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Mapping Dialogic Tendencies: A Four-quadrant Method for Analyzing and Teaching Whole-Class Discussion

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Abstract: In a self-study of my English Language Arts (ELA) methods class, I found that I was not creating the kind of dialogic discussions with my preservice English teachers that I desired, and that my intent and my practices were not aligning. In an attempt to find a clearer way to both analyze and discover the tendencies in my whole-class discussions, I devised a four-quadrant system of dialogic analysis, and then applied that system to previously analyzed ELA methods class sessions to answer the question: Could a modified quadrant system more adequately explain what happened in whole-class discussion events to make them more or less dialogic? By mapping each whole-class discussion event on the quadrant, I found that even though I anticipated more active than passive responses, I spent more time in convergent-active discussions, which were focused on myself and my voice. These findings helped to explain the mismatch between the findings and the intent of the previous study (Reynolds, 2016), and more clearly detailed what happened in my discussions, and how I could modify them to create more dialogic discussions.

Keywords: dialogic instruction, whole-class discussion, Bakhtin, English Education



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Introduction¹

In a self-study of my secondary English Language Arts (ELA) methods class using Nystrand's (1997) definition of whole-class discussion as a guide (Reynolds, 2016), I found that, despite my best efforts to lead dialogic whole-class discussions, I resorted to tactics that limited the dialogic nature of my classroom. My students, who were preservice English teachers in their last college semester before student teaching, had the opportunity to speak frequently; however, I also found that there was a lack of uptake and high-level evaluation. The findings appeared to be contradictory. My discussions definitely had a dialogic feel to them since the students were speaking frequently, but according to Nystrand's definitions, the discussions were more monologic and teacher-centered. Similar tension between practices and intentions have been found in other studies (e.g., Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dillon, 1990; Johnson, 2017), which indicates both the difficulty in enacting dialogic instruction and in analyzing it in a way that is beneficial for teachers.

I left that study wanting more clarification on what was happening in my classroom. The binary method of classification (monologic or dialogic discourse) did not help me understand what I was doing, or how I was creating discussions that were intended to be dialogic discussions even though, upon closer analysis, they appeared to be monologic discussions. Because of these puzzling findings, I created a four-

quadrant system for analyzing a whole-class discussion. In this article, I applied the utterance theories of Bakhtin (1981, 1986), and modified and expanded the quadrant systems of Burbules (1993) and Scott, Mortimer, and Aguiar (2006) to reexamine discussion events from the previous study (Reynolds, 2016) in order to answer this research question: Could a modified quadrant system more adequately explain what happened in whole-class discussion events to make them more or less dialogic?

Dialogic and Monologic Instruction

Dialogic instruction prioritizes students' voices over the teacher's voice and provides opportunity for those students to engage in partner, small group, and whole-class discussions. Generally speaking, when teachers create dialogic opportunities for their students, those students tend to perform better (Frijters, ten Dam, & Rijlaarsdam, 2008; Nystrand, 1997; Wilkinson et al., 2017). However, even though researchers have found improvement, dialogic instruction still tends to be lacking in schools (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002; Hardman, 2011). Few teacher-generated questions are open questions, and the teacher's voice dominates the classroom (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand, 2006). Additionally, when teachers have tried dialogic instruction, they have experienced tension between what they desired to do and what actually took place (Alvermann, et al., 1990; Christoph & Nystrand, 2001; Johnson, 2006). It is with this lack of dialogic instruction in mind that I attempt to teach more dialogically in my ELA methods classes, and to provide opportunities for my students—all preservice ELA teachers—to engage in dialogic instruction.

Before examining Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theories, one frequently discussed dichotomy needs to be

¹ I acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that myriad pronouns exist that I can use when referring to individuals in my writing. Throughout this article I will use "he" to refer to individuals who identify as male, "she" to refer to individuals who identify as female, and "he or she" to refer to hypothetical or abstract students or teachers. I have selected these pronouns because I believe they are more familiar for a diverse audience of readers.

explored—dialogic versus monologic discourse (e.g., English, 2016; Nystrand, 1997; Sherry, 2016). In a classroom situation, monologic discourse is typically tied to lecture formats, or to Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) formats (Mehan, 1979) that privilege the voice of the teacher at the expense of the students; dialogic discourse is typically connected to whole-class or small group discussions where the students' voices have a significant role in constructing the meaning for the participants in the classroom (Nystrand, 2006).

Ford and Wargo (2012) called this dichotomy into question, arguing that monologic and dialogic aspects of discourse can coexist in a classroom, and that dialogic instruction could be ideologically monologic, and monologic instruction could be ideologically dialogic. For example, a teacher could structure a discussion that appears to be open-ended but could focus on “correcting and redirecting focus to the officially sanctioned idea in an authoritarian way” (Ford & Wargo, 2012, p. 374). Conversely, the teacher could maintain complete control over the discussion, but guide the class through different, sometimes competing, ideas. The complicated relationship between monologic and dialogic discourses is enough to give pause to using the terms as antithetical to each other. Bakhtin (1986) also diminished a dichotomy between the two:

However monological the utterance may be, however much it may concentrate on its own subject, it cannot but be, in some measure, a response to what has already been said about the given topic, on the given issue, even though this responsiveness may not have assumed a clear-cut external expression... The utterance is filled with dialogic overtones. (p. 92)

All utterances are necessarily dialogic, which makes a pure monologic utterance an impossibility. Even if a tactic has monologic tendencies, like the IRE questioning format or a lecture format, new utterances are still in response to previous utterances, meaning that they are dialogic, even if only minimally so. As Bakhtin (1986) described, an utterance “always responds (in the broad sense of the word) in one form or another to others' utterances that precede it” (p. 94). The standard concepts of monologic discourse and dialogic discourse are different. However, because of the nature of utterances in general, they are both different while still being dialogic since every utterance is dialogic. For a study of the classroom, it is necessary to move beyond this dichotomy in order to create clearer concepts for understanding what dialogic tendencies appear in whole-class discussions.

