# DISCOURSE BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT:

The effect of teacher's style of communication on learning environment as viewed in literature and the cinema

Candidate's thesis
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**ABSTRAKTI**

Tutkielman tavoitteena oli tarkastella, kuinka opettajan tapa kommunikoida luokkansa ja yksittäisten noin 15—18-vuotiaiden oppilaidensa kanssa vaikuttaa vallitsevaan oppimisilmapiiriin. Kysymystä tarkasteltiin fiktiivisten lähteiden kautta, ja aineistona käytettiin kolmea erilaista datanäytettä, jotka oli julkaistu eri vuosikymmeninä: *Dead Poets Society* (*Kuolleiden runoilijoiden seura*) 1980-luvulla, *Dangerous minds* (*Levottomat sielut)* 1990-luvulla ja *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* (*Harry Potter ja Feeniksin kilta)* 2000-luvun alussa. Tutkielmassa käytettyä dataa käytettiin taustakirjallisuuden kanssa ensimmäistä kertaa kyseessä olevan tutkimuskysymyksen analysoimiseen.

Jokaisesta datanäytteestä otettiin kattava määrä esimerkkejä opettajan ja oppilaan välisistä kommunikaatioista. Näitä esimerkkejä analysoitiin ja tuloksia vertailtiin keskenään. Analyysissa kiinnitettiin huomiota siihen, miten opiskelijat suhtautuvat opettajan kommunikaatioon ja minkälaisia vaikutuksia tällä oli oppimisen mielekkyyteen sekä oppimisen onnistumiseen. Huomion kohteena oli myös vertaisryhmien toiminta, eli millainen oppimistilanne oli, kun opettajana oli kanssaopiskelija eikä koulutettu opettaja. Vertailua tehtäessä kiinnitettiin huomiota eritoten samankaltaisuuksiin, joita eri datanäytteistä löytyi.

Analyysissa selvisi, että opettajan käyttämällä äänensävyllä oli erittäin suuri rooli oppimisen mielekkyyteen. Kylmä ja pistävä ääni ei herättänyt oppilaissa halua suurempaan kommunikointiin oppimistilanteessa. Tämän lisäksi puheen sisältö vaikutti oppimisessa käytettyyn vuorovaikutukseen, sillä oppilaita alentavasti puhuttelevien opettajien opetuksessa oli kommunikoinnilla selkeästi pienempi merkitys kuin opettajien, jotka vitsailivat oppilaiden kanssa ja olivat puheissaan kannustavia. Huomioitavaa oli myös, että vertaisryhmän antama opetus vaikutti oppimisilmapiiriin myönteisesti, jos oppilaat saivat itse valita, kuka vertainen heitä opetti.

Analyysia olisi ollut mahdollisuus selvittää pidemmällekin vaihtelemalla datanäytteitä, ottamalla enemmän esimerkkejä jokaisesta näytteestä ja käyttämällä useampia lähteitä. Kirjallisuus ja elokuvateollisuus tarjoavat useita teoksia, joita voisi käyttää tämän opettajan kommunikoinnin tärkeyden tutkimiseen tässä analyysissa käytettyjen datanäytteiden lisäksi.

Avainsanat: Classroom discourse, English learning, English teaching

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

Teachers play a major role in a classroom. They control the learning activities of students in and even outside the classroom. Teachers can affect their students' behaviour and mood by changing their style of communication or, in other words, what kind of tone of voice they use and what kind of content their speech has. The on-going communication can have an effect on the student's learning immediately or even much later in the student's life. Thus it is important to pay attention to the way in which teachers communicate and what kind of communication style is seen positive in the learning progress. This analysis will present three fictional productions from which various teachers' communication styles and their effects are analyzed.

In the analysis, I will introduce different kinds of teachers, professional ones and peer teachers, presented in the data. I will give examples on how their communication skills are shown and how the students receive the communication style used by the teacher. In addition to this, I will analyze how academic the communication in the classroom is, and how the academic atmosphere, or the lack thereof, affects the learning situation. I will also present how the students see the teachers due to their communication.

