Abstract Theoretically the paper addresses the question of how official and unofficial discourses are related and what function the unofficial register serves for the official one. It draws on the idea of 'underlife' and the heterogeneity of discourse in order to show how the unofficial discourse can be a productive tool for students to both distance themselves from school and negotiate school identities in order to create new, and (for students) more compatible, forms of 'school'. Institutional settings do not automatically produce the institutional scripts, positions and norms they are associated with; rather, they need to be authored by participants who 'instantiate' these scripts, positions and norms. This paper focuses on how students author school (the official) but at the same time produce alternative discourses (the unofficial). A data set of transcribed student group talk in a multi-ethnic classroom in the Netherlands is used for the analysis.

Key Words authoring, heterogeneity of discourse, institutional communication, multi-ethnic classrooms

Mariëtte de Haan
University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

The Authoring of School: Between the Official and Unofficial Discourse

Studies on classroom discourse have long since revealed 'school' as a place of cultural reproduction where certain regimes of conduct, discursive rules and authority relations are imposed, resisted and partly reproduced. School discourse has been characterized as reflecting a particular, culturally defined social organization evident in speech rules and rules of conduct (Mehan, 1998) based on certain cultural assumptions of what teaching is (De Haan, 1999) and on historically formed complex 'registers' of talk that represent authority relationships between teachers and students (Cazden, 1986). Other studies on school discourse, based on post-structural notions of power, have shown how classrooms must be seen as practices of 'disciplinary technology' (Locke Davidson, 1996). Through practices of isolating, ordering and systematizing, schools discipline students in what, according to the meaning of a particular institutional tradition, is normal, official or legitimate. Children must deal with this institutional

tradition and somehow adopt, change or resist these meanings in order to function within and, in some way or other, continue that tradition as a student. In doing so they must respond to, and create their own version of both local traditions and larger histories of schooling that resonate in these local practices.

This study focuses on how students in a multi-ethnic classroom in the Netherlands discursively create their version of 'school', that is, on how they appropriate a regime of conduct that is locally considered 'official' in terms of the institution. In Bakhtinian terms, the study focuses on how they dialogically *author* school, where *authoring* is used as the reproduction of the official, the permitted, the established or the authorized. At the same time, the study reveals how students also switch to, or simultaneously build other, alternative scripts or regimes that are not locally acknowledged as the official, main, legitimate activity. In fact, the unofficial, alternative discourse forms the entry point to gain a better understanding of the student's version of the official. The questions that are posed are therefore twofold: (1) 'How can we characterize student's attempts to discursively resist school?' and (2) 'How does the development of an alternative, unofficial, discourse relate to the building of a discursive student version of school?' I consider this last question to be part of the general theoretical problem of how institutional discourses are adopted, interrupted or ignored and what this means for the construction of new forms of these discourses. The idea of a contact zone or a third space will be used to understand how, through the confrontation of a variety of interpretations of school, new forms may be built.

Official and Unofficial, Heterogeneity and Third Space

A number of different approaches are relevant in order to gain a better understanding of how the unauthorized, unofficial or not yet acknowledged discourse relates to the authorized, official, established discourse. I first approach this problem from the idea of 'frame switching', borrowing from an ethnography of communication perspective. Second, the focus is turned to a social discourse perspective in which the intersection of discourses is linked to the idea of heterogeneity of discourse, and finally the idea of heterogeneity of discourse is linked to notions of resistance and third space, inspired by Gutiérrez, Rymes and Larson (1995).

In ethnography of communication studies, official and non-official talk is studied from the relationship between frame of reference and text or between focal and non focal events. It builds on a distinction

between the official focus and background, between the 'figure' and 'ground', between the centre stage and the stage itself. The frame of reference is the background against which a so-called 'focal' event needs to be interpreted. Basically, it is used to refer to the *other* phenomena (cultural setting, speech situation, shared assumptions) that are necessary for understanding the phenomenon under study (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). However, this distinction is further elaborated, arguing that what is 'focus' or official is negotiated in spaces that are not focal at that particular moment. Participants may have multiple frames of reference that they want to put forward and they will enter into negotiation about them in the so-called 'non-focal' or unofficial domain. Kendon (1992) shows how the non-focal is necessary to negotiate relevant aspects of the focal and shows how what is happening in the so-called 'other context' is essential in maintaining or disrupting 'the actual context'. These studies demonstrate the importance of the non-focal, the not yet acknowledged, for the negotiation or reinterpretation of official discourses. Of course, there could be multiple attentional tracks or multiple interpretations of what the attentional track is, as much as there are multiple rivalling non-attentional tracks. One could say that we can distinguish between the intersubjectively shared perspective and the perspectives that have not yet been fully negotiated. Further negotiation about what is (currently) shared does not necessarily take place in the present or official frame, but the unofficial frame(s) has (have) particular qualities that are relevant for frame change.