Bakhtinian Terms for Dialogic Discussions

For the purposes of this analysis, a whole-class discussion is defined as a series of utterances between the students and teacher where every person in the classroom has an opportunity to participate. With the utterance as the focus, we must define both the boundaries and the traits of the utterance. Bakhtin (1986) defined the boundaries as marked by the change in speaker. When one person speaks, it is an utterance. That utterance is complete when the speaker relinquishes the floor or loses the floor. In this way, every utterance begins and ends, and both follows other utterances and anticipates future utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). Within a classroom, every teacher and student utterance is a response to something: another participant's utterance, a previous class, a curriculum guide. An utterance is, though, always responding to and anticipating other responses.

The constant interaction between an utterance and reply creates a communicative situation. In a classroom, the relationship between the teacher and students is created by the kinds of utterances they make in the course of that situation. Bakhtin (1986) called this addressivity and argued that it was not only necessary to the utterance but vital to its existence. Because the teacher is the defined authority figure in the classroom, examination of the teacher's utterances can explain the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the overall dialogic tone of the classroom. The interaction between the teacher and students is necessarily important, but students will bring variety to the classroom that the teacher cannot always anticipate or count on. However, the teacher can always control his or her own words, phrasing, and focus. Consequently, focusing on the teacher's comments can help teachers determine both what they are doing and what they can do to become more dialogic. The focus for this study was specifically on what I could do as a teacher to create more dialogic discussions in the classroom.

Active responsive understanding and passive understanding. One of the important features of a classroom is the concept of understanding and responding to utterances. The teacher's utterance sets up a specific kind of response. When that response leads to active responsive understanding, the class tends to be more dialogic. The understandings can be richer in meaning and connections for the participants involved.

Bakhtin (1981) defined active, responsive understanding as "a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse" (p. 281). This is contrasted by a passive understanding that is "receptive, contributes nothing new to the word under construction, only

mirroring it, seeking, at its most ambitious, merely the full reproduction of that which is already given in the word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 281). The contrast here is important. In an active, responsive understanding, the speaker contributes to the discussion, enhances it, and enriches it. He or she takes the discourse in a new direction, or at least moves it further in its current direction. On the other hand, a passive understanding contributes nothing new to the discourse; it mirrors what has been said, repeating it back to the speaker possibly in a slightly different way but with no new meaning, no new direction, and no new discourse.

In a discussion, passive understanding is used to arrive at the surface level meaning of a sentence (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The speaker, who passively understands, knows all the words that were spoken, and recognizes or decodes those words into a meaning, but goes no further than that. In an active responsive understanding, however, the listener must interpret and evaluate the utterances, put them into context, compare and relate them to personal knowledge and experiences, and create ways to respond (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Once again, the way the teacher's utterances create either active or passive responses is of importance for this study. Whether or not the students successfully provided an active or passive response is a separate and important area. In the previous study (Reynolds, 2016), I found that I was asking open-ended questions, but that did not necessarily mean that I allowed for, or anticipated, active responses. In many cases, I stopped an active response from happening despite the open-ended question. For the purposes here, I was eager to examine what kind of responses I was anticipating specifically to ensure that students had more voice in my classroom and that I provided a better model for my preservice teachers.

Authoritative discourse and internally

persuasive discourse. In the course of a classroom discussion, the teacher's utterances create the kind of understanding that he or she experiences in the classroom. This is done by embracing either authoritative discourse, or internally persuasive discourse. Authoritative discourse "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). It is not played with, nor modified, nor argued with; it is only a given, only transmitted (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The listener must recite the discourse, must mirror the discourse, and must follow the discourse.

Internally persuasive discourse, on the other hand, is the interplay between the listener's words and someone else's words. "It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new context" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 345-346). Internally persuasive discourse allows for the play of words as the listener incorporates what was said into his or her experiences, and creates an utterance in response which is a mix of his or her words and the words of other speakers or texts. Internally persuasive discourse allows for a variety of responses as new voices are added to the discussion (Morson & Emerson, 1990), meaning that the speaker cannot always control the path. The speaker must relate what was said to what he or she is currently saying, but does so by retelling in his or her words. The teacher's utterances, then, can create the space for the kind of discourse he or she desires in the classroom.

Examining the Whole-class Discussion

By examining the utterances and anticipating responses of teachers, we can analyze the whole-class discussion, determining whether it was more or less dialogic. As noted above, simply using the monologic and dialogic dichotomy is not clear enough since every utterance and every communicative event is dialogic in nature (Ford & Wargo, 2012). An either/or dichotomy or a continuum between monologic and dialogic discourse does not provide enough information for classrooms where every utterance is dialogic. Burbules (1993) and Scott et al. (2006) articulated another method of analysis: a quadrant system based on two continua.

