquation. While all of the focal students spoke freely during their interviews with me, Marcia also spoke up frequently in class and thus her appearances in the data record followed a thread from classroom discussions to interviews. Marcia wrote the following self-description during the unit on The Metamorphosis to depict her view of herself in society:

> I know myself best. . . . I know my family next best. . . . My best friends are next. . . . Society doesn't have faces. I don't really know them. I only get glimpses.

This is the voice of a girl whose life was characterized by a closely-knit family and a small set of friends. She always sat next to her best friend, Cherry, in class, attended the same church, and planned to room with her at college. I interviewed Marcia and Cherry together the first time, then separately for the paper discussions. Marcia was active in drama, directing a play at a community center and participating in various drama activities at school. Jean told me that she thought Marcia was "brilliant," and she sometimes used Marcia's work as a student model for the class. Much to Jean's surprise, though, Marcia did not get an AP score that was high enough to satisfy the writing requirement at her university in the fall.

Data Collection

I visited Jean's class two to three times per week for three months during the spring semester. While observing in the classroom, I collected audio recordings of class discussions and wrote observer notes. I completed my extensive field notes after leaving the site. The class period lasted 45 minutes and preceded a school-wide study period dedicated to "sustained silent reading" (SSR) and other quiet activities, during which most of the students remained in Jean's room and worked individually or in small groups. I remained at the school during these study periods and used the time to interview students.

I held two semi-structured interviews with each of the focal students: a preliminary interview and an evaluation interview. The preliminary interview focused on gathering background information: linguistic and cultural backgrounds, educational history, plans for university studies, recent writing assignments, and concerns about their writing. The evaluation interview was dedicated to discussing a number of student essays. Explaining that they were not being tested for "right" answers, I asked each interviewee to critique a set of papers. I asked probing questions and elicited comments on the essays and on the students' views of writing examinations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As a participant observer, I also used everyday conversations as a means of interviewing, especially with Jean (Dewalt, 2002). I gathered additional data through observation of informal activities that occurred before and after class (Stake, 1995).

I observed three literature units during my visits to Jean's class (*The Metamorphosis*, *Hamlet*, and *The Stranger*), and chose to focus on the Kafka unit. This choice was largely a matter of the particularly rich data I was able to collect during this unit. During the unit, students engaged in artistic interpretations of their readings, depicting their relationship to society through sketches. They also worked in groups to create posters and 3-D models describing various characters, the plot progression, point of view, and the characteristics of cockroaches (even though they decided that Kafka's "despicable vermin" was not precisely a roach). At the rear of the room, they hung a large black flag in the shape of a large bug with a red apple stuck in its back. And they devoted a full period to a dance interpretation by a member of the class. Each of these activities contributed to a rich context for situating the practice essay discussions. During this unit, the students wrote their practice essay on the novella (Friday, March 2), received feedback on their introduction paragraphs (Tuesday, March 6), and submitted rewrites of their essays (Thursday, March 8).

Data Analysis

I pursued the data analysis in two separate steps, first focusing on content analysis of my field notes, then selecting and analyzing transcripts of target episodes. I explored connections between discourse analytic approaches to the study of talk

about writing and constructivist theories of writing assessment, with the goal of identifying discourse resources. I employed micro-level approaches to discourse analysis for examining linguistic particulars (Gee, 1996, 1999; Wortham, 2001a) and macro-level approaches reflecting Bourdieu's sociocultural theory (1991) for examining ideological and contextual factors. I relied on data and method triangulation to establish trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). For triangulation using multiple data sources, I examined interview data, transcripts of class episodes in which student papers were discussed, sample papers written by focal students, and test preparation materials created by the teacher. To ensure methodological triangulation, I employed techniques drawn from educational anthropology (Collins, 1996; Mertz, 1998), discourse analysis of naturally-occurring classroom discourse (Cazden, 1988; Macbeth, 2003; Rex & McEachen, 1999; Rex, Steadman, & Graciano, 2006; Schiffrin, 1994), and analysis of interactional positioning (Wortham, 2001a).

Step One: Content Analysis of Field Notes

To contextualize my discourse analysis of selected episodes, I first conducted an extensive content analysis of my observer notes, field notes, student papers, and classroom documents such as handouts and overhead transparencies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This step focused specifically on features such as discourse activities, writing practices, mention of exam(s), mention of writing conventions, and emic concepts of mastery, all of which could influence the evaluation of writing. These categories aided in the selection of episodes for transcription and provided background for the discourse analysis of these episodes in Step Two.

Step Two: Transcription and Analysis of Selected Episodes

I defined the episodes I sought as literacy events (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005) in which participants engaged in discussion of a written student text, with the physical paper of the text preferably at hand. I particularly sought episodes in which close attention was given to the language of the papers. Poole's (2003) categorization of spoken discourse-written text connections that occur in situated literacy events helped in the process of identifying episodes. According to her framework, I particularly sought episodes in which speakers made spoken reference to a text, repeated it, or paraphrased it. I identified 21 such episodes, which I transcribed and analyzed using methods drawn from studies of real-time interaction in educational settings (Cazden, 1988; Collins, 1996; Mertz, 1996, 1998). Following Chafe (1980), I marked idea units at the boundaries of major tone groups with periods and minor tone groups with commas, assuming that breaks in speech reflect a change in the speaker's object of consciousness. I highlighted all occurrences of direct speech with a special notation marking the opening (Q<) and closing (>Q) of each direct quote: e.g. "Q< text >Q". The full transcription key can be found in Appendix A. I coded the transcripts for four

discursive resources that have been linked to ventriloquation: metapragmatic verbs, quotation, evaluative indexicals, and epistemic modalization (Wortham, 2001a). Brief definitions of each follow below, with examples from the data.