Discourse as Social Practice: At the Intersection of Identities and Discourses
In order to understand the change of perspectives and frames of talk we need to be aware that discursive events are, in addition to being 'text' and interpretational frames, also an instance of social practice (Fairclough, 1992). That is, producing a particular discourse is part of a wider process of producing social life, social relationships and social identities.

In other words, producing school as a discourse in the sense of 'talk' also means producing school as a social practice: for instance, complying with the formal obligation for children to attend school, the implicit and explicit rule that school defines what children should learn and how they should behave. In the same vein, producing an alternative discourse means that these norms are challenged and identities are, at least temporarily, changed. For instance, when students do not follow certain conversational norms that are set by a teacher, and build an

269

alternative conversational frame that does not comply with the norms set by the authority, they do more than just change conversations. They are at the same time involved in a process that changes their social identities and the power relations between themselves and the teacher. Another key insight from a discourse as social practice perspective is that it is at the *intersection* of discourses that new forms of discourse and social practice can develop. What is more, the inherent heterogeneity and historicity of discourses make change possible. 'Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in situations which usually preclude them' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 96). It is this perspective of heterogeneity of discourse that is particularly useful for looking at the boundaries between the official and unofficial and how, through a confrontation of both, new discourses can develop.

Heterogeneity of Discourse, Resistance and Third Space
In line with a social discourse theory perspective, the distinction between the official and the unofficial can be seen as a struggle with the demands of institutional practice, as is argued in critical education theory or resistance theories (e.g. Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977). In these studies, the unofficial is seen as a contestation of or as a form of resistance to the dominant ideology, form of knowledge or discourse. Gutiérrez et al. (1995) relate this distinction between the official and unofficial to the idea of underlife (Goffman, 1961) and describe the unofficial discourse as those activities that participants develop to distance themselves from institutions. The concept of 'third space' is used to indicate the meeting ground of the official and unofficial where the potential for more authentic interaction and heteroglossia (in the Bakhtinian sense) is created. The notion of heteroglossia is applied to argue for the inherent multi-voiced character of classrooms and its potential for the construction of transitional spaces in which new identities and world views might arise. Interestingly, this notion of third space combines elements of the inherent heterogeneity of discourse, conflict between parties that differ in power positions and the potential of change that follow from these conditions. In a similar vein, others have used the notion of third space or contact zone as a zone that exists between the familiar and the established and the foreign and the yet to be established, the known and unknown (Papastergiadis, 2000), as density of opposites and confrontation (Pratt, 1992) that give rise to processes of change. Applying this to classrooms, the spaces students develop to distance themselves from the institution of

schooling can be seen as spaces of struggle that might lead to the confrontation between the official and the unofficial, and finally to new interpretations of what is legal, official or institutional.

How Students Move between the 'Official' and the 'Unofficial'

The analysis and data set presented here are part of a project which investigated collaborative strategies among small groups in multi-ethnic classrooms within a Dutch primary school. The school is referred to as a 'black' school as 80 per cent of the students have parents who were not born in the Netherlands, and who are therefore called second-generation migrants. The teaching staff are native Dutch. We use the term Dutch-Moroccan, Dutch-Ghanaian, and so on, for the students with a migrant background, referring both to their background and to their socialization in Dutch society, irrespective of nationality. Although minority students are, on average, two years behind their Dutch counterparts in terms of national tests on language skills, the results of this school are above average when these background characteristics are taken into account.

   In this paper I use nine group-work sessions (from a total of 145 sessions) of approximately 50 minutes' duration that were audio- and video-recorded in the two highest grades of primary education. There are four different sessions of one group in the seventh grade and five different sessions of a group in the eighth grade. The first group (seventh grade) consists of a Dutch-Moroccan girl, a Dutch girl, three Dutch-Moroccan boys and one Dutch-Turkish boy. The second group (eighth grade) consists of a Dutch-Moroccan girl, a Dutch girl, a Dutch-Ghanaian girl, a Dutch-Turkish boy and a Dutch-Moroccan boy. The analysis is based on transcriptions of audio recordings and is therefore based predominantly on talk. The students were working on maths problems and were, as usual, instructed to work and think together in line with the philosophy of the school, in which collaborative learning is seen as an important instrument for learning and development. The school stresses the importance of peer tutoring as a means to bridge differences in skills between students. The maths problems they work with form part of what is called 'realistic maths', which fosters the development of the students' own maths solutions from problems that reflect everyday contexts.