In his study of classroom dialogue, Burbules (1993) classified four types of dialogue. To do this, he asked two questions. First, was the dialogue directed at a particular ending point? If there was an end point, he labeled the dialogue as convergent since all discussion moved toward one specific and correct response (Burbules, 1993). If there appeared to be multiple possible outcomes or answers, it was labeled as divergent, which includes "plural meanings, complex and ambiguous connotations, and the myriad associations speakers have for the terms they use" (Burbules, 1993, p. 111). Second, what was the belief about the other participants in the dialogue? If the listener placed some faith and trust in the other participants' voices and attempted to understand what the other participants were saying, then Burbules labeled it as inclusive. If, however, the listener tried to judge the other participants' statements first, evaluating them against evidence or logic as they were stated, then it was labeled as critical. Essentially, a listener devoted to understanding is inclusive, and a listener devoted to debate and argument is critical.

By putting these two continua onto a coordinate plane, Burbules (1993) arrived at the four quadrants. He argued that teachers and students could move around in these quadrants, or they could be firmly planted in one quadrant for one class or one purpose but be in a different quadrant for a different class or purpose. He also pointed out some qualifications to this grid classification, noting that it was not exhaustive, that the categories were necessarily ideals and not rigid divisions. But, despite these qualifications, this grid system did well to present an analysis of a classroom discussion that moved beyond a simple dichotomy.

Scott et al. (2006) created a similar quadrant system. However, it was based on two different questions: “whether or not the teacher interacts with the students... and whether the students’ ideas are taken into account” (p. 609). The dialogic-authoritative continuum determined if the teacher’s purpose was “to focus the students’ full attention on just one meaning” (Scott et al., p. 610), or if the purpose was open to different points of view. The interactive-noninteractive continuum determined if one person participated, or if many people were allowed to participate. Both of these quadrants provided quality analysis of discussions. However, modifying their concepts, focusing on addressivity and the nature of responses (Bakhtin, 1986), can provide more attention to the ways the teacher creates more dialogic situations in the classroom.

Burbules’ (1993) second continuum (inclusive and critical) focuses on the listener’s mindset as he or she hears the speaker. This mindset could manifest itself in the dialogue through what the listener said when he or she has the floor, or it could remain internally within the listener as he or she attempts to engage with the conversation in some way. It does, though, imply an active response on the part of the listener who must actively attempt to understand or actively attempt to debate. Neither

side of Burbules’ continuum accounts for a passive understanding, a recitation or mirroring of what was said previously either in the text or in the discussion. Scott et al. (2006) created a quadrant system with a focus on points of view, but it does not necessarily consider how a teacher controls a discussion while including multiple points of view and controlling the overall flow and content of the discussion. More importantly, the second continuum is focused only on whether students were allowed to interact and not on whether that interaction is active or passive. The quadrant presented here follows Burbules’ (1993) direction of convergent-divergent for one continuum. Teachers, or discussion leaders, in a convergent discussion can value and field other viewpoints. However, the teacher keeps control over the topic being discussed, over who speaks and when and the basic content of the discussion. Instead of closing those viewpoints, as in authoritative discourse from Scott et al. (2006), a convergent discussion could allow those viewpoints in to the discussion, even if they are held tightly to the specific content being discussed. The second continuum departs from both Burbules (1993) and Scott et al. (2006) by focusing on the active or passive nature of the response.

Along these lines, Burbules’ (1993) first question aligns nicely with a study on utterances, but the phrasing could incorporate more of a relationship with Bakhtin’s concepts. Instead of focusing on the epistemic end of the dialogue, we could focus on the utterances of the teacher by asking this question: does the utterance create a space for authoritative discourse or for internally persuasive discourse? An utterance that creates authoritative discourse is convergent, since the discourse always moves toward the one authoritative discourse of the teacher or text, not allowing other discourses to function within the discussion. An utterance that allows for internally persuasive discourse is divergent since it allows for movement from the

teacher's utterance; it allows for play, for a diversity of voices, for a multiplicity of paths. The second question, then, is: what response is anticipated and/or received by the utterance? The teacher's utterance could anticipate either an active responsive understanding, a retelling in one's own words, or it could anticipate a passive understanding and a reciting by heart. Instead of focusing on the intent of the listener, as Burbules' continuum did, this study focuses on the addressivity and understanding in the classroom based on the specific utterances of the teacher (Bakhtin, 1986).

Four quadrants are created with these two continua: divergent-active, divergent-passive, convergent-active, and convergent-passive (see Figure 1). With these four quadrants, discourse possibilities not found in the monologic/dialogic discourse dichotomy become more apparent. While authoritative discourse usually calls for reciting and passive response that many would call monologic discourse, it does not always. The purpose could be to engage the students despite the authoritative discourse, thus the call from some for an embracing of the IRE form as a dialogic tool when used with an appropriate purpose (e.g., Ford and Wargo, 2012). Classifying discussion with these quadrants allows for an authoritative discourse, or an IRE format, to have an active responsive understanding, or the passive understanding that many recognize as the traditional format of the IRE (Nystrand, 1997). Alternatively, it also allows for a teacher utterance that appears to create a space for an internally persuasive discourse to create a passive understanding. In other words, a teacher could ask an open-ended question, but still ask it in such a way as to receive a recitation of what has already been said in class.

Essentially, the first question (convergent-divergent) focuses on the control in the classroom, the dominant voice or text. There are important

pedagogical reasons to be on either side of this continuum, but by calling specific attention to the dominant voice of the discussion, we can more clearly ascertain whether this aspect was more or less dialogic. The second question (active-passive) focuses on the kinds of responses, usually created by open or closed questions. These four quadrants, then, create a clearer picture of what takes place in the classroom.

A divergent-active classroom includes a multiplicity of voices, all adding to the discourse by actively engaging each other in a variety of ways to gain new understandings and new insights. In classroom terms, a divergent-active class is one where there is an open, free-flowing discussion with all participants engaging each other through questions and responses; importantly, the teacher is one of the participants, not the dominant participant.