METAPRAGMATIC VERBS. Speakers and writers use metapragmatic verbs (Wortham, 2001a) to characterize the speech or thought of others. These verbs have been called mental processes (think, believe, dream) and verbal processes (say, tell, shout). The verbs are sometimes described as projecting the quoted utterances following them (Halliday, 1994). The following examples taken from classroom discussions are typical of the data:

(b) If you just **say** Q<Through diction, The Metamorphosis shares the plight of modern man,>Q or Q<the isolation of modern man>Q, you're missing the point. (Jean)
(c) I don't **think** it's a theme. (Darla, a student).

While these examples are considered value-neutral and do not convey much information about context, many metapragmatic words do contain the speaker's evaluative stance towards the person being quoted; for instance, "he **whined**;" "he **snarled**;" "he **chirruped**."

EPISTEMIC MODALIZATION. This device (Wortham, 2001a) makes use of verb tenses and modal verbs to modulate the speaker's perspective on the events or utterances being described. Some examples from the data include:

(c) They ***will know*** you're under pressure; you've only got 40 minutes (Jean).
(e) OK. So you***'re*** a reader, and you***'re going*** with it, and you ***think*** . . . (Jean).

While discussing clichés, Jean switched to an epistemic future tense to remind the students that at the future testing date the raters reading their essays would know that they wrote their papers under time pressure (d). She used simple present "be" and "think" and present progressive "go" to invite students to put themselves in the place of the raters (e).

QUOTATION. Quotation combines metapragmatic verbs and epistemic modalization to represent some utterance that can be attributed to someone or something (Wortham, 2001a). Quotations can range from the imitative, which attempt to reproduce the original utterance as faithfully as possible, to the indirect, which translate the original message. By choosing and framing utterances, the speaker can add his or her evaluative comments. A recent coding scheme devised by Semino and Short (2004) accounts for *represented speech, writing, and thought*, including direct, indirect, free indirect, and free direct. Semino and Short describe a special category of projection in which the represented speech, writing, or thought is explicitly projected as being hypothetical. I coded selectively for any type of quo-

tation of speech, writing, or thought (direct, indirect, free) that was deliberately hypothetical. For example, from an interview with a student:

(f) I'm reading it, **like**, Q<***oh, that's good about the grandma. Oh, dad, oh, school***>Q. I'**m like**, Q<***oh so?***>Q (Tony, a student, commenting on a paper during an interview).

In (f), Tony is using a quoting device that has emerged fairly recently in the speech of speakers of American English. "Be like," "go," and "like" are quotatives that are likely to precede very imitative quotations, replacing older quotative devices such as "say" and "think" as a still marked means of introducing an imitative performance (Buchstaller, 2003; Fox Tree, 2007; Fox Tree & Tomlinson, 2008). This imitative quality can be seen in Tony's self-quotation. It can also be observed in Jean's use of "like" to demonstrate the desired impact of a "two-by-four obvious" thesis statement:

(g) So what you're trying to do when you write about *The Metamorphosis* is include something that is like two-by-four obvious, **like** Q<***bonk!***>Q (Jean).
(h) You know what that tells the reader. That reader **says** Q<***Oh good, she's read the question***>Q (Jean).

Example (h) illustrates a more common instance of direct speech. It is introduced by the metapragmatic verb "say" and exhibits fewer imitative qualities, partially because the speaker (Jean) is reporting an imaginary statement. Reported speech has been described as an imaginary speech performance (Wierzbicka, 1974) or as a demonstration in which the speaker depicts rather than describes (Clark & Gerrig, 1990). These characterizations suggest that quotations actually demonstrate particular utterances or ideas, and thereby highlight them.

Evaluative indexicals. Evaluative indexicals (Wortham, 2001a) may be expressions, adjectives, or adverbs (among others) that are typically associated with a particular idea. For example, as the year progressed and the members of the class established shared culture and communication patterns, two expressions became associated with Jean: "plug it in," and "get it." When Jean told her students to "plug it in," she meant that they were to incorporate their critical interpretation of the literature they had read into the thesis sentence and the rest of the essay. These and many other evaluative indexicals emerged throughout the period of my fieldwork in Jean's class. The evaluative indexicals in the following excerpt are marked in bold:

(i) Jean: What happens when you listen?
Student: I take notes.
Jean: But then do you say, Q<I don't ***get it***?>Q.
Student: No, I ***get it***. I just wish I could do it.
(j) I wrote down Q<so>Q. In other words, <Q ***plug in the meaning***>Q, and sometimes I wrote down Q<***plug in the meaning***>Q ((Jean, describing her written comments on student papers)).

Results

I begin this section with an ethnographic anecdote that serves as a starting point for analytic assertions about ventriloquation. In each of the four sections that follow, I demonstrate how speakers use ventriloquation to position themselves and others in flexible ways.

On an overcast morning in March a few days after the Kafka practice essay, I arrived at President well before the beginning of third period. As I helped Jean make photocopies and walked with her back to the classroom, she explained how she had found the essays full of worn-out clichés: many of the thesis statements sounded like "cross-stitch sampler" mottos. So concerned had she been that she conferred with other English faculty on how best to raise this issue in class.

Before introducing the model paper, she offered some general observations on their thesis statements, reminding the students, as she often did, that the opening paragraph should quote the prompt, summarize the plot in story present, and conclude with a thesis considering how some element of the reading added to the meaning. As she spoke, she wrote on the overhead projector: "How to write well . . . fast . . . analytically to show the significance of some novel you've studied." She spoke quickly, but paused occasionally to concentrate on her writing. She stopped briefly and waited for some students to nod in agreement. The nods came slowly and hesitantly. Then she tackled the issue of the clichés:

> These are big, big ideas, and when you wrote your papers some of you wrote something that was smaller than big, and you got to just stay with the big, because you're under pressure. They will know you're under pressure; you've only got 40 minutes. Your thesis has to have something that's not a cliché, remember that? When we were talking about not a cliché, Q<appearances are deceiving,>Q and not something so small that it ignores the impact of the entire book. Uh, you can't say Q<through diction, *The Metamorphosis* shows the plight of modern man,>Q you know what I'm saying? It's like if I said Q<how do you like this Ferrari?>Q and you say Q<I really like the doorknob.>Q You're missing something.