Identification of What is 'Official' and 'Unofficial': The Analytical Work

Distinguishing what is 'official' and 'unofficial' in student talk is not self-evident and there are no clear-cut rules with which to make this distinction. This is related to the fact that although what is legitimate, institutional and official is fostered by long-term, more stabilized traditions of what school is, these traditions are reinterpreted locally and take on specific forms in particular classrooms. Moreover, these local norms are also constantly reinterpreted and might vary according to how authority relations are interpreted and applied from moment to moment. In order to deal with this problem in the analysis, I made use of notions of what can be considered typical of institutional communication in contrast with everyday talk (e.g. Agar, 1985; Drew & Heritage, 1992). I focused in particular on (1) whether the talk reflected student identity, and (2) if their activity could be identified as 'on task' in line with the official regime of conduct. In addition to these general criteria for defining what was 'unofficial', I used the teacher's and the students' own definition of this difference as it was expressed both in the transcripts and from how I interpreted their interpretations of what was official and what was not from a longer period of field-work in these classrooms. For instance, *official* talk was talk about how to solve a maths problem, talk about who does what, talk about whose answer is correct, or talk about whether something is clear or not. Official talk could also include out-of-school contexts when it was inherent to the maths problem: for instance, talk about football fields was official when it was related to a maths problem about area. *Unofficial* talk was anything that allowed students to escape from being on task and not behaving as good students: for example, when scolding and quarrelling, but also talk that came under the category of 'play' rather than 'work', which is how the teacher referred to their school activity. Moreover, unofficial talk was also talk in which the subject digressed from the maths task at hand and was not related to solving the maths problem (e.g. talk about pop music, videos, family relation-ships, etc.). Unofficial talk could therefore include conversations *about* school that go beyond what is expected of them, such as an attack on another student's school identity (e.g. 'you are cheating') or quarrelling about the kind of participation that is expected from each student. Therefore, official is not defined in terms of 'school' as a thematic topic but more as a specific type of behaviour that was legitimized by the teacher of this class.[1]

In the analysis I further studied both types of discourses making use of elements of frame change and the idea of the intersection of

discourses and their related identities. This resulted in a focus on the following questions:

1. How can 'frame switching' between the official and the unofficial be described? How do students build up and construct these different frames?
2. How do the official and the unofficial relate? In particular (how) does the unofficial address the official discourse?

Moving Back and Forward to 'School': Transitions and Establishing Boundaries

Generally the students in both classrooms showed an interest in doing the maths tasks they had been assigned, although their major preoccupation seemed to be to get the task done and have the right answer in the allocated period. A lot of time was spent on organizational matters, such as finding out what problems they needed to work on, who was to work on which problem, how to write the answers down, and so on.

But the students would also exchange strategies about which mathematical procedure to use, argue about which procedure would be easier, better or more efficient, in addition to the exchange of answers. These 'on task' conversations, which I only describe here in general terms, sometimes 'deviated' to other matters or 'escalated' into 'non-permitted' play or quarrelling. Generally students would not explicitly mark or reflect on the transitions from 'school' to 'not school' (at least not verbally), in particular not when picking up the official discourse, as it seemed to be there, ready to fall back on, whenever they felt the pressure to do so.

Occasionally, students would mark the transition to the official by reprimanding or reminding others that they were not 'on task', as in example 1, where one of the students calls the others 'disturbers'.

Example 1: [tr-gr7-subgr4-25-5-00-A90][2]

DUTCH
Abdel: °Sti::l°, °ik zit hier°, °ik zit°, ik zit hier heel belangrijk iets uit
te rekenen en jullie versto:ren het alleen maar.

(. . .)

Abdel: Verstoo:rders.

ENGLISH
Abdel: °Silence°, °I am doing here°, °I am°, I am doing here
important (things), calculating something, and you are only
interru:pting this

(. . .)

Abdel: Distu:rbers.

273

A close look at the transitions from the official to the unofficial and vice versa resulted in the observation that, if students were working on the creation of another frame for their talk, it would happen while they were 'in' the official discourse and were creating an alternative frame but not vice versa. Their moving back to 'school' was always abrupt and prompt. But their moving away from school tended to be a more gradual process in which contents and relationships were gradually transformed, as in example 2. In this example a Dutch-Moroccan student, Fahd, is criticized by Lonneke, a Dutch student, for his copying. He has just suggested copying the answer of the former part of the assignment when Lonneke gives her reply in turn 1.

Example 2: [Tr-gr7-subgr4-25-5-00-A74]

DUTCH

 1 *Lonneke*: >Nee <u>mag</u> niet<, >je moet <u>zelf</u> bede:nken<.

 2 *Ll?*:   Ma:g niet.

 3 *Lonneke*: Hou je be:k eens een keer.

 4 *Fahd*:   Ik <u>heb</u> geen >bek<, >oh< >ja< ik   [heb een <u>bek</u> en jij hebt helemaa::l <u>niks</u>!

 5 *Lonneke*:   [Papegaa::i, papegaai, je bent gewoon een papegaai.

 6 *Fahd*:   Papegaai (   ) papegaai.

 7 *Samira*: Papagaai↑, hmmm↑, ik heb noo:it een <u>bruine</u> papegaai gezien.

