A Whole Different Story: The Discursive (Re)construction of Student Ability in Teacher-Generated Assessment Narratives

Maren Aukerman

University of Pennsylvania

Though progressive teacher education often seeks to move teachers away from a deficit orientation toward their students, very little work has considered teacher learning in this domain as an aspect of language socialization. This article examines the change in one teacher's affective and epistemic stance in the evaluation of student reading ability as reflected in two written assessment narratives, one that she wrote near the beginning of a professional development academy and one written near the end. The marked changes in stance toward student ability from the first to the second narrative suggest that language socialization had reshaped the teacher's language away from a deficit perspective toward a precise, well-supported emphasis on what the child *could* do. The author argues that such micro-level linguistic changes may be a better indicator of teacher change than broader statements teachers find easy to espouse, such as "All children can learn."

Introduction

In narrative, teachers not only recall and report experience, they repeat it and recreate it. Through narrative, the meaning of experience is reorganized and reconstructed, both for tellers and for audiences. In telling their narratives, teachers are rehearsing, redefining and regenerating their personal and professional selves, since self is what we believe ourselves to be, our self-narrative. (Cortazzi 1993: 139)

If we agree with Cortazzi, then it stands to reason that the kinds of stories teachers tell not only reflect teachers' attitudes and experiences with students, but also shape these in critical ways. Cortazzi (1993) has examined narratives for what they might reveal about an overarching

"teachers' culture"(5), considering commonalities among the stories of teachers at different schools and locations. Such a framework may offer descriptively useful glimpses into the practice of teaching, but I believe it is vital to take narrative analysis of teacher work a step further by looking across time and situation to consider whether and how a teacher's narratives can enact *differing* attitudes and experiences. If so, teacher narratives might become a useful tool for documenting (and perhaps even effecting) teacher change.

In the current study, I examine a teacher's written narratives generated during a summer professional development program aimed in part at helping teachers develop a broader repertoire of tools to teach students by building on what students already knew. One important goal of this academy, from the perspective of the professional developers, was for teachers to call into question some of the circulating discourses about "struggling" readers based in a deficit perspective, that is, a tendency to frame a child's current ability and capacity to learn in terms of a lack or a deficiency, what the child *cannot* do rather than what the child currently *can* do.

The assessment narratives written by each teacher during the academy described here documented student performance on a reading assessment battery administered by the teacher during a summer professional development program. In this study, I compare an assessment narrative generated at the beginning of the summer with one generated at the end of the summer for a different student. I ask: Did the nature of the teacher's judgments of student ability differ at the end of the professional development program, compared to the beginning? If so, how?

The Student Deficit Perspective Through the Lens of Discourse Analysis

Cortazzi's work indicates that teacher narratives related to academic ability tend to reflect a one-track, linear model, with "bright" children at one end of the spectrum and "slower learning ones" at the other. The majority of students fall somewhere in a nondescript in-between, "that middle sort of grey area" where students are often "forgotten" by the teachers (Cortazzi 1993: 122-123; note that all quoted text reflects actual quotations from teachers that were cited in this work).

Flores, Cousin and Diaz (1991) have argued that such evaluative academic labeling has negative pedagogical consequences, and they have documented how efforts to undo the widespread "deficit perspective" among teachers can improve academic achievement for students. However, their analysis of teacher perspectival change relies primarily on teachers' self-reports of their own attitudes toward students, which (as reported by Flores et al.) tend to be quite general, i.e., "'We accept our children's language, experiences, and knowledge about the world; and we begin with that'" (Flores, Cousin, & Diaz 1991).

It is one thing to be able to broadly espouse the idea that every child is a capable learner, and quite another to transfer that generalization in specific ways to evaluations of academic capability of given students. The presence or absence of this sort of transfer becomes most visible in analysis of teacher narratives about the academic performance of specific students. Yet little work has been done in this area, and there have been few attempts to consider change in teacher perspectives toward student ability through the lens of narrative discourse analysis.

What is Assessment Narrative?

More than thirty years ago, Labov (1972) suggested a discourse analytic framework for looking at narrative through several components, including the following: the abstract, which is typically one or two sentences at the beginning of a story summarizing it; the orientation, which identifies setting, characters, and situation; the complicating action; the result or resolution; the coda, which closes the narrative action; and the evaluation, which gives the point of the narrative (Labov 1972). The write-ups of student assessment performance in this study do *not* follow this general format, and might not be considered narratives by Labov because they do not describe a temporally sequenced series of actions in this way. A more recent view of narrative, however, proposes that the term might apply equally well to all stories we tell "for their potency to explain, rationalize, and delineate past, present, and possible experience" (Baquedano-Lopez 2001: 343).

In this latter spirit, then, I propose that descriptions of student assessment results that are generated by teachers are in fact special types of stories; they are built around a set of actions of a character (the student), but aim to describe these actions more thematically than temporally. To avoid confusion, I will use the term "assessment narrative" in describing these, a term that captures both descriptively what the stories aim to capture (a story of a student's performance on an assessment) and methodologically what is central in the narratives (the stories themselves enact an assessment of student reading practices).

Labov (1972) maintains that not all narratives are evaluated, but others have convincingly argued that there is no such thing as unevaluated narrative. For example, Hymes (1996) proposes that every narrative in fact has a point, a reason for being, although we as audience do not always have sufficient information to be able to get the point. Evaluation, then, is *not* a separate, concluding section of a narrative, but rather "the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Thompson & Hunst 2000: 5). This is the perspective on evaluation that frames my work here.