Jean paused briefly for emphasis, her excitement for the topic of the Ferrari growing. She continued, "A Ferrari is in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, there's an entire car, a red Ferrari from a certain time, the one that's in *Ferris Bueller* [. . .]" The students laughed appreciatively at this reference to a cult-status movie about high-school culture.

This "Ferrari" narrative set the stage for the model paper discussion. Before handing back their papers, Jean critiqued the students' thesis statements directly, explaining her margin comments, and then announcing that she would show them a paper that worked. This model paper had been written by a former student, although sometimes model papers written by classmates appeared as well. The prompt, which can be found in Appendix B, asked the writer to discuss elements

of literary realism and distortion. Although Jean spoke quickly and paused infrequently during the above segment of the class, the students participated extensively in the subsequent discussion. The transcript has been reproduced in Figure 1.

01	Jean:	OK, so the very first thing I said was to quote the prompt,
02		to summarize the plot,
03		and conclude paragraph one with a thesis,
04		could somebody read the opening paragraph?
05		Thanks.
06	Lisa:	((reading aloud)) *In* The Metamorphosis *by Franz Kafka, Gregor Samsa*
07		*wakes up one morning to find that he has been transformed into a "despicable*
08		*vermin." By no stretch of the imagination can this be termed "literary realism."*
09		*But by distorting the laws of physics and biology to turn Gregor into something*
10a		*that is physically so completely inhuman, Kafka is able to exaggerate the*
10b		*situation depicted and show the underlying*? ((rising intonation))
11	Jean:	Uh-hmmm.
12	Lisa:	((continuing to read)) *theme with a bold relief not appropriate to a more realistic work.*
13	Jean:	OK .. hold on.
14		Does the person quote the prompt?
15	Jeffry:	Yeah.
16	Jean:	[Where?
17	Lisa:	Q<Despicable vermin>Q.
18	Jeffry:	The prompt.
19	Jean:	Uh .. quoting the prompt.
20		Yeah.
21	Sam:	Literary realism.
22	Jean:	Literary realism.
23		See that quote from the prompt in there.
24		You know what that tells the reader,
25		that reader says Q<Oh good, she's read the question.>Q
26		Ok .. where else is the prompt quoted?
27	Max:	The word Q<distorted>Q
28	Jean:	The word Q<distortion>Q is there.
29		Some of you wrote your whole essay without saying the word Q<distortion>Q once,
30		And that's a gift.
31		You know .. that's just right there.
32		That's a gift.
33		So you want to use that …
34		Because it also makes you feel more grounded,
35		Uh … where is the person giving you the plot in short form?
36	Marcia:	At the beginning? ((rising intonation))
37	Jean:	Hmm?
38	Marcia:	At the beginning?
39	Jean:	Say that .. quote it.
40	Marcia:	Q<wakes up one morning to find that he has been transformed into a despicable vermin.>Q
41	Jean:	Good.

FIGURE 1: *Transcript of a discussion of a model essay on* The Metamorphosis

Figure 1: *Continued*

42		Now is the meaning in the last sentence? (.6)
43	Wong:	I'm not sure about Q<bold relief>Q.
44	Jean:	It's an art term .. it means that the .. it's easy to see.
45	Leann:	But she doesn't tell the theme.
46	Jean:	No .. no .. she doesn't does she,
47		but tell me this,
48		do you get the feeling that she knows it?
49		You only read one paragraph,
50		do you get a sense that you're going to learn it soon?
		((Leann shrugged her shoulders. A few students said "no."))
51		Do you?
52		You don't either ...
53		You don't know.
54		OK. So you're a reader,
55		and you're going with it,
56		and you think,
57		Q<Ok this person writes intelligently,>Q
58		right?
59		Q<Quoted the prompt,>Q
60		Q<so let's hope that we get the theme,>Q
61		but it's not there.
62		I'm recommending that you put the theme in the first paragraph, but she didn't,
63		but this is the best paper I found in the other students' writing,
64		so I thought you should have it.
65		Uh .. is there anything you like about the way she's written that first paragraph,
66		other than the things I asked you to look for?
67		Is there anything you like? … Yeah.
68	Marcia:	She uses physics and biology,
69		and I like that
70		because it seems like something that brings you into the real world,
71		and shows you that it really is distorted.
72	Jean:	I like Q<by no stretch of the imagination.>Q
73		You know why,
74		because it makes me think that this writer is comfortable with her thinking.
75		All right. ((began reading the next paragraph aloud))

Performing the Students-as-Raters

Jean called students' attention to important features of the essay by ventriloquating the students through a hypothetical reader or rater (lines 25, 57, 59, 60). Beyond simply quoting a hypothetical rater, however, she asked her students to imagine themselves in this authoritative role. She set them up as the "animators" (Goffman, 1981) of her direct quotations by constructing a hypothetical situation in which they were the raters: "OK. So you're a reader, and you're going with it, and you think . . ." (54-56). When no one answered her request to identify the theme of the model paper, she led them from a face-to-face participation framework to

a new framework that evoked the significance of the essay readers and their influence on the present.

Reflecting her experience as a rater, and perhaps voicing herself-as-rater, she expressed some thoughts of a hypothetical rater, employing shifts in verb tense to set up the imaginary context. She also employed shifts in paralinguistic speech qualities while voicing the reader, moving from her usual pitch level to a higher one, raising her volume, and speeding up the pace of her delivery. When she paused periodically to insert her comments in her own voice, she lowered the volume of her voice: "right?" (58) and "but it's not there" (61). These comments filled a phatic function, ensuring that the students were following the hypothetical situation and focusing on the important features of the text. When she reached the end of the direct quote of a hypothetical rater, she dropped back to her habitual patterns in pitch, pace, and volume. Metapragmatic verbs such as "think" (line 56) and discourse markers such as "OK" (54, 57) and "so" (54, 60) also signaled the boundaries of the account (Gumperz, 1982). To conclude, she returned to the first person to offer her recommendations on how the students should write their introductions (63-64).