 8 *Abdel*:   Ik heb er al <u>een</u> gehad.

 9 *Lonneke*: Nee, en deze vieze <u>kut</u>sprinkhaan, die zie je op elke (   )

10 *Fahd*:   Sprinkhaan. Die zijn <u>groe:::n</u>, <u>koe:::</u>

11 *Lonneke*: Helemaal niet, ook bruin.

(. . .)

12 *Fahd*:   Bitch. Jij zei <u>hoer</u> tegen mij.

13 *Lonnek*:   Ik zei <u>koe</u>, <u>du::s</u>

14 *Fahd*:   °Nee, jij zei <u>hoer</u>°

15 *Françoise*: Nee, ze zei koe, ze zei koe.

16 *Lonneke*: Hemaal niet, koe.

17 *Fahd*:   Nee, je zei, ze zei koe.

18 *Abdel*:   Nou moet je ook nog E maken?

19 *Lonneke*: Nee, eerst B.

20 *Abdel*:   ((geïrriteerd)) Die heb ik al.

21 *Lonneke*: Ja, ja je moet allemaal figuren schrijven hier in je schrift.

ENGLISH

 1 *Lonneke*:   >No, that is not all<u>o</u>wed<, >you have to find out yourse:lf<.

 2 *Student?:*[3]   Not allo:wed.

 3 *Lonneke*:   Keep your <u>mouth</u> (lit. beak) shut for once.

 4 *Fahd*:   I do not <u>have</u> a >beak<, >oh< >yes<, I do   [have a
       beak and you have <u>nothing</u> at a::::ll.

 5 *Lonneke*:   [<u>Pa:::rrot</u>,
       parrot, you are just a parrot.

 6 *Fahd*:   Parrot (   ) parrot.

 7 *Samira*:   Parrot↑, hmmmm↑, I have ne:ver seen a <u>brown</u> parrot.

 8 *Abdel*:   I have already had one.

 9 *Lonneke*:   No, and these dirty damn grass-hoppers, you see them
       on every (   )

10 *Fahd*:   Grasshopper. Those are <u>gree:::n</u>, <u>co:::w</u>!

11 *Lonneke*:   Not at all, also brown.

(. . .)

12 *Fahd*:   Bitch. You said <u>whore</u> to me.

13 *Lonneke*:   I said <u>cow</u>, so::

14 *Fahd*:   °No, you said whore°.

15 *Françoise*:   No, she said cow, she said cow.

16 *Lonneke*:   Not at all, cow!

17 *Fahd*:   No, you said, you said cow

18 *Abdel*:   Do we have to do E as well?

19 *Lonneke*:   No, B first.

20 *Abdel*:   ((irritated)) I have already done that one.

21 *Lonneke*:   Yes, yes you have to write all those figures in your
       exercise book.

The example shows how talk about copying, which was first quali-fied as 'official', gradually develops into 'unofficial' talk as their talk turns into a quarrel. The transformation builds up in turns 1–2, and there is a change of tone in turn 3 where 'normal' communication between them, which makes their work possible, is challenged ('keep your mouth shut for once') and develops into name calling with a clear racist undertone that completely falls outside the category of behaving like a good student from turn 10 on. At the same time, there is a gradual thematic shift in which school-related behaviour is converted into other qualifications. The copying that Fahd wanted to do is quali-fied as 'not allowed' in turn 1–2 and then transferred into the metaphor of a parrot in turn 5 by Lonneke in an attempt to further substantiate

the claim that Fahd is doing something that official norms do not allow, the parrot being a creature famed for mimicking someone's words. At the same time, the parrot theme is reinforced by the use of the word 'beak' (as a beak is the mouth of a bird) expressed in turn 3–4. The conversation takes another thematic turn in line 7 when Samira states that she has never seen a brown parrot, implicitly referring to Fahd's ethnic identity as 'brown', which is the general label used for referring to the non-Dutch students in this class. Their conversation finally ends up as pure rebuke, with animal names being mentioned.

What the example shows is how a particular school-related behaviour, that is, Fahd's copying, is fought out in a different frame that was characterized as unofficial, and this behaviour developed into a fight over the (ethnic) relationships in the group. Further analysis of the same material revealed that tutor and tutee roles in this class can be interpreted as ways to express and confirm certain ethnically informed status relationships between the different groups in this class (De Haan & Elbers, 2005 a, b). The example shows that by means of several kinds of transitions (both thematically and by challenging each other's identity in increasingly offensive terms, moving away from their identities as students), the students both move away from the official discourse and use it as input for the development of an alternative discourse.

The switch back to school in turn 18 is again abrupt, as if school talk is always there to return to. Although the move back to school seems effortless for the students, the teacher puts considerable effort into marking the distinction between what is official and permitted and what is not permitted. In particular, the move to official talk is a constant effort in which his authority is at stake, as example 3 shows. After a period in which student talk has become louder and students have started to move around the classroom, the teacher asks the students to stop what they are doing and listen to him.