Although it might be argued that assessment narratives represent merely descriptive summaries of student reading practices rather than

evaluations, I argue that "pure description" is never possible, since even the apparently restrictive form of a summary leaves open a wealth of semiotic possibilities. Authorial stance, also in what is ostensibly a summary, colors the telling in ways that create different evaluations for the "same" story; there is no such thing as a report that is "merely" descriptive (cf. Kramsch 2000).

A Framework for Evaluation in Assessment Narrative

One key form of authorial stance, for Ochs, is affective stance, which "refers to a mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition, as well as degrees of emotional intensity vis-à-vis some focus of concern" (Ochs 1996: 410). Affective evaluation inevitably gets mapped onto a good-bad continuum, where "something that is good helps to achieve a goal, while something that is bad prevents or hinders the achievement of that goal" (Thompson & Hunston 2000: 14). Linked to this affective system is the evaluative sub-system of judgment, a system deployed to evaluate behavior; evaluation of capacity in turn is one aspect of judgment (Martin 2000).

In the case of evaluating assessment narratives, many of the central questions at stake concern affective stance: To what extent is the child in question evaluated as "capable" in reading (or of reading) by the teacher-author? That is, are the documented observed reading practices of the child evaluated in ways that situate them as good or bad vis-à-vis the goal of reading competence?

The other key form of authorial stance discussed by Ochs is epistemic stance, or "knowledge or belief vis-à-vis some focus of concern, including degrees of certainty of knowledge, degrees of commitment to truth of propositions, and sources of knowledge, among other epistemic qualities" (Ochs 1996: 410). Here, the distinction pursued is less directly one of good versus bad; instead it is linked to the level of (and reasons for) (un)certainty about the particular claim being made.

One way of looking at epistemic stance is to consider the relationship between what is "fact" and what is "assessment." While both are inherently evaluative, "a writer either gives information which purports to have truth-value and which can be contradicted only by calling the writer a liar (a 'fact'), or he or she gives an opinion, something which cannot of itself be said to be true or not true (an 'assessment')" (Hunston 2000: 186). An assessment may or may not be followed up by supporting "facts" (or additional assessments) that give value to that assessment; value is also indexed lexically (Hunston 2000).

In terms of epistemic stance, the key question in analyzing teacher assessment narratives for this study is how certainty itself is constructed in the assessment statements that are averred by the teacher. In other words, how does the teacher-author make a case for the claims of capacity she ascribes to the student assessed?

Evaluation, Language Socialization, and Professional Development

Thus far, I have primarily spoken of how evaluation works *in* a text. But as Cortazzi and Jin (2000) point out, evaluation simultaneously happens at two other levels as well. The text itself is evaluated jointly by reader and author (evaluation *of* text); and the text also serves as an evaluation of the author her/himself (evaluation *through* text) (Cortazzi & Jin, 2000). As such, the nature of evaluation is profoundly contextual and dialogic.

In this case, the teacher-author of these assessment narratives was writing in the context of a program explicitly targeting "professional development." The primary readers of these texts were course instructors (myself included) who would not only undertake evaluation *of* the textual product (and the student-character described), but also an evaluation of the teacher-author *through* the text. The instructors, as well, were participants in a particular language community of reading specialists. Teacher-authors were novices in this language community who were being socialized into that language community through language-in-use – both in their writing and in their teaching (Ochs 1996). This placed obvious constraints both on what was possible, what was expected and what was valued as the teachers generated their assessment narratives.

One key principle of their language-in-use shared by the course instructors in the current study was a sharp rejection of the deficit orientation. Drawing on Marie Clay, a seminal figure in early literacy intervention, the instructors felt that traditional reading readiness tests typically

> divide children into a competent group ready to learn on a particular programme and a problem group supposably not ready to learn. On the other hand, observations which record what learners already know about emerging literacy eliminate the problem group. *They are all ready to learn something*, but are starting from different places. (Clay 1993: 6, italics in original)

Instructors felt that student assessment – and student assessment interpretation – should work from this latter perspective. Thus, they attempted to communicate and model this in their written and oral communication with teacher-authors.

Given, then, that this understanding of student ability was key to both evaluation *of* and evaluation *through* teacher written work (and teaching) throughout the summer, I asked: would a greater reflection of this understanding of student ability begin to appear discoursally *in* the end-of-summer assessment narratives as well? From a Bakhtinian perspective, our "own" voice (by which I mean, following Bakhtin, the constellation of utterances we ultimately choose to speak or write, our speaking personality) is always "half-someone else's" (Bakhtin 1981: 345).

Thus, if all our words "have the 'taste' of a profession" (Bakhtin 1981: 293), will teacher-authors mark their developing participation in a new, particular professional language community of reading specialists through taking on – or revoicing – the voices they have heard spoken in that community as they generate these latter narratives of student reading ability?

Data Collection

I became interested in examining teacher assessment narratives as a part of my work as an instructor and coordinator for a reading certificate program offered in a largely rural/small-town school district in a mountain region in the western US. Over the course of six weeks, the fifteen participating teachers attended the Cal Reads professional development "institute" every day from 8:00 am until 12:30 pm. In addition to formal coursework, they tutored the same child one-on-one daily. They also communicated each day via e-mail with team leaders, who supervised the tutorials, observed instruction, and modeled lessons. Participating teachers also turned in weekly written assignments centered on their focal student to the course instructors. Course instructors supplied written electronic feedback on these assignments; they also observed instruction and modeled lessons.

