

The Use of Space in a TLaC Low-Ability Language Learning Classroom

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Abstract

This study investigates one hidden dimension and perhaps an often neglected semiotic resource that teachers routinely employ in the classroom – space. While there is no shortage of literature on classroom pedagogy and talk that makes incidental reference to the spatial configuration in the classroom, or even the extra-linguistic tools that can engender multimodal talk (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2007), there are limited explicit studies, such as Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle, Jones and Reid (2005), on the deliberate use of space as a semiotic resource that teachers can leverage in the classroom.

Building upon the work of Lim, O'Halloran, and Podlasov (2012) on spatial proxemics in the classroom, this present study explores the ways in which teachers in a Teach Like a Champion (TLaC) programme use space either deliberately or subconsciously in class in order to achieve their linguistic and lesson objectives. Studying the patterns of spatial use in the classroom vis-à-vis the classroom talk allows us to explore the meanings that are dynamically created through the different uses of space in the classroom, and to unravel the hidden dimension of space that has too long been neglected in the classroom.

Introduction

Teachers tend to be very familiar with such semiotic resources in the classroom as language, voice quality, facial expression, gaze and gesture. The combination of these, when used to complement one another, allows communications between teachers and students to be rich with meaning. Teachers, in the process of classroom orchestration, are adept at using various configurations of the semiotic resources in order to effect behavioral change in the students. Traditionally, the semiotic resources listed above tend to be the main focus of attention in the minds of teachers when they think about how to effectively realise a particular lesson objective.

Yet, there remains one often overlooked semiotic resource that teachers may have implicitly and intuitively leveraged without actually realising it — space. A cursory glance at many of the classrooms in a typical school will show a teacher actively moving about the class as he or she conducts the lesson. Yet, beyond the limited number of studies into spatial pedagogy such as Kress et al. (2005) and Lim, O'Halloran and Podlasov (2012), the use of space in the classroom is a topic that is not commonly explicitly discussed by scholars as well as teachers.

Thus, the *Teach Like a Champion* (TLaC) pedagogical strategy (Lemov, 2010) comes as a refreshing change as the use of space is actually explicitly referenced in a number of strategies. For example, teachers are encouraged to occupy certain positions in the classroom in order to convey a certain interpersonal message to the students. This suggests that space in the classroom is a semiotic resource

through which meaning is encoded and enacted continually throughout the course of a lesson. Therefore the objective of this study was to find out how teachers leverage the semiotic resource of space in the TLaC classroom to augment the talk in the classroom.

Research Question

How do teachers in a Secondary 1 TLaC classroom use space in the classroom to complement their teacher-student talk?

Literature Review

The study of multimodal communication in the classroom is an emerging area of research that has the potential to inform and guide educators in their quest to refine their classroom communication and thus pedagogy. Research into multimodal communication commonly focuses on the role of extra-linguistic resources such as gesture, gaze, posture, or visual symbolism in determining or shaping meaning in communication (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). By transposing these extra-linguistic resources into classroom communication, educators realise the rich potential for communication and teaching to be shaped, supplemented or undermined by extra-linguistic choices. (Schleppegrell, 2007).

Kress et al. (2005) uncover the myriad of resources for multimodal communication with a discussion on the study of the use of space in the classroom as a purposeful mode of communication between teachers and students. They argue that the layout of the classroom, as well as the movement of the teacher within that classroom, is laden with meaning that shapes the interaction between the teacher and the student. For them, the use of space is productive and impactful enough that it contributes to stark differences in the conduct and delivery of lessons that have been guided by the same curriculum.

Lim et al. (2012) take this understanding of the use of space in the classroom, and augment it with Hall (1966) and Matthiessen's (2009) studies of proxemics to explore the possibility of mapping meanings to various spaces in the classroom. They study two classes helmed by two different teachers in a Singapore Junior College and propose that various spaces in the classroom, combined with the nature of movement within and between those spaces, generate social meanings together with traditional linguistic communication.

It is important to note at this juncture that, in multimodal communication, the individual resources often combine with and supplement other semiotic resources. For example, a person's closed-fisted gesture is often allied with voice modulation to convey varying emotions. In the context of the present study, it will be hard to argue for the use of space in the classroom to be singularly meaningful. Rather, as Lim et al. (2012) argue, the teacher's position is important "as the material site where the semiotic resources of the teacher (e.g. gesture, language and others) are embodied and instantiated" (p. 2). Therefore, while the focus of this study is on the varied use of space, it does not ignore the role of other semiotic resources such as gesture and language that are meaningfully enacted within that space.