Example 3: [Tr-gr8-subgr2-12-10-000-A16.0]

DUTCH

Leerkracht: ((boos)) >En nu zijn we aan het <u>werk</u>< en nu moeten we iets proberen voor <u>elkaar</u> te krijgen en je mag over<u>leggen</u>, maar niet op <u>deze</u> manier. En als ik iets vraag (.) wil ik een <u>fatsoenlijk</u> en <u>gewoon</u> antwoord. En anders kom je <u>gewoon</u> vanmiddag terug, en dat bepaal <u>ik</u>, dat bepaal <u>jij</u> niet dat bepaal <u>i:k</u>, want normaal moet je op school zijn . >Aan het werk nu<. En dat mag <u>samen</u> he, verder verandert er niets, maar vind de flauwe<u>kul</u> wat te veel nu.

ENGLISH

Teacher: ((angry)) >And now we are working<, and now we have to try to get something <u>done</u> and you are allowed to <u>consult</u> with each other but not in <u>this</u> way! And if I ask you a question (.) I want a <u>decent</u> answer. And if not, you will <u>just</u> come back this afternoon, and <u>I</u> am the one who decides that, <u>you</u> do not decide, <u>I:</u> do, because normally you have to be at school. >And get to work now<. And you are allowed to work <u>together</u>, o.k.? and for the rest nothing changes, but I consider this nonsense a bit too much now.

Different Strategies to Build Other Frames and How They Address 'School'

Different categories were designed to characterize the different kinds of talk that develop in the unofficial spaces that students create, and specific attention was given to how these forms of talk relate to school. As can be seen in Figure 1, only part of the talk (41%) that was categorized as unofficial refers to activities that do not take place *in* the school setting, labelled *'out-of school activities'*. These were: buying and

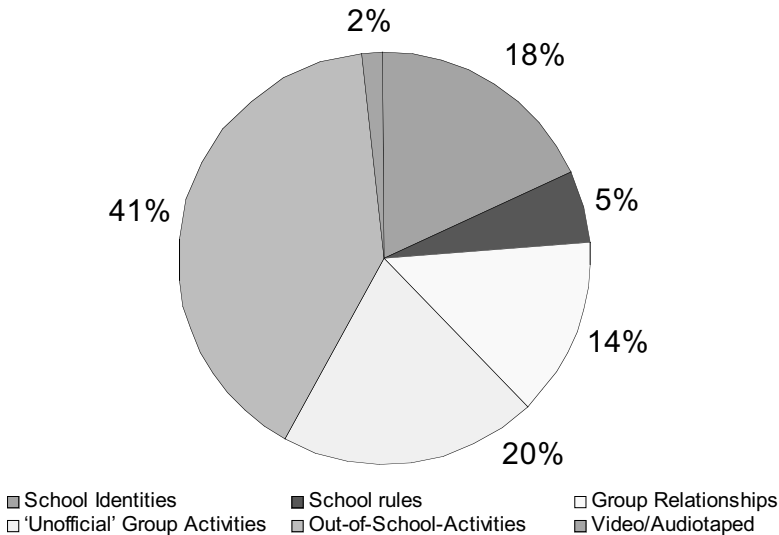## What Do Students Talk About in the Unofficial Context?

Figure 1. Different strategies to escape 'school'

owning expensive goods (16%), television and film (14%), sport (8%), eating (8%), pop music (6%), speaking other languages (6%), holidays (6 %), family (6%), weddings (6%), Morocco (4%), new clothes (4%), religion (4%) and other (12%). Other talk was related to the unofficial activities they developed as a group in the school setting (e.g. play), or to the research (being videotaped, 2%) but the other categories (school rules, 5%; group relationships, 14%; and school identities, 18%) were directly or indirectly relevant for the activities and identities they needed to develop in the school discourse. Although this talk did not fall into the category of the permitted version of school, it did address school.

The 'school identities' category is, together with the 'school rules' category, the category that is most directly linked to 'school', and is the reason why we address this category more extensively below. In this first category, students would explicitly refer to the roles that were expected of them in the official context. In most cases they took a stance with respect to these roles, ridiculed them, criticized them, and some-times different versions of these roles emerged. Their comments mostly refer to the question as to who is entitled to explain things or who is entitled to participate in a particular task. They mostly rejected or struggled with the rule that 'the one who knows' must explain to the others. It was mostly the Dutch students who were given the role and who took the role of 'the one who knows', and this position was some-times ridiculed but in other cases defended as the norm (see De Haan & Elbers, 2005a, b). The 'school rules' category represents the talk in which students would discuss, for instance, who is the ultimate author-ity at school and what is permitted at school and what not. In the category labelled 'group relationships' students would address the relationships in their group, not directly referring to their identities as students. This could be ordinary scolding, talking about quarrels they are having or have had, or about particular likes and dislikes within the group. Below I give an example of how students use the unofficial space to challenge the peer tutoring suggested by the teacher, but which also shows how they have developed their own norms about how students should work together. In this group, which consists only of migrant students, another quarrel about 'copying' develops, but it is different from the one in example 2.