Each teacher assessed two primary grade students at the beginning of the summer with a reading assessment battery. The first written assignment was to do two pre-assessment narratives of student reading practices based on each child's performance during test administration. These assessment narratives were considered a preliminary instructional plan or "road map" for instruction for the student. Teachers were provided with a sample pre-assessment narrative and a basic outline format to follow; Cal Reads staff also met with some of the teachers (including the focal teacher in this study) to talk about the assessment battery results before the teachers completed these write-ups.

One of these two students was randomly selected to be the teacher's focal student for the summer, and an instructor commented electronically on the write-up for the focal student. The other student was tagged a control student; no commentary was provided for that pre-assessment narrative. At the end of the summer, teachers again administered the same assessment battery to two students, in most cases the same two students. They completed another assessment narrative for each student, based on the same general outline format.

I decided to compare a teacher's assessment narrative from the beginning of the summer with one of these that was written at the end of the summer in order to analyze the nature of the assessment of student ability in each. I decided against using any of the focal student narratives, however, because I felt that the character of the narrative would inevitably be influenced by the roughly twenty instructional sessions in which the teacher had gotten to know the student. Moreover, the teacher presumably had a vested interest in these cases in demonstrating progress, change, and positive aspects of reading practices at the end of the summer.

Since teachers had not worked with students in the control group, I felt that those narratives would provide a cleaner comparison. However, I encountered another methodological challenge. While the assessment battery was the same at the beginning and end of the program, the focus of pre-assessment narratives was somewhat different than the focus of post-assessment narratives, in that the latter were documents that emphasized change and/or continuity over time. (For example, what new or different reading practices did a child exhibit? Which reading practices had continued or developed?)

This meant that direct comparisons of teacher discourse between pre- and post-assessment narratives were very difficult. As a result, I decided to choose a teacher whose initial control student was unavailable at the time of post-testing. Thus, she had completed an end-of-summer pre-assessment narrative on another new student. This gave me two pre-assessment narratives on control students to compare that were written by the same teacher – one about Diego[1] at the beginning of the summer (June 22) and one about Ben from the end (July 25). (See Appendix A and Appendix B)

Terri Bentley, the author of the two assessment narratives, had little prior experience in the teaching (or assessment) of literacy, less than that of the majority of her teacher peers in the program. Her teaching background was as a special area teacher, and she expressed considerable anxiety about participating in the program because she worried that she did not have the assumed background knowledge in order to be successful. She also expressed some concern about the level of her writing skills in what she found to be a writing-intensive program.

Data Analysisand Results

Terri's Affective Stance.

The two control pre-assessment narratives that Terri wrote are almost identical in length (1056 words for Diego's write-up, 1057 words for Ben's write-up), making it fruitful to look at the frequency of particular evaluative devices in each and juxtapose them. Appropriation and use of such devices will obviously vary slightly from piece to piece, but substantial changes in the frequency of particular forms of evaluation are powerful indicators that a shift in overall language use may be taking place. The analysis here was conducted on all subsections of the assessment narrative except the introduction (which did not, for the most part, strive to describe reading practices).

[1] Note that all names have been changed.

Of course, Diego and Ben represent two quite different student pro-files. Ben, a rising first grader, did not control as many emergent literacy practices as Diego, a rising third grader. And yet, as will become clear in the analysis that follows, Terri actually evaluated Ben's reading practices, in the July 25th pre-assessment narrative, more positively than she did Diego's, in the June 22nd pre-assessment narrative.

Since I was particularly interested in evaluation of capacity, I began by looking at the use of the modals "was able to" and "could" as positive markers of capacity with regard to particular reading practices. In the June 22 pre-assessment narrative, Terri uses this type of modal structure three times to directly describe Diego's reading practices[2] (See Table 1). But in two of these instances, she qualifies the extent of that "could" by follow-ing it with evaluations that suggest limited capacity, e.g., "He did not know the sounds of the short vowels. He **could only** tell me the letter names" (Appendix A). In other words, in only one instance did Terri com-ment on Diego's capacity without immediately qualifying it.

<div align="center">

Table 1
Terri's Use of Phrases Marking Evaluation of Capacity

</div>

Phrase	June 22 Pre-assessment	July 25 Pre-assessment
Could/was able to	3	7
However, but, yet	4	3
Then	0	8

In the July 25 pre-assessment narrative, by contrast, Terri uses the phrase "was able to" seven times to describe specific reading practices exhibited by Ben, e.g., "He **was able to** rhyme 'red' with shmed, ted, med, and bed." (Appendix B) Of these phrases, only one has a lexical marker that qualifies the extent of capacity indicated: "He was able to show one word, **but** showed me three words when asked for two." (Appendix B)

Terri's use of this kind of lexical conjunct to qualify extent of capacity was fairly similar in the two assessments (see Table 1). However, Terri's July 25 pre-assessment narrative of Ben introduces the use of the word "then," a word that does not appear at all in Diego's assessment narrative. In Ben's write-up, "then" appears eight times, seven times within a single paragraph:

> Ben sounded out each of the consonant digraph sounds **then** said "hud" for each digraph. For example: /sh/ he sounded /s/ /h/ **then** said "hud". For the short vowel sounds, Ben told me the letter names first **then**

[2] She did use the phrase "be able to" on one additional occasion: "After level 14 I asked him which story would he **be able to** read, level 16 or 18. He went with 18 and that put him to frustration level." Here, she does not describe Diego's ability but rather lets him "choose it" – and he chooses "wrong" – selecting a book as a level he was not able to read successfully (as defined by test protocol). Essentially this "able to," then, indexes a lack of capacity.