These shifts from student-as-hypothetical-rater to teacher commentary can be seen in Figure 2, in which I have separated the three frameworks operating in this segment into three columns. This figure demonstrates how inviting students to imagine themselves in this role reinforced the ideologically significant aspects of the test, particularly since Jean had the students-as-raters voice the key evaluative indexicals. In line 57, she projected the students-as-raters speaking of writing "intelligently." Although Jean did not repeat this expression frequently as an aphorism, the idea that smart writers follow the directions was a frequent message in her classroom. In lines 59 and 60, she put two of her frequent aphorisms into the mouths of the students-as-raters: "Q<***Quoted the prompt***, so let's hope that we ***get the theme***>Q." (Evaluative indexicals marked in bold.) All three of these messages (write intelligently, quote the prompt, state/get the theme) were prominent features of the authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) through which Jean ventriloquated what she thought was most important and demonstrated how to participate in this literate community.

Performing the Teacher-as-Rater

During a follow-up discussion a few days later, Jean voiced herself as a potential reader to emphasize her point that students did not have to express critical opinions that they thought would be most popular with the raters. She used a performance metaphor, reminding the students that they needed to show that they could "dance the dance":

> And the other thing when you do the timed writing, and I read what you have to say, I'll be looking to see whether you know how to dance the dance, whether you know how to discuss meaning critically.

	Paper Discussion: Jean's Commentary	Context of Ventriloquation: Positioning Students as Hypothetical Raters	Ventriloquation: Students-as-Hypothetical-Raters
52	You don't either ...		
53	You don't know.		
54		OK. So you're a reader,	
55		and you're going with it,	
56		and you think,	
57			Q<Ok this person writes intelligently,>Q
58	right?		
59			Q<Quoted the prompt,>Q
60			Q<so let's hope that we get the theme,>Q
61	but it's not there.		
62	I'm recommend-ing that you put the theme in the first paragraph, but she didn't,		
63	but this is the best paper I found in the other students' writ-ing,		
64	so I thought you should have it.		

Figure 2: *Positioning the students as raters*

She illustrated this point by once again shifting beyond the face-to-face participation framework of the classroom, this time placing her in the position of the reader: "I'm not going to say Q<oh .. well .. so-and-so doesn't agree with me>Q" (Figure 3, line 6). Then to further reinforce her points, she returned to a narrative, voicing a hypothetical rater's thoughts by setting up yet another shift in participant footing: "And the readers that you have in June are not going to say, Q<Oh . . . that's an unusual view of *The Metamorphosis*>Q" (Figure 3, lines 7-8). Then she posed some of the standard questions that raters could be expected to ask, again setting up the shift first:

> "They're going to say Q<Is that an analytic paper about *The Metamorphosis*?>Q; Q<Does this person seem to be able to think critically about a complicated text?>Q; Q<Yes . . . 'A' . . . beautifully written . . . well organized>Q" (Figure 3, lines 10-12).

	Paper Discussion: Jean's Commentary	Ventriloquation 1: Self-Positioning as Rater	Ventriloquation 2: Voices of Hypothetical Raters
01	And the other thing when you do the timed writing,		
02	And I read what you have to say,		
03	I'll be looking to see whether you know how to dance the dance,		
04	whether you know how to discuss meaning critically,		
05	I'm not going to say		
06		Q<oh .. well .. so-and-so doesn't agree with me>Q	
07	And the readers that you have in June are not going to say,		
08			Q<Oh .. that's an unusual view of *The Metamorphosis*>Q
09	They're going to say,		
10			Q<Is that an analytic paper about *The Metamorphosis*?>Q
11			Q<And does this person seem to be able to think critically about a complicated text?>Q
12			Q<Yes … [A] ... beautifully written … well organized…>Q .

FIGURE 3: *Jean's ventriloquation of herself and of imaginary raters*

The longer pauses after "yes" and the grade of "A" suggested that the rater would pause while writing the sought-after high score on the top of the page. Jean's matter-of-fact intonation and use of epistemic future tense contributed to the evaluative impact that this segment had on its hearers: she was asserting that she knew how the raters would react to a paper of this quality and what scores they would assign to it.

I have set up Figure 3 to highlight the shifts in footing. Here, as in Figure 2, the ideologically significant features of the student paper are highlighted through ventriloquation. Jean positioned herself first as an imaginary rater by quoting herself.

She set this up by using "say" as a projection device (Figure 3, line 5). This verbal process appeared again in lines 7 and 8 as she returned yet again to the thoughts of the raters. She used ventriloquation to convey four important facts about the test. According to her ventriloquation of the raters, they:

1. didn't want to read unusual interpretations of the reading (Figure 3, lines 7-8).
2. looked for evidence that the writer could write analytically (lines 9-10).
3. looked for evidence that the writer could think critically about literature (11).
4. gave high scores for beautiful prose and strong organization (12).

The footing shifts reinforced the ideological significance of the point that Jean was making about critical judgment: that the readers would not judge them negatively for "correct" critical judgments as much as they would be looking for evidence of competence in expressing a critical judgment. In a classroom saturated by the pressures of an upcoming high-stakes test, the views of the raters and the essay features that were most likely to impress them took precedence over any other features of the essay that might have been worthy of discussion.

Performing the Writers

When discussing essays that she considered to be poor models, Jean often ventriloquated the student-writers as silly or immature, using intonation and pacing to signal a distinct critical break between these voices and the voice of the student. Focused discussion of actual textual features was unimportant. What mattered was the overall tone of the critique, and a suitably amused response from the class. Taken from a discussion that occurred later that spring, the "typical terrible paper" episode shows how Jean discussed less-than-desirable student performances.