Even though the terms seem to be contradictory, a divergent-passive classroom is one in which the teacher creates the space for students' voices; however, despite that space, a passive response is anticipated. For example, the teacher could create a discussion where the students lead, where the students' voices are the dominant voices in the classroom. In this kind of discussion, the students create some of the questions and the responses in the discussion. However, students could ask questions that lead to passive responses. Even though their voices are the dominant voices which create the divergent discussion, their potentially closed questions lead to passive responses that merely recite what has already been said or read.

A convergent-active classroom is the other apparent contradiction, but it is the one that could happen when an IRE-format is used to actively engage the students. Ford and Wargo (2012) made the case that science knowledge is inherently dialogic, so even by utilizing a convergent discourse, one could still

create active responsive understanding for the students. Wells (1993) conceived the IRE format as an Initiation Response Follow-up (IRF) format, with follow-up as the final stage. This structure could also set up a convergent-active classroom since the format would be fairly convergent, but the follow-up questions and pursuing more development in responses could lead to an active response rather than a passive response.

Finally, a convergent-passive classroom would be the kind of classroom typically described as a monologic classroom, and it embodies the kind of instruction that seems to dominate classroom instruction (Nystrand, 1997), using either a strict IRE format or a lecture format. In this classroom, the teacher directs the discourse. When questions are asked, they require a recitation or a predetermined correct answer. The teacher controls both the language and content of the discussion and does not let it stray from the topic chosen by the teacher.

As Burbules (1993) and Scott et al. (2006) argued, these quadrants are not fixed or rigid. The boundaries between them could be blurred, and teachers may move their classrooms through the four quadrants during the course of a semester or even a class period. However, the quadrants provide a method of analyzing the kind of dialogic instruction that happens in classrooms to answer the question: Could a modified quadrant system more adequately explain what happened in whole-class discussion events to make them more or less dialogic? Using Bakhtinian concepts as the guiding force for these quadrants can help teachers understand their utterances, anticipate responses, and provide some guidance for how to achieve more dialogic instruction in the classroom. Additionally, by applying the four quadrants of discussion based on the two continua, we can map the overall tendencies of a classroom discussion, finding that

dialogic classifications appear most frequently and looking for paths to more dialogic instruction.

Methods

To apply this method of classification to classroom discussions, I revisited seven class sessions from the previous study (Reynolds, 2016). That study took place in a secondary English Language Arts methods classroom in a university in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. The 18 student participants were all studying to be secondary English teachers, and would complete their student teaching in the next semester. In their English Methods II class, all participants were asked if they would be willing to be a part of the study. Their participation included attending and speaking in class as they normally would and allowing me to record their voices on a digital recorder. For this examination of the data, 26 discussion events in seven classes were utilized. I applied the four-quadrant system to the 26 discussion events, mapping the tendencies on the quadrants to understand more completely what aspects of the discussion events were more or less dialogic. Following Christoph and Nystrand (2001) and their analysis of short segments of typical and atypical conversations in the classroom of a teacher attempting to lead more dialogic discussions, I performed a closer analysis of the 38-minute class discussion, because it was the longest discussion and one that I believed was typical of my discussions.

Analysis of these discussion events was based on the dialogic analysis of Nystrand (1997) that designated episodes and segments and quantified the time spent in discussion, the questions asked, uptake demonstrated, and high-level evaluation incorporated. This analysis began with the same steps for quantifying time and turns, and then used the four quadrants to further analyze the discussions. The first step was to determine how

many turns were taken by students and the teacher. The discussion began with the first teacher utterance anticipating a response from the entire class and ended when the entire class was no longer expected to participate in the same dialogue.

To further analyze the discussion, I divided it into stanzas that focus on “a specific character, theme, image, topic, or perspective” (Gee, 2011, p. 74). Gee derived the term based on stanzas in poetry, but in a classroom discussion, stanzas mark changes in topic within the discussion. The duration of each stanza was also calculated. Because of the focus on teacher utterances, the stanzas were determined by the questions, directions, or prompt of the teacher. Each new question or direction that changed the focus of the discussion marked the beginning of a new stanza. Within each stanza, every teacher utterance was coded based on the prioritized voice (convergent or divergent) and the kind of response anticipated (active or passive). After each utterance was coded, the stanza was mapped on the quadrants based on the coding of the teacher’s utterances. When all stanzas of the discussion were mapped on the quadrants, the overall dialogic nature of the discussion was determined by the dominant quadrant, the quadrant which had the longest overall duration of discussion (see Figure 1).

Convergent Active	Divergent Active
Convergent Passive	Divergent Passive

Figure 1. Four-quadrant system for analyzing discussion

The x-axis is determined by asking, “Does the utterance create a space for authoritative discourse (convergent) or internally persuasive discourse (divergent)?” The y-axis is determined by asking, “What response is anticipated and/or received by the utterance: active or passive?” Analysis takes place in each stanza and is based on the teacher’s utterances as he or she leads the discussion. Once the stanzas are classified, the overall discussion event is classified based on the amount of time spent on discussion in each quadrant.

To determine whether a stanza was convergent or divergent, I began with the question, “Does the utterance create a space for authoritative discourse, or for internally persuasive discourse?” The first step was to examine the number of turns for the teacher and students. If the students had multiple opportunities for student-to-student interaction, or if the students were in control of the discussion, they would have more turns (likely many more turns) and would speak for longer times than the teacher. Those classes where the students were clearly in control as demonstrated in total turns taken and total time speaking were likely divergent. However, turns were not the only indication. Sometimes, the teacher could alternate turns in a divergent discussion.