---

went back and was able to say the sounds for 4 of the 5 sounds: /o/ /a/ /u/ /e/. When blending words with short vowels, Ben sounded out each letter correctly to himself **then** pronounced a different word out loud ('map' he sounded /m/ /a/ /p/ then said "pan"). He did this with all ten words. When blending words with silent -e and long vowels, Ben sound-ed out some letters and said the letter names for others, **then** pronounced a different word out loud ('rope' he sounded /r/, said the letter /o/ sounded /p/ said the letter /e/ **then** said "eto"). (Appendix B)

In all but one of these cases, "then" precedes an error or miscue that tex-tually and sequentially follows what might be classified as "competent performance" on a specific reading task. Yet the evaluative force is quite different than a "but" or "however," which might have been used instead. "Then" provides a temporal link between the previous described practice and the one that follows, rather than directly evaluating what follows as a limitation. In fact, "then" can be used equally well to precede events that document "competent performance," as we can see in this segment of Terri's writing: "For the short vowel sounds, Ben told me the letter names first **then** went back and was able to say the sounds for 4 of the 5 sounds: /o/ /a/ /u/ /e/." (Appendix B)

While "then" figured prominently in the July 25 pre-assessment narra-tive, "difficulties" and "problems" do not appear at all – unlike in the June 22 pre-assessment narrative, where these words come up a number of times in passages like "He **also had difficulties** with the 'r-=controlled vowel patterns'. fur was 'four'; sir was 'ser'; server was 'sarve'" (Appendix A). Interestingly, in two of the five instances where Terri uses this terminology, she actually takes pains to suggest that Diego had "no problems" with a particular task. Yet, even though these phrases can be taken to suggest a positive evaluation of Diego's capacity, they index a view that would consider non-mastery of these tasks to be a problem.

In Terri's July 25 pre-assessment narrative, she seems to be relying on different semiotic signals to indicate non-mastery of particular reading-related tasks. What once might have been a "problem" is now described as an area for future mastery, e.g., "Ben **should have continued practice** with applying word by word and spacing in his writings and contextual readings" (Appendix B). The lens seems to be on what Ben *will* be able to do, not on what he currently cannot do. In other words, there has been a shift from an orientation toward areas of non-mastery as "problems" to areas for "continued practice"—emphasizing the future agency of the child.

There are no statements in the June 22 pre-assessment narrative that emphasize the child's future agency in this way. When statements are made about Diego's areas for future mastery, these are described in ways that high-light the teacher (not the student) role in that future mastery, for example, "Diego needs help with phonemic awareness including short vowels and words with a silent /e/" (Appendix A), or "He might need guidance with

reading silently" (Appendix A). Such statements evaluate Diego as depen- dent on adult assistance, and thus implicitly as incapable.

There were notable differences as well in Terri's use of descriptive terms of appreciation (see Table 2). In the June 22 pre-assessment narrative, only two such phrases appear. One of them was "Diego **did fine** with the conso- nant sounds and the digraph sounds on the BPST test" (Appendix A). Again, while Diego is evaluated positively in this case, the lukewarm phrase "did fine" suggests that it would not be fine at all if a student had not mastered these sounds on the test. In the July 25 pre-assessment, appreciative terms occur much more frequently. For instance, the word "good" (which does not appear once in the June 22nd pre-assessment narrative) occurs six times.

Table 2
Terri's Use of Terms of Appreciation

June 22 Preassessment narrative (Appendix A)	July 25 Preassessment narrative (Appendix B)
Diego **did fine** with the consonant sounds and the digraph sounds on the BPST test. During dictation, Diego did **very well**.	I believe he also had a **good** command of word vs. letter. Ben has a **good** understanding of rhyming. The BPST protocol showed that Ben has a **good** command of most of his consonants. During Ben's Dictation, he had a **great** concept of beginning letter sounds. Ben has a **strong** vocabulary. He had **good** definitions for all 10 words in the vocabulary test. Ben has a **good** command of concepts of print in a written text. He has a **good** start with his consonant and short vowel sounds.

Similarly, positive expressions of knowledge and understanding in the July 25 pre-assessment narrative far outnumbered those in the June 22 pre- assessment narrative (see Table 3), while negative expressions of student knowledge and understanding happened with greater frequency in the June 22 narrative (see Table 4). The one case of a qualifying expression of Ben's knowledge was constructed, as indicated earlier, in a way that sug- gests this as an area of future mastery: "This tells me he **still needs to understand** spacing between words" (Appendix B).

Table 3
Terri's Use of Positive Expressions of Understanding & Knowledge

June 22 Preassessment narrative (Appendix A)	July 25 Preassessment narrative (Appendix B)
Diego **demonstrates understanding** of concepts of print. He **obviously understands** directionality, page layout and the functions of print. When he read out loud, he **thoroughly comprehended** the stories, even if he did relate them backwards. Diego **seems to comprehend** when reading aloud.	Results of the CAP test suggest that Ben **has a basic knowledge** that print contains message. (21) Ben **has a very clear understanding** some punctuation. (27) He **also understands** first and last letter of a word. (29-30) With Ben's writing assessments, the Dictation page showed **he had the idea** that writing occurred on lines. (38-39) Ben **has a good understanding** of rhyming. (51) The BPST protocol showed that Ben **has a good command** of most of his consonants. (58) During Ben's Dictation, **he had a great concept** of beginning letter sounds. (71) With the "Words I Can Write", Ben **demonstrated again a knowledge** of first letter sounds and sounds within a word. (85-86) Ben **understands** that the words tell a story and that the story must make sense. (95) Ben **has a good command** of concepts of print in a written text. (102) He **understands** directionality, some punctuation and word to word concepts. (102-103) He **understands** rhyming and sounds in words, especially beginning letter sounds. (103-104) With the "Words I Can Write", Ben **demonstrated again a knowledge** of first letter sounds and sounds within a word. (85-86) Ben **understands** that the words tell a story and that the story must make sense. (95)