The example is taken from the end of a lesson in which this group has been working on several maths problems, mainly by sharing their ideas on how the particular problem should be dealt with (e.g. 'How do you have to do this one?') and sharing particular strategies on what to do ('You have to multiply this'). Towards the end of the 50 minutes' work, Feliz seems to lose pace with the group and is a little outside it,

occasionally checking what the results of the collective work are. The episode shows how the other students react to this.

Example 4 [Tr-gr7-subgr1-5-6-00-B15]

DUTCH

 1 *Samira*: Dus de eerste is tweeduizend tweeho::nderd (   ) tweeduizend
             . . .
 2 *Feliz*: Is de eerste tweeduizend?
 3 *Hassan*: ((geïrriteerd)) A:ch ma:n.
 4 *Samira*: ((geïrriteerd))> Ja, je zit alleen maar af te kijken<, hallo↑
 5 *Feliz*: ((geïrriteerd))>Ik ↑begrijp het niet! Jullie ↑begrijpen<-
 6 *Samiar*: Ja, jij <u>doet</u> ook niet me<u>e</u>:
 7 *Hassan*: Tweeduizend.
 8 *Feliz*: Helemaa:l we:l Maarjullie zeggen <u>niks</u> aan mij.
 9 *Hassan*: Wij zeggen niks, wij, jij doet niks.
10 *Samira*: Omdat je ook niet <u>mee</u>doet.
             (. . .)
11 *Hassan*: Weet je waarom dat we niks <u>ze:ggen</u> , want je moet ook eigen
             (   )
12 *Feliz*: Leg het dan ui:t↑ Leg dan ui:t↑ Leg dan ui:t↑
13 *Assad*: Waarom moet je <u>ui:</u>tleggen? Je moet gewoon
             meedoen.

ENGLISH

 1 *Samira*: So the first is two thousand, two h<u>u</u>::ndred (   ) two thousand
             . . .
 2 *Feliz*: Is the first two thousand?
 3 *Hassan*: ((irritated)) Hey man.
 4 *Samira*: ((irritated))>You only want to copy it<, come on↑.
 5 *Feliz*: ((irritated)) >I don't under↑stand, you understand<-.
 6 *Samiar*: Yes, you don't <u>work</u> with us.
 7 *Hassan*: Two thousand.
 8 *Feliz*: I <u>do</u>. But you don't tell me <u>anything</u>.
 9 *Hassan*: We say nothing. You do nothing.
10 *Samira*: Because you don't work with us.
             (. . .)
11 *Hassan*: Do you know why we say nothing, because you should have
             your own (   ).
12 *Feliz*: Explain it, explain it to me.
13 *Assad*: Why do we have to explain? You should work with us.

In this episode, Feliz (line 2) asks the others to tell her about the solution to the problem they have spent some time working on. Obviously, the others consider that she is not participating enough in the collective process as they accuse her of copying in turns 3–4. Feliz's defence that she does not understand is not acknowledged by the group. Acting as tutee, someone who does not know and needs to have an explanation, is criticized, as can be seen in the rest of the episode, in which being an active member of the group is stressed as being a condition for sharing the solutions: for example, line 6, in which Samira states that Feliz should work with them. Also in line 9 Hassan is making the connection between being part of the process (doing) and being part of the solution (saying). Assad confirms this in line 13, where he explicitly does not acknowledge 'explaining' and puts forward 'working with the group'. The example shows how Hassan in turn 3 steps out of their 'on task' activity (the official space) in order to address Feliz's role (in the unofficial space). A conflict develops in which both a tutee identity is challenged (an identity that is considered 'normal' in the groups where Dutch and minority students work together), and certain alternative norms of participation and knowledge sharing, which have obviously developed in this group, are made explicit.

Example 5 presents a conflict about a tutor role in an ethically mixed group, where Lonneke (who, as noted above, is Dutch) is criticized for not being a good tutor for the group. The example starts after Lonneke is invited by Samira, a Dutch-Moroccan girl, to explain something, but she refuses (turn 1 and turn 5).

Example 5: [Tr-gr.7-subgr4-25-5-00- A44]

DUTCH

1 *Lonneke*: Ik over<u>leg</u> niet met jou.
2 *Samira*: >Ja, en ik overleg ook niet met jou<. Maar je weet het helemaal fou:t. Je rekent niet uit. Je doet gewoon <u>dingen</u>, je zegt gewoon een antwoord. Je zegt maar iets ofzo.
3 *Fahd*: Lonneke, hoe moet je dan twee maken?
4 *Student?*: (   )
5 *Lonneke*: Weet ik ook niet.
6 *Abdel*: B. De eerste (   ) vijfentwintig
7 *Lonneke*: ((geïrriteerd)) <u>Jij</u> kan lekker uitleggen.