The next level of analysis for this question was to examine how the teacher was guiding the discussion through his or her frequent utterances. Did the teacher create a space for the students to actively guide and lead the content of the discussion, or did the utterances expect the students to follow the lead and direction of the teacher? For example, in one stanza, the students took more turns than I did, but I spoke for 59% of the total time. In addition to speaking for more time than the students, I asked questions that were focused on my goals and direction. Even though my initial question led to a seven-minute student-to-student exchange, I was the one who decided when to change the topic. At the end of the student-to-student exchange, I took

over and spoke for almost five minutes, and then asked another closed question, “Did anyone happen to catch what [some pitfalls of the gradual release of responsibility model] are?” Because of the focus on my voice and content, this stanza was classified as convergent. Conversely, in another stanza, the students had only one more turn than I did, yet spoke for 81% of the time. I began this stanza with an open question: “Other thoughts on that? Independent work versus group work?” Then, I only asked for clarification after that. As a result, this stanza was classified as divergent.

To classify stanzas as active or passive, I started with the question, “What response is anticipated and/or received by the utterance?” Analysis of this question began with whether the question or prompt by the teacher was open-ended without a predetermined answer, or closed-ended and had a predetermined answer. When a stanza contained more closed questions than open questions, the stanza was classified as a passive stanza. When the stanzas had mostly open questions, the responses by the students and follow-up utterances by the teacher needed to be examined further to explore whether or not the teacher led the students to a predetermined end that would make the stanza a passive stanza. If most questions were open and most of the responses were active responses created by the students in their own words and with their own interpretations, the stanza was classified as active.

For example, in one stanza classified as passive, I began the stanza on their reading with the closed question, “Notice those things that were key?” My next four utterances ended with more closed questions as I asked the students to recite the information from the text. For stanzas classified as active, I asked mostly open questions or follow-up questions. In one stanza, I started with, “What are some of the things you talked about? What are some

of the things you were arguing with as you read?” In this stanza, the students had the opportunity to share their own active construction of meaning from their reading, thereby creating an active stanza. After each stanza was mapped on the quadrants, the overall time spent in each quadrant was calculated. The quadrant in which the discussion spent the most time was the dominant quadrant and was the classification for that whole-class discussion.

Findings

The 26 whole-class discussion events analyzed in this study were divided into 41 stanzas based on a topic change by the teacher. Those stanzas ranged in time from 35 seconds to 17 minutes and 27 seconds. Overall, students took more turns than I did (55% to 45%). This number, though, also contributed to the dissonance I felt as I was leading discussions (Reynolds, 2016). The application of the four quadrants to these 41 stanzas provided more clarification for how each stanza and each discussion event functioned.

Out of the 41 stanzas, 19 were classified as convergent and 22 were classified as divergent (see Table 1). However, one class session (Oct. 3) included a teaching protocol called Say Something about the poem “Mid Term Break” by Seamus Heaney (1980) that engaged the students in frequent but short discussions about the poem. Of the 13 stanzas that took place during that class, 10 were classified as divergent, which means that on the other 6 days of discussions there were only 12 divergent stanzas, compared to 16 convergent stanzas. Time spent in each category also demonstrated the prevalence of convergent stanzas. Overall, 56% of the discussion time was spent in convergent stanzas, compared to 44% of the time in divergent stanzas.

For the main classifications, there were more divergent-active discussion events (16) than convergent-active discussion events (8); however, 50% of the time was spent in convergent-active discussion, as opposed to 44% of time in divergent-active discussions and 6% in convergent-passive discussions (see Table 2). Most of the time spent in discussion events over these seven class sessions were spent in discussions centering on the teacher's voice or the text. One constant over the seven class sessions was that active stanzas far outnumbered passive stanzas (34 to 7). Even though I was keeping discussions convergent and focused on me or the text, students were still being asked to actively create knowledge and discourse for their contributions to the classroom discussion.

Three important findings set this analysis apart from the previous study (Reynolds, 2016). First, the quadrants allowed me to see specifically where discussions were more convergent and more divergent or where an equal mix created a discussion that did not function as I anticipated. For example, even though discussion event 3 was classified as divergent-active (see Table 2), the times were almost equal between divergent-active and convergent-passive. Despite the classification as a divergent class, this particular discussion event had multiple moments where I simply took over the discussion. The divergent-active discussion quickly moved into a convergent-passive discussion, leaving the students' voices behind and embracing my answers and thoughts.

Second, the quadrants created the opportunity to see how discussions transformed into other kinds of discussions, despite the intent. For example, discussion event seven, a one-stanza discussion on chapters from *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do* (Beers, 2002), began with an open-ended question, "What did you think about the pieces?" The follow-up questions, though, were closed

questions for which I had a prespecified answer in mind: "What do we have to do next?" While it appears to be an open question asking for an active response, I kept asking the question until I got the response I wanted. Despite the attempt to lead a divergent-active discussion, I maintained a constant pattern of moving into passive questions that created a convergent-passive discussion. The students were left guessing at what I wanted while I continued to ask questions until I got the anticipated response.