Table 4

Terri's Use of Negative Expressions of Understanding & Knowledge

June 22 Preassessment narrative (Appendix A)	July 25 Preassessment narrative (Appendix B)
However, he stated he **didn't know** what a quotation mark was. Diego **didn't know** how to rhyme on the Phonemic Awareness test. He **did not know** the sounds of the short vowels. **If he understood** the sounds more he might try to read the actual words.	This tells me he **still needs to understand** spacing between words.

Terri's Epistemic Stance.

In addition to examining Terri's affective stance in her assessment narratives, I also wanted to determine whether there were shifts in her epistemic stance. That is, I wanted to determine whether Terri supported her claims about student capacity differently at the end of the summer compared to the beginning.

I analyzed this by coding the two assessment narratives initially along the lines of Hunston's (2000) "fact" versus "assessment." For example, a statement such as "Diego did fine with the consonant sounds and the digraph sounds" (Appendix A) would be considered an assessment (since "fine" is an assessment that relies on Terri's opinion), while a statement such as "Diego said 'Mom and given Mary a brother'" (Appendix A) would be considered a fact. I then looked at each assessment statement related to the child's reading practice (except those in the introduction and in the summary, where assessment statements were summarizing the entire previous text) in order to determine whether the assessment was supported by "facts."[3] For example, the statement about Diego's reading of two-syllable words that asserted that, "The 'syllables' also caused problems" (Appendix A) was supported by the fact: "ladder became 'lader'; locate 'locket' and cactus 'cutes'" (Appendix A). But the statement "When he read out loud, he thoroughly comprehended the stories" (Appendix A) had no supporting facts.

I found that, in the July 25 pre-assessment narrative, Terri supported her assessment statements somewhat more frequently (See

---

[3] It is not my purpose to analyze whether these facts as presented adequately support the assessment statement made. I am merely interested in whether there is an attempt to support statements of assessment with statements of "fact."

Table 5

Terri's use of supported and unsupported assessment statments

	June 22 pre-assessment	July 25 pre-assessment
Total number of assessment statements	21	15
Supported assessment statements	9 43%	12 80%
Unsupported assessment statements	12 57%	3 20%
Positive[4] assessment statements (supported)	4 19%	10 67%
Negative assessment statements (supported)	5 24%	1 7%
Positive assessment statements (unsupported)	6 27%	3 20%
Negative assessment statements (unsupported)	4 19%	0 0%

---

[4] A small number of assessment statements were neither clearly positive nor clearly negative, or were mixed in tenor. These are not included in these counts.

Table 5). But more dramatic was the significant decline in her use of unsupported assessment statements (3 times, compared to 12 times in the June 22 pre-assessment narrative). In other words, in the June 22 pre-assessment narrative 57% of the assessment statements were unsupported by any sort of "fact," whereas by the final assessment narrative, only 20% of assessment statements were unsupported. While Terri made fewer assessment statements overall in the July 25th pre-assessment narrative (15, compared to 21 in the June 22nd narrative), she provided far more facts in support of her claims.

I also noted that the nature of the assessment statements shifted from roughly equal numbers of positive and negative statements (whether supported or unsupported) to a far greater number of positive assessment statements (See Table 5). In fact, there were no unsupported negative assessment statements in the July 25th pre-assessment narrative at all: the only negative assessment statement, "This tells me he still needs to understand spacing between words," was supported in the preceding sentence by specific evidence: "He told me his writing 'ilikmykr' means 'I like to ride my car'" (Appendix B).

A Brief Overview of Instructor Feedback

Although it would be possible to maintain that the different evaluative stances appearing in the June 22 and July 25 pre-assessment narratives simply reflected some different inherent attitude Terri held toward the two boys, I argue that language socialization provides a better explanation. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze multiple dimensions of the language socialization that gave rise to the shifts in Terri's pre-assessment narratives described above, I will suggest that one dimension of the language socialization took place during the summer program was the instructor feedback that Terri received from me on her June 22nd pre-assessment narrative for Diego, the student she subsequently tutored that summer. I analyzed all comments on the June 22nd narrative that were provided on the sections analyzed here (excluding the introduction and summary, for the reasons indicated above). I thematically coded each utterance (for the purposes of this analysis, each utterance was defined as the stretch of writing between quoted excerpts from Terri's own writing), and found notable patterns in terms of what was emphasized in the feedback.

One approach emphasizing alternative ways of linguistically conceptualizing a child's capacity in the written narrative involved specifically commenting on instances where Terri *was* already noting Diego's strengths—documented in four feedback utterances, e.g., "A NICE, KEEN, SPECIFIC OBSERVATION OF WHAT DIEGO IS DOING WELL. BRAVO!" At other times, the feedback directly indicated enthusiasm for something Diego was doing—something that Terri had not necessarily expressed enthusiasm for in the way she had written her pre-assessment narrative. For example, after Terri noted that, "On the level 2 story he self-corrected every time (he did this on 4 of the 6 sentences)," the written comment was "WOW! THAT'S REALLY IMPRESSIVE!" Such commentary may have functioned to shape the pre-assessment narrative as a linguistic activity involving appreciation (recall that there were very few terms of appreciation in Terri's own writing in that narrative).