Previous research in this field has concentrated on classroom discourses and how teachers can change the atmosphere of the classroom by choosing different kinds of communication styles. In this analysis, the question of communication styles means how teachers use humour and the tone of voice in the discourses. In addition to this, the content of the speech and its effects on the students are taken into account. The study will include the analysis of peers as tutors as well, and discuss whether the classroom discourse changes remarkably when there is no professional teacher, as instead there is a fellow-learner to guide the students.
The study will be analyzed from the students' point of view: how the teacher's communication affects them and what styles of communication are preferred by the students.

## 2 FEATURES OF CLASSROOM DISCOURSES

Technically I do not have any previous research considering my topic, *The effect of teacher's style of communication on learning environment as viewed in literature and the cinema*, since the same primary sources are not used in any previous research. However, there are a number of secondary sources that do provide useful information about various classroom discourses considering both teacher and student. In addition to this, the secondary sources introduce the importance of a teacher's behaviour, which is relevant to my study.

### 2.1 Traditional teachers

First of all, I will pay attention to professional teachers performing in classrooms. As Read (2008:612) mentions when discussing the power relationship between classroom participants that

> the classroom teacher has the highest degree of authority/power in the classroom, followed by other adults such as classroom assistants, and then the pupils, who have the least degree of power/agency.

Firstly, I will explain the teacher's role in conversations, secondly, the style of communication that is used, thirdly, the topics discussed in classrooms and fourthly, how the teacher should take students into account in classroom discourses. It is significant to notice that all secondary sources introduce their topics from an adult's point of view, and, although some authors have collected empirical data by analyzing the actions of various students, the writers are professional researchers and/or teachers.

Teachers are the ones who control the classroom and students' behaviour in most cases. They affect the nature of learning significantly and this is why the teacher's speech needs to be paid attention to. As Hadfield (1992:10) proposes, teachers should create a joyful and productive learning situation where the students can participate and learn from also after the actual face-to-face-teaching. In addition to this, listening to students and giving attention to them is important in order to maintain the interest in classroom discourses (Hadfield 1992:158). Students often expect some oral feedback or comment on their speech and thus it is important for the teacher to listen in order to maintain a diverse discourse. The students lose their

interest quickly if the teacher uses monotonous voice or ignores students and their opinions completely.

In addition to the overall importance of the teachers, one should pay attention to the different features that the teacher can exploit during the classroom discourses. One of these features is the style of speech as the teacher's style of oral communication can vary during the learning situation. However, it should be noted that the style of communication should be encouraging and positive, since "[N]egativity has a very powerful attraction" (Hadfield 1992:86). Teachers tend to voice criticism more easily than satisfaction to students, and in the same way students tend to remember negative communication easier than positive communication. Negative oral communication style can lead to a lack of self-confidence and desire to participate in the classroom discourse and the whole learning situation. In the same way Bushell (1973:31) says that a student's behaviour should be positively reinforced, since paying much attention to what the student says or does wrong does not encourage students to speak up and learn in the classroom. Axelrod (1983:9) also mentions that negative reinforcement does not bring anything useful to the classroom discourse, as it is used to remove an unwanted feature. However, positive reinforcement often brings, for example, an urge to learn more and be better in the subject at hand. Thus it should be used instead of negative reinforcement in the classroom discourses to maintain the encouraging atmosphere during the learning situation.

Moreover, the topics used in classroom discourses are important in keeping the learning session interesting and encouraging the students' want to study. The topics should be close to students' lives so that they could participate in the discourse more willingly and find learning more interesting, as students will lose their interest fairly soon if the topics are not in any way familiar to them or they do not have any kind of significance in students' lives. Hadfield (1992:59) says that students should be invited "to draw on their own personal experience, talk about themselves and share feelings." This approach is said to promote "friendship, good feeling, and co-operation, while providing good language practice."

In addition to the features mentioned above, it is important that the teacher gives attention to the students for the classroom discourse to succeed. The teacher should *see the student* and not forget that the learning situation is done mostly for the

student and not for the teacher. By *seeing the student* I mean that classroom discourse is not a biased speech happening during the learning situation, as it is a multi-directional action that often requires participation from students. Ayers (1993:25) says in his book that teaching can be seen as an interactive practise that has to concentrate on seeing the student.

It should be remembered that each student is an individual. Even though certain kind of teaching, such as basing the learning situation only on oral communication or written communication, is suitable for certain students it might not be suitable for others. In addition to Ayers (1993), Walshaw and Anthony (2008:19) say that the teacher should pay attention to students and that effective "teaching involves observing students [and] listening carefully to their ideas and explanations". Thus the teacher cannot build classroom discourse based only on his or her opinion and want, as the teacher should notice that teaching does not involve only the concept of one single class as it is about several individuals learning in different ways.