Finally, discussion event that focused on important qualities of literacy instruction (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011) was the longest discussion and the one I tried to model for my students. Overall, there were 90 turns taken; the students took 50 turns, and the teacher took 40 turns. However, the teacher spoke for 56% of the time, and the students spoke for 44% of the time. Only one stanza was classified as divergent, totaling one minute and 31 seconds; five stanzas were classified as convergent, totaling 36 minutes and 43 seconds. For the anticipated responses, four stanzas were classified as active, totaling 26 minutes and 20 seconds, and three stanzas were classified as passive, totaling 11 minutes and 54 seconds. Combining the continua, then, there was one divergent-active quadrant, totaling one minute and 31 seconds, two convergent-passive quadrants totaling 11 minutes and 54 seconds, and three convergent-active quadrants, totaling 24 minutes and 49 seconds (see Table 2). This class session was typical of what I planned (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001), so it warrants closer examination.

Divergent-Active Stanzas

A divergent-active stanza is one where all participants engage in open discussions. In the class session specifically analyzed here, the one divergent-active stanza was very short, only a little over a

minute long, but it followed a specific pattern. I asked, “Other thoughts on that? Independent work versus group work?” At this point in the discussion, I chose to change the topic from round robin reading to a comparison between individual and group work. After that initial question, I only asked clarification questions as the discussion continued, demonstrating low-level uptake questions that just required a simple one-word responses (e.g. “what’s the page number on that?”). The divergence in this stanza is found in the open-ended responses that students could give. The topic was more focused, but the students could take that topic and go anywhere. They were also actively making their connections, not simply reciting what the text said in the reading since this particular topic was not in the reading, but was the product of the previous stanza's discussion. Even though this stanza was my ideal form of discussion, I was only able to utilize it for one short stanza that could account for some of the disconnect I felt between what I wanted to do and what I ended up doing.

Convergent-Passive Stanzas

The convergent-passive stanzas took an entirely different path for discussion. In these stanzas, my initial prompts were closed questions or ones with prespecified answers either found in the text or in a previous discussion. In stanza two, I asked, “Think about in your mind what takes place during a round robin reading?” Even though this could be a more open question, I had one specific answer in mind, which was demonstrated by the way I dealt with the first response, which was a humorous student response: “Stress.” Instead of building off of that answer and probing for more, I restated the question, “Structurally speaking. What takes place in a round robin reading? What happens?” One student gave a response, and then I took over again. Since the initial response was not the “correct” response, I needed to give the question again, and

when the next response also was not quite what I wanted, I took over the conversation. I then asked a similarly closed question: “So, what are the important parts happening here?” I just read a text out loud, and wanted students to identify specific pieces. One person responded, which led to a longer response by me. At the end of that response, I asked an almost rhetorical question: “You guys listen to round robin reading? Other people reading?” One student responded quickly, which allowed me to continue in a lecture mode. In this stanza, I had specific things that I wanted the students to either say or bring up, and as soon as someone did, I took over the conversation and continued talking.

The second stanza was marked by me taking over the discussion. In this case, I started the stanza by saying, “So, that starts the next discussion,” clearly taking over the content of the discussion, keeping it focused on the topic of my choice. Even though a student made a quick comment, I simply took over and spoke for almost four minutes. In fact, during this stanza, I spoke for 88% of the time, leaving the students as passive participants.

These stanzas could also be described as Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) style or lecture style discussions. I initiated a prompt with an answer in mind, a student responded, and then I evaluated what the student said or I just took over completely. These discussions were convergent because they prioritized either the text or my voice. The answer could be found there, and the students needed to correctly recite it. The anticipated responses were passive because of that recitation. There was no need for the students to evaluate or interpret anything in the text; they only needed to find the right piece of content to successfully answer my question.

Convergent-Active Stanzas

The remaining three stanzas were convergent-active, which is where the voice of the teacher or text is prioritized, but the students are able to actively respond to a prompt by evaluating or interpreting something in their own words and not just reciting it. In the monologic-dialogic discourse dichotomy, this stanza does not have a place because of the seemingly contradictory focuses: teacher voice but active responses. However, that was what happened in these stanzas.

The first convergent-active stanza began the entire whole-class discussion. I first asked the students to share their thoughts from the previous night's readings: "What are some of the things you were arguing with as you read?" The responses from that point were all active responses as the students were expected to share their own thoughts on the reading. The important aspect of this stanza's classification, though, was the way that I controlled the discussion. Even though students were actively creating their responses, I controlled who spoke and when. I also controlled the topic. For example, after one student shared a response, I said, "So, let's stick with this idea of reading aloud. What are some reactions to this part?" By doing this, I focused the topic on one specific piece of the text, one that I wanted to cover, and then limited the other responses to discussions of that idea. I then kept that control by saying, "Other thoughts on reading aloud?" Once again, I focused the topic on something of my choice and then added "other thoughts," a trait that was analyzed previously (Reynolds, 2016). The topic appeared to be open to student responses, but, after only one student, I took control of the discussion and the topic.

In the second convergent-active stanza, my opening prompt was, "How do you envision the needs-based that we're talking about? How does that look over

the course of a week? How does it look over the course of a unit?" This discussion was not based on the reading or on any text or previous discussion that the class has had. I decided to ask this question to move the discussion in a different direction. The result was an open-ended prompt, asking students what they thought. I controlled how they thought about this question, and kept the focus on my version of the content, which is why it was convergent. After the first student replied, I responded by saying that the student's response was okay, but that it was not what I was looking for:

But just looking at those needs-based groupings, so the needs-based groupings that they're talking about, how do you envision that in the classroom? So let's take a two-week unit, so it's a complete unit in two weeks. What's it going to look like?

Since the initial response was not in line with my expectations, I clarified and reworded the question to give the students more focus. I still allowed them to respond by activating their own knowledge, but I guided them into a very specific concept that I felt needed to be addressed.