More frequently, the feedback directly suggested ways of reframing a negative evaluation of Diego's capacity in ways that highlighted his abilities instead. This was documented in four utterances, and was often quite extensive. For example, when Terri indicated that Diego was "confused with punctuation marks" because, to him, "they all mean stop or finish," the following reframing was offered:

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT THIS, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT HE UNDERSTANDS IN A BROAD SENSE THAT PUNCTUATION FUNCTIONS DIFFERENTLY THAN LETTERS, WHICH IS REALLY AN IMPORTANT REALIZATION AND A STRENGTH THAT I WOULD NOTE. WHAT'S LEFT FOR HIM TO DISCOVER IS THAT THESE STOPS AND FINISHES ARE DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER.

While the phrase, "what's left for him to discover" does not appear in Terri's July 25 pre-assessment, there are echoes of that kind of linguistic construction in Terri's language during that second pre-assessment regarding things that Ben "still needs to practice."

In addition to feedback that emphasized how to frame Diego as capable, at least thirteen utterances included requests for more specific information and/or examples. For instance, in response to Terri's unsupported assessment statement "He doesn't seem to know the difference between a word and a letter":

HOW DO YOU KNOW? WHAT EXACTLY DID HE DO WHEN ASKED TO SHOW A WORD? A LETTER? IT SEEMS THAT THERE ARE SOME OTHER PIECES OF HIS PRINT AWARENESS YOU MIGHT WANT TO TALK ABOUT HERE. ONE OTHER CRITICAL PIECE HERE IS HOW SOLID HE IS WITH ONE-TO-ONE WORD CORRESPONDENCE. WAS HE ABLE TO POINT TO WORDS WITH YOU READING? DID HE POINT WHILE HE WAS READING HIMSELF? DID HE CONSISTENTLY READ THE CORRECT NUMBER OF WORDS ON A PAGE?

This kind of feedback was frequently placed after unsupported assessment statements, and seemed intended to elicit "facts" to support such

statements. Occasionally, there were also comments that indicated appreciation for the presence of supporting "facts." For instance, when Terri noted that Diego "would sound out the word to himself correctly, but when he said it aloud the word was completely different. He sounded out feed correctly then said 'fat'; leak was said 'cap,'" the subsequent feedback was: "THANKS FOR THE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES HERE – THEY GIVE ME A VIVID PICTURE OF WHAT HE'S DOING!"

In short, there is significant evidence to suggest that Terri received explicit feedback that attempted to shift her affective stance away from a deficit perspective, and that program instructors also sought to shift her epistemic stance to one that supported assessment statements with "factual" examples.

Discussion

The above analysis indicates that the nature of Terri's evaluation of student reading ability did change from her initial assessment narrative to her final one. Her judgments were far less likely to describe reading practices in terms that were negative or that imply limitations and "problems." Moreover, her assessment statements were far more likely to be offered in ways that are supported by observational evidence.

But while the extent of change in the nature of student evaluation was dramatic, do these shifts reflect real changes in Terri's perspective, or were they an empty voicing of the kind of language Terri realized was desired by the course instructors? In other words, does Terri emphasize student ability because she herself believes this is important, or because she knows the instructors believe it is important?

It is impossible to conclusively answer this question from an analysis of these narratives alone. However, in some senses Terri's reasons for changing her authorial stance (assuming the shift is a calculated one – and I would suspect that at least parts of it are not) may not be as important as they seem. Whatever they were, Terri appeared to be attending to reading practices differently and was providing different interpretations of these practices at the end of the summer. Her language-in-use changed and, as Ochs argues, "language praxis is a hand-maiden to culture, a medium for passing of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next" (Ochs 1996: 408) . Furthermore, I would argue that the resultant assessment narrative, in addition to itself enacting a form of language praxis, also provided different possibilities for her relationship with the student (through, for example, giving her concrete, identified strengths to build upon), and different possibilities for future instruction.

Conclusion

While my findings examine the shift in evaluative language for only one teacher, they indicate that professional development can serve as an effective instrument of language socialization, in this case by changing the way teachers construct notions of student ability in assessment narratives. In short, we can teach teachers to reject a deficit orientation and emphasize, in specific evaluative terms, what a child can do.

However, my analysis only scratches the surface of how the change in a teacher's evaluative framework might have taken place. While instructor written feedback may have played a role, other forms of interaction (such as the tutorial itself, or the accompanying coursework) might have been equally salient for Terri, or more so. Further analysis is also necessary to determine how such a shift in perspective might impact the nature of instruction. Future work I undertake might include an analysis of what went on in Terri's tutorial lessons with Diego – whether and how the shift in teacher perspective created different avenues for learning for the student. But the current study, in addition to what it specifically reveals about possibilities for changing teachers' evaluative framework through professional development, also serves as a methodological starting point for using narrative analysis to examine teacher change. Future educational research can use discourse analysis to tease out other aspects of the effectiveness of professional development as well. Perhaps such work ultimately will enable an analogous shift in the evaluative framework of *teacher educators*, so that we might differently evaluate our own progress toward the goal of better teaching teachers as well.

Maren Aukerman is an assistant professor of Reading/Writing/Literacy at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the relationship between talk and learning, both among child readers and their teachers, and on pedagogical decision-making in professional development settings.

E-mail: mauker@gse.upenn.edu.