While Lim et al.'s study may have centred around General Paper classes in Junior Colleges, where not only the subject matter but also the students' socio-emotional and classroom' physical profiles markedly differ from this present study, it reinforces the belief that various spaces in the classroom and the interplay of those spaces are meaningful and significant in classroom interaction.

Methodology

This study focuses on Secondary 1 Normal (Technical) classes that are piloting the *Teach Like a Champion* (TLaC) programme – a collection of pedagogical strategies pioneered in the United States that are aimed at making lessons more engaging for low-ability learners – specifically because the recommended pedagogy of the programme explicitly references the use of certain spaces in the class in order to achieve various pedagogical goals. For example, the “Pastore’s Perch” stance calls for teachers to occupy the front corner of the class in order to adopt an efficient surveillance stance – since the teacher only needs to pan 90 degrees to view the entire class. It is evident then that the TLaC classes are potentially rich with meaningful uses of space by the teacher.

The male teacher who was the focus of the study had more than five years of teaching experience and had agreed to take part. There was also a secondary newly-trained female teacher who had recently joined the class as a co-teacher. The data was collected from the classroom in the form of video and audio recordings. Eight one-hour lessons were recorded across the span of a term. This was specifically done to include a large range of lesson types that covered various topics and objectives within a theme that was taught in the term. Recording lessons across one entire term allowed the full range of the teacher’s various (spatial) pedagogies to be observed, allowing the study to understand the various ways the teacher made use of space in the classroom to achieve different purposes.

The data gathered was transcribed in two ways. Firstly, a transcription of the linguistic exchange that occurred in the class was obtained. This allowed for an understanding of the nature and patterns of the linguistic interaction that took place between the teacher and the students, as well as for the discernment of the various phases of the lesson observed. Separately, a transcription of the teacher’s spatial positioning in class was obtained. Here, Lim et al’s (2012) framework for coding movement in the classroom was used. The teacher’s positioning in the classroom was tracked at regular intervals and charted in Microsoft Excel, with various regions in the classroom given specific codes. For example, the space behind the teacher’s desk was called BTD (behind teacher’s desk), while there were also spaces titled Classroom Front Centre, or Classroom Front Right.

Subsequently, the two sets of transcription and codified movement data were analysed together. Some of the areas of preliminary interest included the general pattern of spaces occupied by the teacher and the students in class, the adoption of different spaces by the teacher in various lesson phases, the dynamic movement of the teacher during certain pedagogical moves, and his access to various spaces in the class.

Interviews with the teacher and selected students were also conducted to elicit their views on the teachers’ use of space in their classroom in order to corroborate the findings achieved earlier. These interviews were conducted both immediately after the lesson, as well as at a later time when the interviewees were given time to review video excerpts (without prior input by the researcher).

Space as a Semiotic Resource in the Classroom

It was observed in this study that space as a semiotic resource in the classroom was used in a number of ways as part of the pedagogic discourse. This involved the teacher making use of various static and dynamic positions which, together with verbal and gestural cues, allowed the teacher to convey his message clearly to his students.

It was also observed that space served to realise the interpersonal (conveying the teachers’ judgement of certain behaviour in the classroom) and textual (helping to sequence the different phases of a lesson) metafunctions of the teacher’s communication in the classroom, therefore aiding the teacher

in his regulative discourse as well. While this is not surprising, and is consistent with Hall (1966) and Matthiessen's (2009) study on proxemics, it serves as an important reminder that the tacit, culturally-bound understanding and appreciation of proxemics that influence everyday interaction in regular social settings are still pertinent in the classroom, and thus stand to be useful as a semiotic resource for teachers (and students) in the classroom.

Below, even though single examples are used to illustrate the various uses of space in the classroom, it must be noted that they serve as exemplars of a consistent pattern of behaviour in the classroom. The examples used in the discussion below merely serve to demonstrate the mechanics of the use of space as a semiotic resource in the classroom.

The Use of Space in Pedagogic Discourse: Signalling Lesson Phases

The role of proxemics in pedagogic discourse is seen largely in signalling the changes in lesson phases. Here, the teacher is seen to occupy different spaces and utilise different movement patterns during the different phases of the lesson. For a given phase of a lesson, there is a unique pattern of movement that occurs exclusively then, and is consistently seen in similar lesson phases during other lessons. Therefore, this clear and unique co-occurrence of movement and lesson phase allows spatial positioning to be a useful and reliable index of the current phase of the lesson. Below, we see how different patterns of movement by the teacher define various lesson phases.