The final stanza featured the most student-to-student interactions, and students took more turns in this stanza than I did. However, I spoke for 59% of the time in the stanza. The discussion began when I changed the topic from the previous stanza: "Rough segue. Other things that you argued with." This was in reference to their reading prompt, which had "Argue" as a section for the students to fill out. I took control of the discussion by returning to the prompt that began the entire whole-class discussion, even acknowledging that it was a rough transition. This did lead to a seven-minute section of student-to-student interaction that could have created a divergent stanza. However, I took the discussion over: "We just discussed this issue in my class last

night, actually." For almost five minutes, then, I lectured. I then went on to ask a closed question ("Did anyone happen to catch what they are, by chance?"), and corrected them on their responses when they weren't what I was asking for. In essence, despite the presence of a long student-to-student interaction, I maintained complete control of this stanza by taking over after that exchange and not relinquishing the control until the discussion was over.

In these stanzas, the anticipated responses were not passive. There was nothing for the students to merely recite or recall. Instead, they were asked to actively think about all the concepts they learned and experienced about groups and convey them to the class. Their active responses were pulled from their background knowledge, their synthesis of other materials, and their experiences either in the classroom as a student or as a teacher. They had to actively frame their knowledge in a new way in the classroom. Even though I was controlling the conversations, I was asking for active responses. I gave the appearance of a more dialogic discussion. However, as it progressed, I kept the content specifically focused on my concept and my vision of where the discussion should go.

Discussion

Nystrand (1997) defined authentic whole class discussion as having four characteristics: time, authentic questions, uptake or follow-up questions, and high-level evaluation or letting the students determine the course of the discussion. In a previous study (Reynolds, 2016), I analyzed my whole-class discussions and found that while there was plenty of time for discussion, many open-ended questions, and some uptake, there was little to no high-level evaluation. However, this left me unable to classify my overall discussions. Were they dialogic or monologic? Were they authentic discussions, or

were they lacking because not all four aspects of Nystrand's definition were present? The purpose of this analysis, then, was to articulate a clearer way of classifying a whole-class discussion to find the tendencies and then to apply that method to the discussion events that were analyzed previously. Using the four-quadrant method, I was able to more clearly explicate what took place during these sessions, finding what made them more dialogic in some places and less dialogic in other places. By mapping the stanzas of these discussion events on to the four quadrants, I was able to explain the tension I experienced by seeing what kinds of discussions happened frequently and how they led to the feeling that the discussions were not as dialogic as I hoped.

What Appeared Frequently

Throughout the class sessions, active responses were expected more frequently than passive responses. I asked mostly open-ended questions, and I created a space for my students to engage actively with the text and in the discussion. Most stanzas began with open-ended prompts. This demonstrated two things. First, I kept the discussion open and active much more than closed and passive. Second, and more importantly, it showed the practical necessity of moving through quadrants. There are times when passive responses are necessary in the course of a discussion, especially when attempting to formatively assess how much of the content the students understood. Even though some of the movement into passive responses was unintentional, some stanzas that anticipated passive responses were geared toward an understanding of a specific concept (e.g., round robin reading) or a specific passage in the reading (e.g., a graph or a page). These were not large units or objectives. They were concrete passages about confusion or questions from the class discussion. By briefly taking the time to go over these specific pieces of text, I could then quickly move into another area requiring more

understanding or a more active response. Echoing Ford and Wargo (2012), I was using passive responses as a quality instructional tool on a very focused piece of text. Granted, the focus was to have an authentic whole-class discussion, but the circumstances changed briefly when I needed to address certain needs of the students.

More intriguing was the time dominance of convergent stanzas. I maintained control throughout many discussions. This brings up a necessary piece of reflection. It is hard to let go and not guide the discussion to a desired end. Convergent-passive stanzas could be explained by arguing that I was meeting the needs of the students. However, the convergent-active stanzas showed how easy it was to take over. These stanzas created the less-dialogic findings that I had in the previous study (Reynolds, 2016). After breaking the discussions into the stanzas and mapping them on the quadrants, I could see that I allowed my voice to guide and lead much more of the discussion than I anticipated. These moments of prioritizing my voice may have been necessary and may not have been negative, but they did take away from the students' voices and kept me at the center. However, a convergent-active discussion could also allow my methods students, who struggle with leading divergent-active discussions, to see a model of how to anticipate active responses while still maintaining control, which is something they might choose to do or need to do as classroom teachers.

Toward More Dialogic Discussion

A previous analysis of these discussion events (Reynolds, 2016) found that the presence of IRE formatted discussion moments, the use of "other thoughts," and a back-and-forth discussion style between the students and myself led to the discussion not being as dialogic as it could be, based on Nystrand's (1997) definition. However, this four-

quadrant method placed those issues in a more complete context that created a direction for me to move toward more dialogic discussions. First, the IRE formatted moments (convergent-passive) were short and were sometimes focused around a specific piece of the text that the students had questions or confusion about, meaning that these stanzas were meeting needs as they came up in the discussion. Even though some slips into passive responses happened, and can be modified, some met specific needs, so they could continue to be included in instruction as I moved forward.

However, the convergent-active stanzas were often too focused on me and too focused on my particular concepts. These stanzas illustrated most clearly my desire to break into the discussion and keep it focused on my voice or my interpretation of the text. Instead of just focusing on the lack of quality uptake or high-level evaluation, I can now focus on moments like these—moments when I feel like taking over.