References

Bakhtin, M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination* (pp. 259-492). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Baquedano-Lopez, P. (2001). Creating social identities through doctrina narratives. In A. Duranti (ed.), *Linguistic anthropology: A reader* (pp. 343-358). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.

Clay, M. (1993). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (2000). Evaluating evaluation in narrative. In S. Hunston & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse* (pp. 102-120). New York: Oxford University Press.

Flores, B., Cousin, P. T., & Diaz, E. (1991). Transforming deficit myths about learning, language, and culture. *Language Arts, 68*.

Hunston, S. (2000). Evaluation and the planes of discourse. In S. Hunston & G.

Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hymes, D. (1996). Ethnopoetics and sociolinguistics. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Ethnography, linguistics, and narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Kramsch, C. (2000). Social discursive construction of self in L2 learning. In J. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 133-153). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Martin, J. R. (2000). Beyond exchange: APPRAISAL systems in English. In S. Hunston & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ochs, E. (1996). Linguistic resources for socializing humanity. In J. Gumperz & S. Levinson (Eds.), *Rethinking linguistic relativity* (pp. 407-437). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, G., & Hunston, S. (2000). Evaluation: An introduction. In S. Hunston & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A
June 22 Pre-Assessment Narrative for Diego
(Beginning of summer)

Pre-assessment Summary for
Diego Calderón

Grade: Third
Assessor: Terri Bentley
Date of Assessment: June 22, 2001

Introduction

Diego speaks both English and Spanish, he is reading in English. He is very excited about computers and was concerned that he might miss his computer time while doing the assessments.

Diego enjoys reading and he has quite an imagination. The only person who reads to him at home is his brother.

He enjoyed doing the readings with me and wanted to read the highest level. With each book I gave him, he checked the back cover for the level. I did start him too low, so we ended up reading seven stories but he didn't seem to mind.

Print Strategies

Diego demonstrates understanding of concepts of print. He obviously understands directionality, page layout and the functions of print. He read the lower level stories with expression and made use of punctuation. On the CAP test, Diego could tell me what a question mark, period and comma were. However, he stated he didn't know what a quotation mark was. Interesting to note, when he dictated the story, he didn't use any punctuation or capitals.

I believe he knows the difference between letters, beginning and ending letters and words however, on the CAP test he showed a letter when asked to show a word.

Graphophonics

Letter-Sound Correspondence.
Diego didn't know how to rhyme on the Phonemic Awareness test. I gave

him several examples yet he still used words associated with the given word. For example: red he said "white" I reminded him to pick words that sound like red and he said "bite, kite" (my example for rhyming was light). On batch he did make up a rhyme word "ratch" but was unable to continue.

When asked to change sounds, Diego again had problems. He was able to change yellow to "yell"; flake to "fake"; and at to "sat". I cannot see a pattern as to how he came up with the other words. Make take away the /m/ became "am"; part take away the /t/ became "pot"; my add /k/ became "came"; land take off the /l/ and put on a /s/ became "sat" and dry take off the /d/ and put on a /f/ became "fat".

Diego did fine with the consonant sounds and the digraph sounds on the BPST test. He did not know the sounds of the short vowels. He could only tell me the letter names however, when blending words with short vowels, he had no problem. On the finale -e words, Diego omitted the /e/ in almost all words: rake was "rack"; cute was "cut"; kite was "kit". He also had difficulties with the 'r-=controlled vowel patterns'. fur was "four"; sir was "ser"; server was "sarve". The 'syllables' also caused problems ladder became "lader"; locate "locket" and cactus "cutes".

During dictation, Diego did very well. He even continued with the words "boy is" when all I had reread was "The". The word riding was written (he spelled it correctly) "righting" and his was written "hes".

Diego had no problems with the sight word list, he only had to identified one of the 30 words.

On the 'Words I Can Write' protocol I told Diego he had 5 minutes to write as many words as he can. I could tell he was writing as fast as he could and because of this, I believe, he wrote the words randomly on the page (not left to right, not top to bottom). He continued writing the entire five minutes and only misspelled 8 of 41 words. I cannot see a pattern as to how he got his words. They didn't rhyme, some were from the stories we had been reading and some were number words.

Semantic, Syntactic, Cross-checking, and Fluency Strategies
I mentioned Diego was a very creative boy. This came out in his reviewing and predicting and in how the story related to him.

When asked to look at the pictures and tell me what was happening he would look at the cover page and create a story of his own. When

prompted to look at the other pictures, he would describe very accurately what was happening in that picture. When retelling a story, he never started at the beginning. He quite often stared at the end and randomly gave other parts of the story. However, when asked "what does this story make you think of" Diego would retell the main points of the story from beginning to end with him as the main character.

Diego didn't give me many clues on the strategies he uses when reading, however, when the text became more difficult, he began repeating words and phrases more often. On the easier stories, most of Diego's self corrections were visual, he was simply reading too fast. However, when the text became more difficult, he used meaning and structure to self correct. Most of the time he did not self correct or even hesitate in his reading. Several times he invented a sentence. When the text said Mandy gave her green shoe box to her baby sister and she sat on it. Oh, no! Diego said "Mayde (Mandy) gave her green shoe box to her baby sister and she said oh no. Oh no!" Some of his invented sentences didn't make sense. Mama was giving Maria a bath. Diego said "Mom and given Mary a brother". He did not repeat or hesitate after this sentence.

I started Diego on a level that was too simple for him and he read his way up the levels. After level 14 I asked him which story would he be able to read, level 16 or 18. He went with 18 and that put him to frustration level. This was the first level Diego read silently. It was also the first level where comprehension was unsatisfactory. When he read out loud, he thoroughly comprehended the stories, even if he did relate them backwards.