## 2.2 Peer tutors

In addition to traditional professional teachers, students can act as teachers too. According to Goodlad and Hirst (1990:90), it is important to introduce the peer tutor to the students, since thus the students feel freer to communicate with each other and with the peer tutor in the classroom. In the same way Hadfield (1992:59) claims that group cohesion is more productive if the students know "something about each other, and are willing to disclose information about themselves." In the present study, students are familiar with the peer tutors as the students get to form the study groups by themselves and not with a help of a teacher.

In addition to the help of familiarity of the group, it is important to set the group activities on a suitable proficiency level for the students to succeed in their learning. One can notice that

> the face-to-face nature of communication in group activities can help speakers to set their speech to a suitable level for the particular listeners and to adjust it when listeners indicate a lack of understanding. (Nation and Newton 1997:244.)

This way the students get more from the discourse and can learn more than they do with the traditional teacher, since the peer tutor's speech to fellow-students is often simpler and more informal compared to the speech used by the original teacher. Nation and Newton (1997:244) mention that students can make errors and ask for repetition freely in a group-based peer interaction without exposing their weakness to the teacher.

It is also possible to give the students a larger degree of agency in a classroom without actually giving them the authority of a peer tutor. Read (2008) discusses how by treating students like adults and giving them more power to affect the classroom discourses make the learning situation better than by having a biased teacher-led lesson. Unlike Goodlad and Hirst (1990), Read (2008:612) does not advise teachers to choose any certain student to act as a tutor. She prefers to give the students more agency without actually announcing it. However, Read (2008:612) believes that the students are aware of the continuation of the teacher's authority and continue to act within the classroom rules given by the teacher even though the teacher would not play a major role in the classroom discourse.

Peer tutoring has been seen as a positive style of teaching in literature. It allows students to get a better understanding of the subject at hand, and it gives the students more power to affect the on-going discourse. Axelrod (1983) mentions that there are a number of advantages in using peer tutoring. He says that in peer tutoring a student can

> begin instruction at her own level, can be paced according to her own learning rate, can be given immediate feedback, and can be taught according to methods most appropriate to her. This is not possible when a teacher instructs all students simultaneously. (Axelrod 1983:63-64.)

Thus the use of peer tutoring in classrooms should be encouraged as they seem to have a positive effect on learning.

## 3 THE PRESENT STUDY

### 3.1 The research question

The teacher often has a major role in teaching, since he or she controls the whole atmosphere of the classroom and can change the whole course of learning by simply communicating with the students in another way. Thus the main question of this

thesis is how the teacher's style of communicating with the classroom affects the students' learning. There are a few other questions alongside the main question of the thesis: How do the teachers actually communicate with the students and is this style academic or not? How do the students see their teacher due to his or her communication? Does the usage of a peer tutor change the learning situation? Moreover, how does the learning environment change depending on the different teachers?

**3.2 Data collection**

The data consists of one fictional book, *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* (Rowling 2003), and two cinematic productions: *Dead Poets Society* (1989, Director Weir) and *Dangerous Minds* (1995, Director Smith). I chose two cinema productions and only one book, since I wanted some kind of variety in the thesis. However, I believe these three sources reveal enough information to discuss in the thesis, and any additional books or cinema productions would have been a bit much to deal with in the present study.

One can understand and study the classroom teaching situations in a different way by watching the films than reading books. Therefore I wanted to have different ways in which I can analyse the content in the main sources. Another fact to remember is that the data has been published in three different decades: *Dead Poets Society* was made in the 80s, *Dangerous Minds* during the 90s and *Harry Potter* at the beginning of the 21$^{st}$ century, and this gives information about what is seen as important over a span of almost 15 years.

**3.3 Methods of analysis**

The plan is to analyse the different topics important to classroom discourse and draw a comparison between the productions. Already at this stage, I will not concentrate so much on the differences found between the sources as I will concentrate on the similarities. I will write down notes and categorize the important different acts of communication that happen between the teacher and the students in the sources.