Using this method of analysis for classroom discussions provided the opportunity to completely map out the discussion events within a class period. Instead of just noting techniques that appeared, such as open-ended questions, I was able to see the overarching tendencies of the classroom discussions, which helped to explain why they didn't feel like the discussions I wanted them to be. By articulating how much time was spent in convergent-active discussion, I can see how prevalent my own voice is in the classroom, and I can begin to make the conscious decision to pull that voice back in order to create more divergent opportunities for my students. Overall, most class sessions included quality dialogic exchanges; they were just mixed between my voice and the students' voices and mostly focused on mine. Despite the convergence in stanzas, though, I still anticipated active responses from the students, still expected them to create

meaning in the classroom. In discussions previously determined to be less dialogic, I found, using these quadrants, that they were more dialogic than I gave them credit for being. They were just more centered on my voice than I initially desired.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There were limitations on this study. One limitation of this study is that it took place in my classroom, so I planned, taught, and analyzed all the classes discussed here. Another is that the class consisted of college seniors and post-baccalaureate students, all of whom were highly motivated to speak in class, and participate in discussions. As a result, the next step for this four-quadrant system is to apply it to more discussions in classrooms with other teachers in order to see if discussions are more clearly articulated than in a traditional dichotomous system.

As teachers are asked to include more and more content and content-area tests, do they allow for divergent voices, or do they maintain their control and keep the discussion convergent? As they ask

questions, are they creating opportunities for students to create their own knowledge and actively respond to the utterance, or are they demanding reciting, passive responses that only mirror what is being said? When those are mapped on the quadrants, then, what is the dominant quadrant of teachers as they attempt to lead whole-class discussion? Simply looking at techniques teachers can use does not give those teachers a clear description of what actually takes place.

Additionally, this system can be used in methods classes, specifically when students lead discussions as part of an assignment, to help identify what the teachers are doing as they lead the discussions and what kinds of things they might consider changing. Ideally, with the inclusion of this system, we can help teachers and preservice teachers describe what kinds of discussion are happening and then help them craft the techniques they need to make those discussions as dialogic as they desire them to be. In this way, we continue to build student voice, and continue to give students the opportunity to create knowledge and become active participants in their own learning.

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Table 1

Stanza Classification for Discussion Events

Date	DE	Stanzas	Divergent / Convergent	Active/ Passive
Sept. 24	1	1	Divergent	Active
		2	Convergent	Active
		2	Convergent	Passive
		3	Divergent	Active
		4	Convergent	Active
		5	Convergent	Passive
		6	Convergent	Active
Sept. 26	3	1	Divergent	Active
		2	Divergent	Active
		3	Convergent	Passive
		4	Convergent	Passive
		4	Convergent	Active
		5	Convergent	Active
Oct. 1	6	1	Divergent	Active
		2	Convergent	Active
		7	Convergent	Passive
Oct. 3	8	1	Divergent	Active
		2	Convergent	Active
		3	Convergent	Active
		9	Divergent	Active
		10	Divergent	Active
		11	Divergent	Active
		12	Divergent	Active

	13	1	Divergent	Active
	14	1	Divergent	Active
	15	1	Divergent	Active
	16	1	Divergent	Active
	17	1	Divergent	Active
	18	1	Convergent	Passive
Oct. 10	19	1	Divergent	Active
		2	Divergent	Active
	20	1	Convergent	Active
		2	Convergent	Active
Oct. 17	21	1	Divergent	Active
	22	1	Divergent	Active
	23	1	Convergent	Passive
		2	Divergent	Active
		3	Convergent	Active
	24	1	Divergent	Active
Oct. 24	25	1	Divergent	Active
	26	1	Convergent	Active

Table 2

Overall Discussion Event Classifications and Percentage of Time in Each Quadrant

Date	DE	Divergent	Convergent	Active	Passive	Time	Classification	
Sept. 24	1	100%	0%	100%	0%	5:17	Divergent-Active	
	2	4%	96%	69%	31%	38:14	Convergent-Active	
Sept. 26	3	51%	49%	51%	49%	23:56	Divergent-Active	
	4	0%	100%	100%	0%	10:47	Convergent-Active	
	5	0%	100%	100%	0%	1:27	Convergent-Active	
Oct. 1	6	41%	59%	100%	0%	12:58	Convergent-Active	
	7	0%	100%	0%	100%	11:51	Convergent-Passive	
Oct. 3	8	30%	70%	100%	0%	17:13	Convergent-Active	
	9	100%	0%	100%	0%	0:35	Divergent-Active	
	10	100%	0%	100%	0%	1:53	Divergent-Active	
	11	100%	0%	100%	0%	5:12	Divergent-Active	
	12	100%	0%	100%	0%	2:15	Divergent-Active	
	13	100%	0%	100%	0%	4:00	Divergent-Active	
	14	100%	0%	100%	0%	2:32	Divergent-Active	
	15	100%	0%	100%	0%	1:41	Divergent-Active	
	16	100%	0%	100%	0%	1:14	Divergent-Active	
	17	100%	0%	100%	0%	2:12	Divergent-Active	
	18	0%	100%	0%	100%	1:57	Convergent-Passive	
	Oct. 10	19	100%	0%	100%	0%	16:10	Divergent-Active
		20	0%	100%	100%	0%	8:09	Convergent-Active
	Oct. 17	21	100%	0%	100%	0%	7:09	Divergent-Active
		22	100%	0%	100%	0%	10:54	Divergent-Active
		23	24%	76%	85%	15%	11:20	Convergent-Active
		24	100%	0%	100%	0%	4:12	Divergent-Active

Oct. 24	25	100%	0%	100%	0%	7:50	Divergent-Active
	26	0%	100%	100%	0%	11:30	Convergent-Active