When Jean performed the student writer in this episode, she went beyond simple quotation and "played the part" of the writer. In this episode, Jean read an example of a very poorly written paper. A student had complained that the class did not know how well they could write, because they never looked at examples of really poor writing. Jean had agreed and had located what she called "a typical terrible paper" that had been written several years earlier by a former student. Jean did not hand the paper out, but read it out loud quickly, using simplified intonation patterns and fast pacing to convey her low opinion of the paper. In this opening segment of her reading, she established a mocking footing by making a display of announcing unnecessary information: announcing the beginning of the essay. She made no mention of the writing prompt, and throughout the reading made only limited references to rhetorical or stylistic details of the essay. Throughout her reading of the essay, she used a sing-song intonation pattern that English speakers often associate with simple thinking or childishness:

Jean: Here's the example. This is the beginning of the essay. ((reading aloud))
The two poems given, "There was a boy," and "The most of it" present encounters with nature, but the two poets handled these encounters very differently. This essay will distinguish between ((loud groans from students)) *solidarity with nature and solitary individuals. In the first poem, "There was a boy," written by William Wordsworth, is about a boy who lived on the island of Winander. In the evenings, just as the stars began to show, he would take a walk over the hills. He would mimic the owls too, and they would respond in turn. This poem, though, is a mocking poem. The poet is mocking the boy.*

Jean paused briefly and waited while the students laughed merrily. Then she read on without making any comment:

The boy in the poem seems to feel at ease up in the hills. He feels he belongs there, and not in society, as shown in, "There was a boy, ye knew him well, ye cliffs." This suggests that=

Here she stopped abruptly and directed her comment to the class: "=That was a whole paragraph." Then she returned to reading without waiting for a response:

This suggests that the poet (uc) by society. Perhaps the poet felt better with the owls than with the people. The poet lets his own feelings be known through the boy. The poet is comfortable alone.

Here she stopped reading again, but did not lower her high-pitched intonation. This gave her subsequent comments the appearance of belonging to the writer of the essay, and not to Jean herself: "Anyway, get it? I like peanut butter, can you skate?" The students' laughter resumed with these last comments, as Jean spoke them with a distinctly higher pitch and a mocking intonation pattern. In this way, Jean's use of simple syntax and logically disconnected statements ventriloquated and parodied the writer of this paper.

After this pause, Jean continued once more, using the same intonation. She did not read until the end of the essay, but stopped abruptly, asking the class the same question again, "anyway, get it?" Throughout this entire process, she never offered any explicit analysis of the paper or invited questions, pointing out only that it was, after all of this, "a passing paper." In contrast to many of the discussions of high-scoring model papers, which could last 10-15 minutes, this entire episode took just over three minutes. The groans and appreciative laughter from the class indicated that the students followed her implicature. Without explicitly pointing out the aspects of the essay that were unacceptable, Jean was showing the students that writers of such essays were worthy of ridicule. Lessons of this sort shaped attitudes towards mediocre writing. This evaluative impact became one of the strongest messages resulting from the performance: the message that the students were intended to "get." Whether or not the students actually "get it" is a complex and open question.

Performing the Teacher

When the students discussed writing in backstage contexts (Newkirk, 1995), they often gave alternative performances, making creative changes that paraphrased the textual norms prevalent in class, and sometimes offering subtle critiques of them as well. Many shared a lingering sense of doubt about their ability to write the way that Jean expected. Some questioned their ability to identify a theme that rose above the level of cliché, for instance. Others told me that they were not really sure what a thesis statement was, even though it had been explained to them many times throughout middle and high school.

Marcia in some ways represented student views of writing that were commonly expressed in this class. In her evaluation interview, Marcia employed the chunk "I like," just as she had at Jean's invitation during the classroom discussion in Figure 1. She used it to express her preference for avoiding the first person singular pronoun. Prior to this exchange, she had been reading a student essay that I had asked her to critique:

Marcia: I don't like starting with Q<I>Q, like that.

BLS: Did you have a teacher who told you that?

Marcia: Yeah, something about I or you or something. Yeah, and when you start, especially the topic sentence, you want more general .. but .. you know .. that just brings you right into something, like directly in, and that should be what the middle says, something. (.2) Of course most teachers don't explain it to me, they just say Q<don't do it like that>Q.

BLS: So how did you figure it out for yourself?

Marcia: Oh, I don't know, I kind of .. It took me some time, and I guess just the general corrections. Sort of like when Cherry was all frustrated about what she was supposed to do, I would just tell her, Q<just let me explain>Q, and I would give her an outline, because they say Q<there's no outline in English>Q, but really there <u>is</u>. There's a way you're supposed to do. Like when [Jean] goes Q<<u>plug</u> .. it <u>in</u>>Q, and you say Q<what's "<u>i::t</u>"?>Q.

We both laughed appreciatively at this imitation of Jean's intonation patterns, and Marcia continued with her backstage review of Jean's teaching style:

Marcia: And Jean doesn't like to sit down and explain, she just says, she'd be like [claps her hands] Q<you just should have everything and all you have to do is plug it in>Q. But when you're confused .. It's like, Q<I have no idea what you're talking about>Q.

Figure 4 provides a visual representation of this exchange. It highlights the shifts in framework surrounding Marcia's ventriloquation of Jean. As with the previ-

01	**Paper Discussion: Marcia's Commentary**	**Context of Ventriloquation: Self-Quotation**	**Ventriloquation: Quotation of Jean**
02	Sort of like when Cherry was all frustrated about what she was supposed to do, I would just tell her,		
03		Q<just let me explain,>Q	
04	and I would give her an outline, because they say		
05			Q<there's no outline in English,>Q
06	But really there is.		
07	There's a way you're supposed to do. Like when [Jean] goes		
08			Q<plug .. it in>Q,
09	and you say		
10		Q<what's "i::t"?>Q.	
11	[a little later] And Jean doesn't like to sit down and explain, she just says, she'd be like		
12			[claps her hands] Q<you just should have everything and all you have to do is plug it in>Q.
13	But when you're confused .. It's like,		
14		Q<I have no idea what you're talking about>Q.	