Open Practice

In the first example, after an extended period of explicit didactic teaching at the front-centre of the classroom, the teacher announces:

Okay now your turn to do this page. Raise your hands if you have any problems.

Here, the teacher has linguistically signalled the shift in lesson phase by using the order marker "okay now" followed by instructions for the students to "do this page". This serves as a clear instruction for



Figure 1: Teacher walking down aisles while facing students

students that they have ended the lecture phase and are now in the *open practice* segment of the lesson, where students are left on their own to attempt the assignment, but may confer with their peers or ask the teacher for help if they need it.

At the same time, we see the teacher beginning to walk along the aisles of the classroom. The teacher consistently and repeatedly walks slowly and deliberately down the aisles close to the students, training his gaze at the work on the students' tables. The slow speed and close proximity allows the

students to easily stop the teacher when they need help. Periodically, the teacher stops to scrutinise the students' work in greater detail, and, when beckoned by a student or when he spots something amiss, the teacher will bend down towards the student to address a concern. The teacher then continues walking down the aisle when the issue has been addressed. This pattern of movement continues until he moves to the front of the class and announces:

Right class, let's discuss the answers to page 3.

Again, the teacher linguistically signals a change in the phase of the lesson by using an order marker "right class" followed by an instruction for the students. The above two linguistic signals of changes in lesson phases have effectively bookended the *open practice* segment of the lesson. Crucially, they also bookend a consistent pattern of movement in the teacher – walking along the aisle, close to the students.

Individual Practice

In slight contrast to the open practice phase described above, the teacher is also seen employing a different pattern of movement to signal individual practice. Here, the students are supposed to complete a task individually, within a prescribed time limit, and without conferring with their peers or soliciting help from the teacher.

As always, the teacher linguistically signals this by telling the class:

You have ten minutes to finish this section. We'll go through the answers at 9.10.



Figure 2: Teacher walking down aisles while remaining distant

The teacher's explicit instruction "finish this section" coupled with him informing the students of the time limit "ten minutes" unmistakably signals to the students that they are in *individual practice*. The teacher augments this with another unique pattern of movement. This time, the teacher also walks up and down the aisle to oversee the students' work. However, here the teacher walks a little away from the students. In contrast to the intimate positioning of the *open practice*, the more distant posture adopted by the teacher, in addition to having his arms akimbo and a distant scanning gaze, positions him as a formal supervisor in the classroom at this point in time.

Okay time's up. Can I have all of you look at me please?

Similar to the *open practice* session, the teacher ends this individual practice session by signalling another change in phase. This time, not only does the teacher declare that “time’s up” but he also moves to the centre of the class while doing so, visually signalling that the time for individual work is over.

Lecture

In the above two examples, the teacher ends his patrols by returning to the centre of the classroom before beginning to speak. Consistently, the teacher does this when beginning a period of extended frontal teaching or a lecture phase. In the example below, the teacher calls for attention from the class before he communicates his intention to demonstrate an alternative technique for finding the answer.

Okay class listen up. (3s). Let me show you how we can get the answer from here instead.

While linguistically this appears to be a regular teacher statement at the boundary of lesson phases, its co-occurrence with the teacher’s use of space is intriguing. Here, the teacher calls for the students’ attention “okay class listen up” while he is in the middle of the class, in the midst of a patrol. While it would appear to be most expedient for the teacher to then begin informing the class of his next intent (“Let me show you.”), he instead only begins that statement when he reaches the centre of the classroom.



Figure 3: Teacher occupying the front and centre of the classroom when lecturing

This deliberate pause while returning to the centre appears to be a persistent feature of this teacher’s communication style. In another instance, the teacher calls time on a timed practice while at the back of the class, and maintains silence while he moves to the front-centre of the classroom to begin going through the answers.

It appears then that the teacher is mindful of an ideal position to occupy in the classroom when performing a lecture or frontal teaching. That the teacher is willing to allow a three-second pause between his utterances, which would otherwise flow naturally, demonstrates that the pause is a deliberate choice that plays an integral part in the teacher’s classroom orchestration. Here, it allows the teacher the time to return to a space that is strongly associated with frontal teaching. That the students do not attempt to fill in the space with interjections or questions suggests that the students are cognisant of the teacher readjusting his spatial positioning in the class, and are anticipating the next phase of the lesson to begin once the teacher has completed doing so.