Summary
Diego seems to comprehend when reading aloud. He might need guidance with reading silently.

Diego needs help with phonemic awareness including short vowel sounds and words with a silent /e/. I think this will also help him use strategies other than inventing sentences. If he understood the sounds more, he might try to read the actual words.

(1056 words)

Appendix B
July 25 Pre-Assessment Narrative for Ben
(End of summer)

Pre-assessment summary
for Ben Harris

Grade: 1st
Assessor: Terri Bentley
Date of assessment: July 25, 2001

Introduction

Ben likes to play outside, go to the beach and ride his bike. He likes to read because it's fun. He reads Winnie the Pooh and his favorite story is one where Tigger gets muddy. He also likes to write because he can make up stories.

Ben was in Kindergarten last school year and believes his reading has improved this summer (he was not a part of the Literacy Intervention). He tells me a good reader sounds out the letters in a word.

Print Strategies

Results of the CAP test suggest that Ben has a basic knowledge that print contains message. He demonstrated moving left to right on the right page. He omitted the print on the left page. When asked about return sweep to the left he was able to point the direction correctly. Ben showed the beginning of a sentence when asked and pointed to the end of the line when asked to show the end of the sentence. He was able to point out word by word matching.

Ben has a very clear understanding some punctuation. He told me "a question mark asks you a question", and "a period is the end of a sentence". I believe he also had a good command of word vs. letter. When asked to show one and two letters he was able to without hesitation. He also understands first and last letter of a word. He was able to show one word, but showed me three words when asked for two.

On the DRA level A book, Ben pointed to one 'no' when two were written on the page. He repeated this behavior when three 'yes's appeared on the page. However, when prompted "how many words are there?", he

self corrected on page 13 and read all three 'no's, then on page 15 he read only one of the three 'yes's.

With Ben's writing assessments, the Dictation page showed he had the idea that writing occurred on lines. He wrote his entire story on the line separating the heading from the body of the page. His writing did not contain any spaces or punctuation. When I asked Ben about the "Words I Can Write" that he wrote, he told me his writing "ilikmykr" means "I like to ride my car". This tells me he still needs to understand spacing between words.

Graphophonic

Letter-sound Correspondence.

Ben has a good understanding of rhyming. He was able to rhyme 'red' with shmed, ted, med, and bed. He also rhymed 'batch' without hesitation. The Phonemic Awareness test shows that Ben understands sounds in words but needs practice with actual deletion, substitution and insertion. On most examples he repeated the original word and when asked to say 'yellow but don't say the /ow/ he said "yella"; say 'flake' but don't say /l/ he said blake; 'land' take off the /l/ and put on a /s/ he said list. Say 'dry' and take off the /d/ and put on a /f/ became "five".

The BPST protocol showed that Ben has a good command of most of his consonants. He did identify /n/ as "a"; he transposed /b/ with /d/ and /d/ with /b/; said "a" for the letter /p/ and self corrected the letter /y/, he originally said "w".

Ben sounded out each of the consonant digraph sounds then said "hud" for each digraph. For example: /sh/ he sounded /s/ /h/ then said "hud". For the short vowel sounds, Ben told me the letter names first then went back and was able to say the sounds for 4 of the 5 sounds: /o/ /a/ /u/ /e/. When blending words with short vowels, Ben sounded out each letter correctly to himself then pronounced a different word out loud ('map' he sounded /m/ /a/ /p/ then said "pan"). He did this with all ten words. When blending words with silent -e and long vowels, Ben sounded out some letters and said the letter names for others, then pronounced a different word out loud ('rope' he sounded /r/, said the letter /o/ sounded /p/ said the letter /e/ then said "eto").

During Ben's Dictation, he had a great concept of beginning letter sounds. He wrote /i/ for the words 'is' and 'it'; /h/ for the words 'his' and 'he'; transposed /d/ for the word 'bike'. He also sounded out two

words. The word 'can' he wrote "kan" and he spelled 'fast' correctly.

Words (in and out of context)

Ben has a strong vocabulary. He even giggled a little when I asked him what a house was. He had good definitions for all 10 words in the vocabulary test. For the word 'imagine' he answered, "just your imagination; imagination's where dinosaurs still live; you can write a book with your imagination".

Ben has 'to' as an automatic sight word and was able to sound out the word 'was'. He once again sounded out some of the sight words but said a different word aloud: 'for' /f/ /o/ /r/ was verbalized "road". When reading in context with the DRA, he automatically read 'no' and 'yes'. With the "Words I Can Write", Ben demonstrated again a knowledge of first letter sounds and sounds within a word. He wrote "mem" was 'mom'; "dod" was 'dad'; "ilikmykr" was 'I like my car'.

Semantic, Syntactic, Cross-checking and Fluency Strategies

Ben understands that the words tell a story and that the story must make sense. He read the Level A story with meaning even if he didn't use all the words in the text (in this story, the word 'no' is written one, two or three times depending on the page. The story ends with a bird saying "yes, yes, yes", where one 'yes' would be semantically and syntactically correct).

Summary

Ben has a good command of concepts of print in a written text. He understands directionality, some punctuation and word to word concepts. He understands rhyming and sounds in words, especially beginning letter sounds. He has a good start with his consonant and short vowel sounds.

Ben should have continued practice with applying word by word and spacing in his writings and contextual readings. At this point, Ben is ready to learn how to blend words with short vowel sounds and to acquire some common sight words.

(1057 words)