In the analysis, I will study how the sources present different kinds of teachers and their styles of communication. I will not specifically concentrate on the

possible differences found between different sources. Instead I will more point out if they have significant similarities in their style of teaching and communicating with their classrooms. By doing this I can generalize what kinds of styles of communication are recommended in these productions.

I will not concentrate only on how the teachers are described, but will also discuss how the students seem to react to the communication style used. The way in which the students act due to the communication style in use in the classroom tells the reader or viewer much of the teacher's efficiency in communication. However, it is good to remember that a classroom full of students has a variety of reactions and opinions on the communication style. Thus one cannot completely rely on the reactions and happenings seen in the data as the reactions are taken from certain small groups of students and not from the whole school, for instance.

## 4 TEACHERS AND PEER TUTORS

In this section I introduce the main factors that affect classroom discourse and students' learning interests found in the data. The factors are divided into four different areas: firstly, I discuss the importance of topics chosen by the teacher to be handled in a classroom, secondly, the use of tone and the content of speech are analyzed, thirdly, the addressing of the students and its effects, and fourthly, the usage of peers as teachers instead of professional ones is considered.

### 4.1 The chosen topics

Classroom topics have much variation. One can cover many subjects in classroom where there are no restrictions to the contents of the topics. However, it would be profitable if the topics were close to students so that they would know enough to be able to discuss them in classroom. Hadfield (1992:59) says that familiarity helps students to participate and invites them to "to draw on their own personal experience, talk about themselves and share feelings."

One can see this kind of familiarity of topics being used in *Dangerous minds* when the teacher Johnson tries to get close to her students by talking about topics familiar to the class. These topics are, for example, drug dealers and the

possibility to choose between different routes in life. These topics make the students to question the teacher and ask for explanations on different questions, such as the teacher's belief that one can choose a certain route in life in the poor neighbourhood. One could think that by criticizing the teacher's speech the students do not see the topic worth learning. However, by expressing their opinions on the topic the students are participating in the classroom discourse, making it multidirectional and thus making it worthwhile. Thus the familiarity of the topics helps the classroom discourse to continue.

In *Dangerous minds* the teacher provokes the students to learn and to express their own opinions. However, this is not the case with Professor Binns, the history teacher, in *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*. Unlike Johnson, he does not seem to care if the students' attention is on him or not. This does not give a very caring image of the teacher. The style of communication he uses does not maintain the students' interest. Ayers (1993:4-5) says that teaching includes a wide range of actions, such as listening, interacting and inspiring. It seems that Binns is not a qualified teacher in these respects compared to Johnson, who acts as Ayers suggests, and thus the students' attention is in no doubt about to wander.

It should be remembered that teachers do not always get the possibility to affect the topics discussed in classroom. Thus one cannot expect familiar subjects and ways of looking at them in every lesson. However, teachers could try and make the topics familiar and easy to discuss for students whenever it is possible.

## 4.2 The tone of voice and the content of speech

The tone of voice has a significant role in the data samples. The tone illustrates clearly the teacher's attitude towards the students. If the tone is distant and uncaring, one cannot expect the students to feel themselves eager to learn. As has been mentioned before, negativity affects the students more than positivity (Hadfield 1992:86), since it can easily cause reluctance towards studying. In addition to the tone, the content of the speech is important in classroom discourses. Disparaging speech does not encourage students to learn and pay attention to the teacher.

One example of the importance of both, the tone and the content of speech, can be seen in *Harry Potter*. Severus Snape, who is the Potions master, is described to have a cold, low and sneering voice (Rowling 2003:322). His style of communication with his students is not encouraging or friendly, as one can see in his speech to his potions classroom: "Moronic though some of this class undoubtedly are, I expect you to scrape an "Acceptable" in your OWL, or suffer my…displeasure." (Rowling 2003:209). In addition to this, he is demanding and he is not afraid to make his opinions of failures in his class public: "So whether or not you are intending to attempt NEWT, I advise all of you to concentrate your efforts upon maintaining the high pass level I have come to expect from my OWL students." (Rowling 2003:210.) Snape's communication style does not fill the demand of positive reinforcing that the students need in classroom discourses (Bushell 1973:31), as it pays more attention to what the students could do and are quite likely to do wrong. This does not help the students to learn more, as it more likely brings an unwanted feature of fear and reluctance to the discourse (Axelrod 1983:9).