The Use of Space in Instructional Discourse: Signalling Expectations

The use of space to signal lesson phases does not solely serve a pedagogic function in class. As the teacher leverages spatial positioning to serve as an index of the different stages of that particular lesson, it in turn communicates and enacts a shift in the role of both the teacher and student in class. For instance, a student who has been strictly a passive listener in a lecture phase of the lesson may then be expected to be an active participant in a whole-class discussion or group work.

Instigating work

In the above section, we see that the teacher uses the combination of spatial positioning and linguistic communication to signal open practice and individual practice time. Below, we are able to see an instance of when the teacher only relies on linguistic communication to convey the shift in the phase of the lesson.

Can you do this now? You have ten minutes. Go.

Here, after briefly explaining the steps needed to answer a particular type of lesson, the teacher declares the time limit for a given in-class assignment before issuing the command to commence using the instructional word “go”. Consistent with the examples discussed in the previous section, we see a clear linguistic signal that the teacher is trying to enact a change in the phase of the lesson.



Figure 4: Students remain otherwise engaged despite instructed to begin work

However, despite the clear instruction and signal from the teacher to begin their open practice, the students appear to be otherwise engaged. There is evidence of students talking to their friends across the aisle, chatting with their buddies, or with their head resting on their arms on the table. It is curious that there appears to be no change in the students’ actions or disposition despite the overt linguistic communication of a change of lesson phase.

However, when the teacher begins to move down the aisle as he would during regular open practice, the instances of disengagement appear to resolve themselves. We can see that even without any further linguistic communication with the class, as the teacher begins his patrol, almost the entire class can be seen to be now focussed on the completion of their written assignment in class.



Figure 5: Students focussed on work when teacher patrols

It appears that the movement and posture of the teacher moving down the aisle has enacted a change in the disposition of the students. The fact that the students begin doing their work without further instruction from the teacher suggests that the movement of the teacher has not only signalled the start of the open practice phase, but also encouraged the students to conduct themselves in a manner that is appropriate for this phase of the lesson.

Off-task behaviour

Proxemics in the classroom can also be leveraged to reduce off-task behaviour in the classroom. It is common for teachers to move towards a student who is displaying off-task behaviour in order to perform a private corrective move. The example presented here is similar in the sense that the teacher is deliberately closing the distance between himself and an inattentive student in order to deter the student from being distracted.



Figure 6: Male teacher a distance away from student

When the teacher is initially across the classroom from the student, as seen in Figure 6, one student puts his head on the table at the back of the class. In addition, he also looks across at his friend two tables away, likely in conversation. This is a clear case of a student displaying off-task behaviour, especially when we consider that the female teacher is conducting a lecture at the front of the class.



Figure 7: Male teacher now standing behind student

Later on in the lesson, the male teacher moves closer to the distracted student and occupies a position behind the student, just behind his shoulder (although off camera), as shown in Figure 7. Even though the teacher has not verbally communicated with the student, we see that the student now sits upright in class and begins to adopt a posture of attention. The same thing goes for his conversational buddy, who is now facing forward with his seat pushed in closer to his desk.

This series of changes coinciding with the the teacher closing the distance with the student suggests that the movement or proximity of the teacher has in itself played a role in deterring off-task behaviour in the students. It appears that the students are aware of the teacher's presence, and thus are inclined to curb any off-task behaviour, perhaps for fear of reprisal. This excerpt demonstrates how, in the absence of any overt visual (in the form of gestures or gaze) or verbal communication between the teacher and the student, the teacher is nonetheless able to influence the student's actions. This highlights the effectiveness of spatial proxemics as a powerful and meaningful semiotic resource to regulate student behaviour in class.

Locus of Attention

The usefulness of space in the classroom as a semiotic resource is not exclusively tied to proxemics. In other words, it is not simply the relative distance between the teacher and the students that has the potential to engender meaning in the classroom. Rather, it appears that there are spaces in the classroom which the teacher can occupy to convey interpersonal meaning. Put another way, by virtue of the teacher moving or standing in various parts of the classroom, the teacher is implicitly communicating certain expectations to the students.