FIGURE 4: *Marcia's ventriloquation of Jean*

ous segments in Figures 2 and 3, the quotations, both by Marcia of herself and of Jean, are preceded by verbs that can project an utterance. In the case of Figure 4, these verbs are all verbal processes: "tell" (2), "say" (4, 8, 10), "goes" (6), "be like" (10, 12). Marcia's performances of Jean are indeed highly imitative. In line 7, she placed emphasis on "plug" and "in" in the same manner as Jean would. She also attempted to imitate Jean's voice qualities. Likewise, in line 11, she clapped her hands in a manner that mimicked Jean's crisp style, and altered her voice qualities once again to imitate the way that Jean frequently told her students to "plug it in." Similarly, when she voiced herself responding to Jean's admonitions to "plug it in," she adopted strong overtones of frustration and disgust in lines 12 and 13, "It's like, Q<I have no idea what you're talking about>Q."

These instances of ventriloquation do not highlight the same aphorisms that Jean used, but they do bring out the features of the writing assignment that were significant to Marcia. When she ventriloquated herself, she conveyed her sense of frustration with not fully understanding the essay format: "Q<what's "i:::t"?>Q" (Figure 4, line 10) and "I have no idea what you're talking about>Q" (Figure 4, line 14). When she ventriloquated Jean, she focused instead on Jean's utterances about essay features that she found doubtful: "Q<there's no outline in English>Q" (Figure 4, line 5); or confusing: "Q<plug it in>Q" (Figure 4, lines 8 and 12).

Discussion

While it is not possible to make generalizations from such a small case study, the results of the data analysis do yield insights into how ventriloquation can be used to express critiques of student essays. In a classroom context that was saturated with performances and references to performance, posing questions or offering comments on a paper through voicing in a narrative provided speakers with the flexibility to represent themselves in creative ways.

Ventriloquation as Pointing Device

Ventriloquation in talk about writing can serve as a pointing device, directing attention to the textual features most important in the context of the speakers. Jean and Marcia used ventriloquation to highlight the features of the text that stood out as most significant, although they directed attention to different features. Jean's emphasis on the textual norms for an academic genre such as a short examination essay reflected her concern that her students be prepared for the upcoming exam. As intertextual elements, these textual norms point to the essay features (e.g. introduction, thesis statement, conclusion, topic sentence) that are most significant. Students ignore them at their peril, because raters who may share little or nothing else with them will make judgments of their work based on such shared understandings of generic features. While these features may not necessarily have their origins in the pressures of testing, they are certainly delimited, even constricted, by the necessity of preparing for tests. The demands of the tests make it more likely that the centripetal forces of language will ensure that formulaic expressions are rigidly conveyed; the risks of deviating from them may be too high. Certainly the frequent appeal to the authority of the unseen raters, resorted to when ideologically significant points need to be made, suggests that tests such as the ones for which Jean and her students were preparing are present in the ideology and knowledge structure of classrooms.

Ventriloquation as a Distancing Device

Ventriloquation enables the teacher to speak through a distant or alternative authority. Although Jean and Marcia both used ventriloquation to perform a similar interactional function, they used it to highlight different features of their common

classroom context and to represent themselves and each other in different ways. For Jean, expressing evaluative stances through the voices of the raters may have been a strategy for demonstrating her experience with the testing process and her control of discourse resources. By asking her students to imagine themselves as raters, she was helping them to focus on the most basic kernels of information about writing for the test. She assumed that the raters would be looking for specific moves, such as quoting the prompt, summarizing the plot, and stating the theme. She enshrined these insights in the quotations she placed in the mouths of the raters and the students-as-raters. When voicing students-as-writers, Jean's parody of the writer of the "typical terrible paper" helped to demonstrate her authority as a critic of writing, and warn students of the social consequences of writing poorly.

By using direct quotation, metapragmatic verbs, epistemic modalization, and evaluative indexicals to animate the voices of the hypothetical raters, Jean could speak through a distant authority (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999) and recreate the world of the test at a temporal and spatial distance from the classroom, a sort of decentering (Hanks, 1994). In this use of voicing, Jean was both animator and author. As an *animator*, she gave physical voice to words that she only appeared to have not authored herself. While animating the figures of the absent raters, she was at the same time the *author* of the words she spoke. In Goffman's words, she "selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" (1981, p. 144). Thus, although not physically present in the classroom, the raters were figuratively present by way of their ventriloquated utterances.

Voicing hypothetical raters also provided imagery that enabled the writers to engage in dialogue with their rater audiences. By positioning herself as someone who was acquainted with the raters—perceived by the students as distant, rather mysterious decision-makers in the testing process—Jean was distancing herself from the responsibility of making the final decisions. She too was ultimately subject to the authority of test score assigners and users not present in the classroom. Voicing the raters suggested that the performance itself and the raters' judgments of this performance were the aspects of the activity that are most important ideologically, not the intrinsic value of learning to write or the material benefits (college, job, spouse) touted by Jean. Furthermore, the normative pressure of judgment by outside raters who are unfamiliar with the specific conditions of the classroom dictates that official discourse for describing writing will mirror prior instances of similar writing. The instantiations and reinstantiations of this particular genre, which is a student genre through and through (Johns, 1997), will resist substantial change because both student and rater rely on it as a shared horizon for defining and talking about writing. They are linguistic resources through which concise, reliable information about the real expectations of the test and the raters can be conveyed between far-flung and disconnected contexts.

Ventriloquation as an Exploration Device

Ventriloquation enables the student to try out new ways of talking about writing and to speak back to authority. For Marcia, ventriloquation served as a means of expressing her frustration with her lack of understanding as well as her perceived failure to progress as quickly as she would have liked. For Marcia, as for most of the students I spoke with, progress would have meant higher scores on the regular practice exams they did in class. Instead of taking up the common phrases that Jean used, however, Marcia parodied some of the formulaic utterances that had been so useful for Jean. For Jean, conventions such as "plug it in" or "state the theme" may have simplified teaching, but how well they mediated concepts of writing in a clear and accurate manner is open to question. Formulaic ways of describing the student essay genre may seem self-explanatory to teachers, but for students they may be opaque or vague (Lea & Street, 1998). They are meant to be pedagogical devices, and perhaps pedagogical crutches, but they also express institutionalized ways of defining writing. Such expressions are often so transparent that even researchers may take them for granted (Briggs & Bauman, 1995).