ENGLISH

1 *Lonneke*: I do not <u>consult</u> with you.

2 *Samira*: >Yes and I do not consult with you either<.
But what you know is entirely wrong. You do not calculate.
You just <u>do</u> things, you just say an answer. You just say
something or something.

3 *Fahd*: Lonneke, how do we do the second??

4 *Student?*: ( )

5 *Lonneke*: I don't know either.

6 *Abdel*: B. The first one ( ) twenty-five.

7 *Lonneke*: ((irritated)) <u>you</u> can explain really well.

In this example a conflict is created, in particular, by Lonneke and Samira in order to address the fact that the 'prescribed' working relationships are not functioning too well in their group. Lonneke is accused of not being good enough as a tutor as she does not explain well (turn 2). However, it is made clear to her that she is supposed to fulfil this role (in turn 3 by Fahd). Explaining is not just giving answers or doing things (turn 2) but it has to meet certain criteria, including having knowledge about the subject (as is evident from the criticism of Lonneke: 'You do not know for sure' in turn 2).

These last two examples (4–5) show how alternative or unofficial frames are created, mostly in the form of conflicts, to indirectly address the official frame. As in the example with the parrot (example 2), the offfical frame that is offered by this classroom is obviously not sufficient or appropriate for them to accomplish this goal.

Challenging the Official and New Forms of School

The description of the students' frame switching between the official and unofficial revealed that the unofficial frames were more gradually built up whereas the switch to the official seemed to be effortless and abrupt. This seems to indicate that the official frame is never really 'replaced' by something else but only temporarily challenged as it 'exists' simultaneously with alternative frames that compete with each other constantly, as the ethnography of communication perspective suggested. This is no doubt related to the constant efforts by the teacher to put forward the official frame that materializes his power by communicating what is legal or official and what is not.

This indicates both the relatively robust character of 'school' and the necessity to actively establish the institutional norms of what is 'official' in order to preserve the particular version of 'school' put forward by the teacher.

Furthermore, I think that looking at the analysis from the perspective of the role of 'the other, non-focal context', as an ethnography of communication perspective does, reveals how the 'unofficial spaces' in classrooms are relevant for the negotiation of what is official—in this case, of what school is for the students. The analysis shows how in these unofficial spaces, mostly through conflicts and quarrels, student identities are made explicit and negotiated. The students in this classroom struggle in particular with the role of the tutor that they are supposed to adopt, a position that reflects school authority relations and a particular vision of how to share knowledge. Students make use of the unofficial spaces to discuss, criticize, ridicule and modify the tutor–tutee role pattern. For instance, example 5 is a criticism of how a student takes up the tutor position, which makes it clear that tutors must fulfil certain conditions. In a similar vein, examples 2 and 4 show that the tutee position also has to meet certain criteria (copying is not enough, more active involvement is prescribed). Example 4 is particularly interesting as it shows how a tutor–tutee role division is rejected ('Why should we explain?') and replaced by a more symmetric model of 'working together' in which the division between 'the one who knows' and 'the one who does not know' is not acknowledged. Students make use of the unofficial spaces in the classroom to discipline and criticize each other in the adoption of school-related identities required for their school work. The alternative or unofficial frames that they create are most likely important spaces for the construction of these interpretations of school, which is in line with Goffman's notion of the relevance of the disattend track (see, for similar results, a study by Maybin, 2003).

If we examine the different categories of student talk that were distinguished in the unofficial space and see them as different ways that students develop to resist the local norms of 'school', we could say that at least two different strategies were developed: one in which 'school' is ignored (the talk about 'out-of-school activities' and 'unofficial group activities') and another in which they address 'school' (in particular the talk about school identities and school rules). These different strategies can be seen as different ways to 'oppose' school, as in resistance theories (see also Gutiérrez et al., 1995). I would not, however, necessarily see the first strategy (ignoring school) as a form of resistance to school but more as an attempt to satisfy the demands of being in a peer group and the struggle of meeting both school and peer group criteria (see D'Amato, 1987, for an account of how students have to find a rationale vis-à-vis their peers for being at school). The second strategy is interesting for taking up the discussion on heterogeneity of discourse and third space.

The analysis supports the claim that the intersection of the official and unofficial presents the opportunity for new interpretations of school, produced through the confrontation of multiple interpretations of it. In the unofficial spaces, official versions of school are tested, challenged and reinterpreted. In that sense, the unofficial spaces do not undermine school but function as spaces where official school identities are made compatible with the diversity of experiences in knowledge-sharing strategies and the particular ethnic relationships in this multi-ethnic class.