In Figure 8, we see how the front-centre of the classroom serves as the locus of attention for the students. The female teacher is in the midst of a whole-class lecture, and is the recipient of the attention of the class in general. Crucially, this is despite the presence of the male teacher in the midst of the class adopting a rather casual posture by sitting down next to a student and seemingly assuming the role of a student. We would expect that such an unconventional posture – especially one that sees the teacher occupy what Hall (1966) deems spatially intimate – would demand the attention of the students, even those beyond the immediate vicinity of the teacher. Yet the students remain steadfast in devoting their attention to the female teacher in the front-centre of the classroom.



Figure 8: Attention is focussed towards the classroom front-centre despite main teacher being close by

However, once the teacher (even if temporarily) leaves her position at the front-centre of the classroom, we see that the locus of attention is lost and the students cease their focus on the teacher. In Figure 9, the teacher is still in the midst of her lecture when she temporarily leaves the front-centre of the classroom to adjust the visual aid on the visualiser situated on the teachers' table. Even though there is no discernible verbal pauses in the teacher's utterance, the students' attention visibly drifts away from the female teacher conducting the lesson to the male teacher at the far right of the classroom.

It appears then that the female teacher's absolute position in the class (as opposed to her relative position to the students) was the only change that coincided with this break in attention on the part



Figure 9: Attention is dispersed as teacher moves off centre

of the students. This suggests that the spaces that the teacher occupies in the classroom lends an authority to the teacher that implicitly positions her as the locus of attention in the classroom. This effect is both extensive and intensive. It is extensive as the entire class appears to focus (and then lose focus) almost in unison in response to the teacher's positioning in the class.

In addition, it is intensive as the students were able to stay focussed on the secondary female teacher despite the primary male teacher adopting a highly unconventional posture in the class that would

normally understandably draw the attention of the students. Rather than being something jarring, it appears that the male teacher taking a seat signals his physical withdrawal from the centre of the classroom, thereby relinquishing command of the class.

Discussion and Conclusion

We have seen just some of the ways in which the male teacher in this class has used space uniquely and consistently, allowing it to be transformed into an unambiguous semiotic resource that helps realise both pedagogic and instructional discourse. However, while spatial semiotics and proxemics are culturally-situated and therefore the meanings they convey are likely to remain largely consistent across classrooms of the same cultural context, it must be noted that the consolidation of patterns of movement as reliable semiotic resources may depend on their consistent cooccurrence with linguistic cues within the classroom.

Therefore, given that different teachers are inclined to utilise space in class in their own unique (and perhaps subconscious) ways, it is important to note that the meanings described above are not automatically understood. Rather, they should be seen as a product of the micro-culture of the classroom – a semiotic resource the meaning of which is negotiated over time between the members of each classroom community.

Space as a Legitimate Semiotic Resource

It appears that the use of space is subconsciously understood by the teacher. In post-observation interviews with the teacher, he expressed a feeling of being “drawn to certain spaces in different phases of the lesson”. Even for an experienced teacher, he feels such moves are subconsciously executed. When presented with a trace of his movements during the lesson and asked about his motivations for such movements, he admitted:

I am not aware of my movement when moving forwards or backwards through the class while supervising work or lecturing. I am not aware of my own use of proxemics in these instances.

The teacher also posited that the movement in the classroom is perhaps motivated by practical reasons, and not necessarily as an enactment of spatial semiotics. Put another way, the teacher feels his movement around the class is necessitated by the need to perform certain physical actions that facilitate the teaching and learning.

However, I feel that my movement around the class is governed by practical reasons. I feel that I “naturally” (emphasis original) need to occupy certain spaces when doing certain actions such as correcting student behaviour or patrolling the class.

However, though the teacher attributed his movement to “practical” reasons, it is perhaps “pragmatic” considerations that drove his actions. If we understand that practical considerations concern the physical configurations of a practice, and that pragmatic considerations revolve around how meaning is malleable depending on the context, then we can see that the teacher’s movement around the class is pragmatically motivated rather than practically so, since a teacher can enact teaching moves such as surveilling the students or lecturing the class from various positions in the classroom (although to varying effect). This can be compared to a task such as operating the laptop at the teacher’s table while teaching, in which the teacher’s positioning in this instance is highly practically motivated.

As alluded to earlier, the teacher’s positioning in the classroom while enacting various teaching moves varies its effect on students. Teachers tend to be aware of this and this knowledge likely drives their movement in the classroom.

I am aware of the slight changes in students' behaviour when I move closer to them.

This is also acknowledged in kind by the students, who admit that they react differently depending on the proximity and movements of the teacher in the classroom.

When (teacher name) is walking around, I know I must start doing work already.