The force of such utterances depends on the context of the discourse; likewise, the context can feed back on the utterance (Martin, 2000). Local meanings of "plug it in" or "get it" will be shaped by the back-and-forth of local use within the classroom as utterances are shaped by preceding utterances and new meanings emerge (Wortham, 2001a). Evaluations such as this reveal an agent taking an evaluative stance and "display that agent's experience of the event, including his or her affective involvement in the referent being assessed" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, p. 155). Certainly the local meaning of the red Ferrari would not be immediately transferable to another classroom context, given the evaluative meaning that it had accrued in Jean's classroom.

For instance, one wonders what it means to "get it" in this classroom context. In the example of Jean reading the "typical terrible paper," the structure of the paper was never actually discussed. To "get it" may have meant understanding the social stigma associated with writing a poor paper—appearing stupid or having your work made the butt of a joke—without necessarily learning what exactly was wrong with the paper. The weaknesses may have been obvious to some of the students, but may have been only partially accessible to others.

Marcia's expression of frustration and confusion does certainly highlight the shortcomings of aphorisms that may seem convenient, and may seem to encapsulate bits of wisdom handed down from rater to teacher, or vice versa. Certainly the choice of language to ventriloquate can have a significant impact on students' opportunities to hear and to assimilate new ways of speaking and thinking about text.

Ventriloquation in talk about writing connects the classroom context to authoritative norms about writing as communicated by the tests. In my research

questions, I asked why the participants in this study might have used ventriloquation while discussing student writing. I offer some conjectures here, although this study raises more questions than it answers. I have noted that in each of the discourse segments discussed above, the utterances that were directly ventriloquated had strong significance for the discussion of student writing in this context. I have already suggested that these utterances were evaluative indexicals that over time had accrued meaning that was familiar to participants in the classroom context, or that became associated with a particular speaker. Wortham (2001a) describes chunking as segments of utterances that cohere and take on indexical significance, positioning participants in particular ways and pointing to dialogic meanings that emerge in the course of a speech event or series of speech events. The local influences on the accrual of meaning are of course far easier to determine than the larger institutional influences, but the appeal made by Jean to the authority of the raters makes the job slightly easier, at least for this study.

Understanding such phrases depends on participation in the social context of the classroom, but participation alone does not guarantee understanding. When Jean repeated "plug it in" many times throughout the course of the year, it accrued indexical function, pointing to previous uses and meanings attached to it. When she used ventriloquation to state this and other similar phrases, she placed her words into the mouths of a seemingly more authoritative source. She also pointed to the larger collectivity that shared a stake in the outcome of their exams.

Use of such expressions can be understood as a "division of labor" (Hanks, 1996, p. 215). In any linguistic community, some expressions will be used that are not fully understood by all members. Only a small subgroup understands all of the features associated with the phrase, so its use by the full community depends on other members using it without possessing full knowledge of its definition. The definitions of such phrases depend on the interpretive collectivity, or collectivities, in which it is used. Expert members possess a highly sophisticated knowledge that has developed through their participation in the group; novice members, however, must use the phrase despite their lack of experience with it. Hanks explains,

> words, like other valued objects, circulate in social groups. Many may have access to them and use them, but there are elements of their value that only a part of the group will have access to. What makes communication possible is not the perfect sharedness posited by Saussure and Chomsky but the modes of cooperation among different actors. (1996, p. 217)

Other "valued objects" of a linguistic nature will undoubtedly include oft-repeated phrases, expressions, or aphorisms that speakers rely on to convey meaning without actually having to make the effort of explaining themselves fully.

The meanings depend on the dynamics of the social and linguistic collectivity in which they emerge. Poorly-prepared members of the collectivity may not

understand them in the same way as more privileged members. For novice members to acquire a working understanding of formulaic expressions or chunks and their uses depends on their membership in the interpretive community. They may use "plug it in" and "thesis statement" in their discussions and nod appreciatively when they hear them used by others. In a word, they may attempt to use them *cooperatively* as befits members of the social group. But they may not yet possess full knowledge of what these chunks actually mean.

Implications for Research and Theory

Discourse and Test Washback

It seems appropriate to ask whether the impact of the tests for which the students were preparing may have been a reason for the use of ventriloquation. Test washback theorists are interested in the impact that tests have on classroom teaching. They are interested in the "sort of vision of society language tests create" (Shohamy, 1998, p. 332). Lea and Street (1999) have argued that writing tests and university policies play central roles in promulgating habitual modes of learning and knowing in academic writing. And washback studies have suggested that tests exert strong influence on writing tasks, choice of genre, and teacher decisions regarding curriculum, time use, and pedagogical strategies (Loofbourrow, 1994; Shohamy, 1996) and on theories of writing and rhetorical stances (Hillocks, 2002). Thus, it seems probable that the ideological horizon against which student texts will be measured is influenced by the tests, as evidenced by the references to the hypothetical raters and the use of their voices to express some of the oft-repeated aphorisms that passed for adequate descriptions of good writing. Furthermore, the teacher's own representations of good and not-so-good writing practices likely also come into the mix as shadow readings of the test scoring session (Irvine, 1996). But it is also probable that the classroom practices of evaluating writing also help to shape the larger institutional and societal practices of evaluation—a form of forward backwash. This question of the impact of testing on discourse (and vice versa) certainly merits further investigation.