In line with Gutiérrez et al. (1995), the unofficial spaces created by students can be seen as an opportunity to create a third space where the confrontation with or the struggle against the official becomes possible. A parallel can be drawn here with how Bakhtin (1981) describes the history of literary language: 'There is a struggle constantly being waged to overcome the official line with its tendency to distance itself from the zone of contact, a struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority' (p. 345). Here, therefore, confrontation is a characteristic of the unofficial, while avoiding confrontation is a characteristic of the official. Bakhtin relates this to what he calls the centripetal and centrifugal forces in language (see also Smolka, 2005). Authorities, or established discourses, exercise a centripetal, homogenizing and hierarchicizing influence, whereas the centrifugal, de-crowning, dispersing forces create alternative 'degraded' genres down below. These centrifugal forces take place 'on the lower levels' where the official is ridiculed and where there is no centre, where there is a lively play with languages, where no language could claim to be 'authentic', incontestable (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 272–273).

To conclude, the analysis can be seen as a particular example of students *authoring* school, in the sense of inventing new versions of the official. As indicated by Smolka (2005), authoring, seen here as the process of (re-)establishing the official, must be seen as (long-term) multiple searches for what can finally be legitimized or recognized. This study has shown how in classrooms multiple searches for the official take shape in the alternative spaces students create for themselves and how they can finally also lead to the production of alternative versions of school.

Notes

1. Furthermore, a piece of talk was only considered when there were at least two participants involved in it and if it consisted of a minimum of three utterances. A research assistant was trained to establish the criteria for what could be considered a transition between official and unofficial, and agreement was reached in 73 per cent of the cases.
2. The notes above the transcript—e.g. tr-gr8-subgr2–12–10–000-A16.0—refer to a particular transcript and give an indication of the group, the date and the position in the transcript. The transcripts were transcribed according to the transcription notation by Gail Jefferson (1988).
3. An unidentified student.

References

Agar, M. (1985). Institutional discourse. *Text*, *5*, 147–168.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (pp. 259–422). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Cazden, C.B. (1986). Classroom discourse. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 432–463). New York/London: Macmillan.

Drew, P., & Heritage, J. (Eds.). (1992). *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings. Studies in interactional sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

D'Amato, J. (1987) The belly of the beast: On cultural differences, castelike status, and the politics of the school. *Anthropology of Education Quarterly*, *18*, 335–356.

Duranti, A., & Goodwin, C. (1992). *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity.

Giroux, H.A. (1983). Theories of reproduction and resistance in the new sociology of education: A critical analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, *53*, 257–293.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates.* New York: Anchor.

Gutiérrez, K., Rymes, B., & Larson, J. (1995). Script, counterscript, and underlife in the classroom: James Brown versus *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. *Harvard Educational Review*, *65*, 445–471.

Haan, M. de, & Elbers, E. (2005a). Reshaping diversity in a local classroom: Communication and identity issues in multicultural schools in the Netherlands. *Language & Communication*, *25*, 315–333.

Haan, M. de, & Elbers, E. (2005b). Peer tutoring in a multi-ethnic classroom in the Netherlands: A multi-perspective analysis of diversity. *Comparative Educational Review*, *49*, 365–388.

Jefferson, G. (1988). Preliminary notes on a possible metric which provides for a 'standard maximum' silence of approximately one second in conversation. In D. Roger & P. Bull (Eds.), *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 166–196). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Kendon, A. (1992). The negotiation of context in face-to-face interaction. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp. 323–334). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Locke Davidson, A. (1996). *Making and molding identity in schools: Student narratives on race, gender, and academic engagement*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Maybin, J. (2003). Voices, intertextuality and induction into schooling. In S. Goodman, T. Lillis, J. Maybin, & N. Mercer (Eds.), *Language, literacy and education: A reader* (pp. 159–170). Oakhill: Trentham Books.

Mehan, H. (1998). The study of social interaction in educational settings: Accomplishments and unresolved issues. *Human Development*, *41*, 245–269.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration: Globalization, deterritorialization and hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Pratt, M.L. (1992). *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation.* London: Routledge.

Smolka, A.L. Bustamante (2005). The authoring of institutional practices: Discourse and modes of participation of subjects. *Culture & Psychology*, *11*, 359–376.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Biography

MARIËTTE DE HAAN is senior researcher at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She has conducted research on Native American educational practices in Mexico, combining psychological and anthropological perspectives on learning. Her current research focuses on educational practices of migrants in the Netherlands, including research on multi-ethnic classrooms and on home–school relationships. ADDRESS: Mariëtte de Haan, University of Utrecht, Faculty of Social Sciences/ASW, Heidelberglaan 2, 3584 CS Utrecht, The Netherlands. [email: M.deHaan@fss.uu.nl]