(teacher name) likes to walk around class a lot and it makes it difficult for us to use our phones or talk.

It appears from the students' comments that the mechanics of compliance is pragmatic. While the students putting away their phones in order to hide them from a roving teacher (the second statement above) appears practically motivated, the fact that the students interpret the teacher's mere movement as a signal to begin work (the first statement) suggests that the students understand the pragmatics of space and its meanings in the classroom. Put another way, space is the conduit through which there is a tacit understanding between the teacher and student of the appropriate or desired behaviour in the classroom as defined by the teacher at that point in time. This mutual understanding between the teacher and student of the meaning that resides in different spatial configurations, forged within the micro-culture in the classroom, allows the teacher to convey behavioural expectations to the students simply by shifting his position in the classroom.

However, while we have thus far discussed the successful demonstrations of classroom orchestration through the teachers' use of space, there remains an important facet of the use of classroom space that is critical to understanding that space might not always be a productive resource – a discussion of its failure in incongruous circumstances. The students have raised concerns that, sometimes, the teacher's use of space might actually be distracting.

It is very confusing sometimes because (teacher name) walks around so much that it is difficult to keep track.

While ostensibly this perhaps suggests a failure of space as a semiotic resource in the classroom, on the contrary, it is actually an important observation that reinforces the notion that spatial configuration in the classroom is laden with meaning. Here, the teacher's movement is viewed as confusing, which suggests that spatial positioning in the classroom cannot be random. This observation cautions us against movement or spatial positioning that is incongruous to the linguistic utterance enacted by the teacher. Just like any other semiotic system, the use of space in the classroom has to be deliberate and purposeful in order to be maximally productive.

Implications for teacher training

Hitherto, the discussion has centred around the legitimacy and usefulness of space as a semiotic resource. Yet one recurrent theme that has yet to be addressed is the teacher's implicit understanding of its potential. The use of space to engender or enhance meaning in the classroom is consistently one that is discussed as intuitive and instinctive. Often, even though teachers are aware of their movement in the classroom vis-à-vis their delivery of the lesson, not many are able to articulate their explicit motivations for those movements, or how the mechanics behind such movements achieve the intended behavioural change in the students. Rather, as mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, teachers are willing to attribute their movements to the invisible undercurrents of the classroom that naturally modulate their positioning. Perhaps, it is as seminal psychologist Carl Jung (1991) famously said, that "in each of us, there is another whom we do not know."

This poses a great challenge in terms of productively articulating the knowledge for the purposes of sharing as part of teacher development. While in "natural" teachers, such decisions are effectively

made in the subconscious, novice teachers who may not be blessed with this innate appreciation of the usefulness of space do not get to access an important semiotic resource in the classroom. The challenge for educators is to speak to the unconscious mind of such “natural” teachers in order to access the formal considerations (such as the use of space) that makes their teaching so effective.

This current state, where the knowledge of spatial positioning in the classroom and its semiotic potential remains implicit and perhaps untapped in the minds of expert teachers, means that there is great potential to develop our understanding of space in the classroom and grow the body of knowledge in this area. That teachers, to varying degrees, even if unknowingly, already leverage spatial positioning and movement in the classroom to augment classroom talk is encouraging. It reflects a tendency – and willingness – on the part of teachers to make use of additional semiotic resources to help orchestrate a communicatively richer classroom learning experience for the students.

It is curious then that, while there exists a growing body of literature on areas such as classroom talk and teacher questioning, there remains limited work on the use of space in the classroom. This is even as spatial position arguably serves to either complement and enhance classroom talk, or as the conduit through which teacher moves (such as classroom surveillance) is enacted. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the relative dearth of literature on the use of space in the classroom, spatial proxemics remains almost an afterthought in teacher training courses. So, while beginning teachers are engaged in rich discussions on the strategies for classroom management or scaffolding student thinking, discussions on space in the classroom is often limited to the role of space in micro-level transactional moves (such as walking near an off-task student to obtain compliance) or spatially defined teacher-student-relationship off-limits markers (such as advice not to stand too close to students).

Without the initiation of a dialogue on the principles, mechanics, and potential behind the use of space, the use of spatial positioning and proxemics in the classroom will struggle to become a consideration at various levels where pedagogy is discussed or considered – from teacher training to lesson enactment. As a result, space will continue to exist as a hidden dimension in the classroom, and teachers will perpetuate in classrooms a blindness to the full potential of a powerful resource for meaning-making for teachers and students.

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