Conversation Research in Writing Assessment

Early in this paper, I asked what role ventriloquation might play in the process whereby students learn the language of classroom assessment and apply it to the evaluation of their own reading and writing. As a part of the social tool-kit for participating in a literate classroom, ventriloquation deserves greater attention in English studies. In ways that are not fully apparent yet, this verbal strategy may provide links between linguistic (micro-analytic) and social (macro-analytic) approaches to the study of interaction in writing instruction. Mertz (1996) has noted: "The structure of classroom discourse mirrors the ideology it seeks to impart at the same time it directs attention to aspects of text that are ideologically significant" (p. 231). As ventriloquation appears to insert direct references to the

broader ideological context into the classroom discussion, the linguistic structure of the ventriloquation reflects that ideology and makes the object of the discussion—namely, academic writing—available in certain ways, unavailable in others (Bauman & Babcock, 1984; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Hanks, 1993; Mertz, 1996). Ventriloquating the raters limits the shape of academic writing: narrow parameters for judging writing such as, among other things, ending the first paragraph with a thesis statement, make testing and test preparation easier, but do little to help children learn to write effectively.

This study suggests that ventriloquation of aphorisms not only limits views of academic writing, but it also limits the options that are available to the speakers. This possibility, too, deserves further attention. Given the evaluative nature of the utterances that were ventriloquated in the data, the context of the utterances not only requires the speaker to adopt an appropriate "stance, or posture, or projected self" (Goffman, 1981, p. 128), but it also requires him or her to carry off this performance with mastery (Briggs & Bauman, 1995). Literacy-related verbal performances such as talk story (Au, 1980), street rhyme (Gilmore, 1983), and poetry slams (Fisher, 2003) are clearly genres that are associated with exhibits of mastery. To what extent does ventriloquation, as a part of the social tool-kit available to speakers, expand or limit the possibilities for displaying degrees of mastery of literacy practices?

Implications for Practice

A practical implication for teacher and tutor training is raising language awareness. One of the merits of discourse analysis is that it makes habitual, and hence unconscious, activities more available to methodical and reflective deliberation. Insights from this study can be useful in raising teacher and tutor awareness of the ways that writing instruction is heavily dependent on talk about writing. For instance, Cooper and Odell (1999) have suggested that teachers must get better at identifying passages in texts and describing how they react to them. When teaching writing and preparing students for writing essay tests, teachers should not assume a shared knowledge of common terminology for describing writing.

To this end, providing teachers with opportunities to look closely at their language use in context will enable them to be more aware of their use of ventriloquation. Such teaching can be conceptualized as an improvisational performance dependent on the emergence of the interaction as it proceeds through time (Sawyer, 2001, 2004). Improvisational theater—setting up a performance by establishing some temporary restrictions on behavior (e.g. "you, the husband, can say anything you like to your wife about her disastrous hairdo, but you can't say the word "hair" or any of its synonyms")—offers some possibilities for developing teaching exercises. For instance, participants in an improvisational activity could try teaching a writing lesson on the opening paragraph without mentioning the words "thesis

statement" or "theme." Or, a classroom observer could tape a discussion of writing and identify heavily-used expressions to discuss with the teacher. These strategies could be useful in contexts where teachers are explicitly trying to avoid the worn-out genres of essay examinations.

Conclusion

Building on current work in conversation analysis of classroom discourse, teacher-student writing conferences, and peer tutoring, I have explored how talk about writing takes on a performative function as speakers highlight the features of the text that are most significant in their particular context. I have shown how the participants used ventriloquation to voice the aspects of the essays that were most ideologically significant. These ideologically significant chunks were often aphorisms about the test essay genre. The teacher frequently ventriloquated raters, while the students often ventriloquated themselves or the teacher.

These findings suggest that ventriloquation in talk about writing can serve as a pointing device, directing attention to the features of the text that the speaker considers to be most important. Teachers and students may use this device differently while discussing writing, but the speech that they choose to ventriloquate is influenced by the ideological pressures that determine which writing is acceptable and which is not. For the teacher, this may mean speaking as a rater or positioning the students as raters to express authoritative norms for writing. For the student, this may mean using ventriloquation to interrogate common, yet poorly understood, expressions. The significance of ventriloquation is not just that it helps to mediate the generic conventions of timed student essays; it also mediates social positioning by helping the speakers to *present* themselves and others as critics of writing who may or may not possess the requisite knowledge to speak authoritatively.

These findings also raise questions about the ways that ventriloquation, as used in this test preparation context, might limit the ways that students view academic writing. However, it is my hope that this analysis, and more of this type, can yield insights into the mostly habitual use of such discourse strategies.

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NOTES

1. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data, 2001.
2. The remaining students were classified under an "Other" designation. Source: Educational Data Partnership, 2000. (http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us).
3. All names are pseudonyms.
4. Buchstaller's data is from the Switchboard Corpus (542 speakers, ages 20-60) and the Santa Barbara Corpus (52 speakers, ages 17-70). Both corpora focus on American English and are available through the University of Pennsylvania Data Consortium.

Appendix A: Transcription Key

<Q … Q>	Quoting from a text or previous utterance
Underline	Emphasis; may be signaled by changes in pitch or amplitude.
[	Left bracket connecting talk on separate lines marks overlap.
]	Right bracket – end of overlapping talk
~	Tildes between words mark rapid speech
:	Lengthening of sound just preceding colon; elongated syllable
-	Dash marks sudden cut-off of the current sound
.	Period at the end of a line marks a falling intonation contour; major tone group boundary
?	Question mark at the end of a line indicates a rising intonation contour
,	A comma at the end of a line marks a falling-rising contour; minor tone group boundary
. .	Short perceptible pause
. . .	Long perceptible pause
(.4)	Numbers in parentheses mark longer pauses in seconds and tenths of seconds
(H)	An H in parentheses marks an inbreath
((laughter))	Double parentheses mark a comment by the transcriptionist
=	An equals sign marks latching: one speaker follows another without a perceptible pause between turns
/ /	Slashes surrounding an utterance indicates backchanneling; e.g. /uh-huh/ or /hmmm/
(uc)	Tape is unclear
(?)	Text within parentheses is the closest approximation possible to what was said
Italics	Written text read out loud
[ ]	Transcriptionist's comments or paraphrase

Appendix B: Prompt for Model Essay

In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has written, "I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see."

Write an essay in which you "make a good case for distortion," as distinct from literary realism. Base your essay on a work from the following list or choose another work of comparable merit that you know well. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are "distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of this work. Avoid plot summary.

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