Another teacher in *Harry Potter* who does not get many praises and does not have eager students to participate in his lessons is the history teacher, Professor Binns. He is described as having "a wheezy, droning voice that was almost guaranteed to cause severe drowsiness within ten minutes." (Rowling 2003:206). On the same page it is mentioned that he never varies the form of the lessons, as he lectures them in a monotonous voice without pausing in between sentences. This does not fit in Walshaw and Anthony's view (2008:19) that the teacher should always pay attention to students and that effective teaching involves seeing and listening to students' ideas and opinions.

In *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix,* Professor Umbridge presents a good example of a teacher to whose voice the students do not seem to pay much attention in a positive manner. She clearly is the most hated and unsuccessful teacher in Hogwards according to almost every student. Her voice is "high-pitched, breathy and little-girlish" (Rowling 2003:191), which does not arouse the students' interest in her classes. She tries to start her teaching in a positive manner by saying "I am very much looking forward to getting to know you all and I'm sure we'll be very good friends."(Rowling 2003:191). However, she does not succeed in this due to her patronizing speech towards the students. Thus one can notice that teachers should

speak to their students in an equal manner; nevertheless they should maintain the authority of the class in other ways, such as by controlling the activities or topics covered in the classroom.

In addition to Umbridge's tone, her speech contains a tinge of pompousness when considering her chosen words while she talks to her students (2003:92). The students seem to be used to simplicity in general speeches, and thus Umbridge's speech does not catch their attention, since it is full of empty pompous words. However, even Umbridge does not seem to care what her students are doing as long as they are not interrupting her: "Harry had the impression that a full-scale riot could have broken out under her nose and she would have ploughed on with her speech." (Rowling 2003:192).

Another set of data, *Dead Poets Society*, provides quite little information on the tone's effects on the students. The main emphasis is on Keating and his behaviour with his class. He seems quite a joker as he uses humour with his students. He does not reprimand the students or make them feel of lower rank. This way Keating seems to earn the respect of most of the students.

The other teachers are inadequately depicted in this cinema production. However, when they are mentioned, they seem sullen and conservative. Their tone of voice or the content of speech does not seem positive from the few examples one can find. One of the teachers calls the students by rather unpleasant names as they are going to their classes: "Slow down, you horrible phalanx of pubescence." Another teacher seems strict and even educationally intolerant towards his students: "Anyone failing to turn in any homework assignment will be penalized one point of their final grade. Let me urge you now not to test me on this point."

Unfortunately the other teachers, in addition to Keating, are rarely shown much in *Dead Poets Society*, and thus one cannot analyze them as much as one could want. However, from the examples found in the data, one can analyze that students find light-hearted and close teachers more interesting than teachers who are the opposite. The tone and the content of speech affect learning and overall atmosphere of classrooms significantly in every data sample.

## 4.3 Addressing the students

Even though teachers often have the major authority in classroom discourses, the students should not be forgotten. The way in which the teacher behaves towards the students and how they are seen by the teacher affects the students' eagerness to learn in classroom discourses and during private meetings between the teacher and a student.

### 4.3.1 In classroom

In *Harry Potter*, the teachers' general terms of address to their students are *Mister* or *Miss* in addition to their surnames. The teachers call Harry Potter, for example, by the name *Mister Potter*. This makes the students seem more distant to the teachers and keeps up the more academic appearance in the classroom, although some of them, such as McGonagall and another professor called Flitwick, are quite friendly and familiar towards the students.

In addition to the teachers, the students do their part as well, since they address their teachers with the title *Professor* in addition to their surnames. Thus the academic touch and the authority of the teacher remain in the classroom discourses. This shapes the image of learning by giving the idea that classrooms are meant as places for learning and studying, and not behaving in an uncaring way.

The addressing of students can also be seen in *Dangerous minds*, when the teacher, Ms. Johnson, calls the students' names every time a particular person gives an answer to a question and not the whole class together. It is also made clear that most of the students want to be addressed by their names and not as *you*, as they say their name even without asking as in Raul's, who is one of the students, case. However, Johnson speaks in a very general level to the whole class and does not address individual questions to any single student. She chooses the student only when she wants a particular student to answer the question. Therefore, from the teacher's behaviour, one can analyze that the teacher wants the students to feel comfortable, and she does not want to put her students into any kind of danger of embarrassing themselves in front of the whole class. From this one can predict that most of the students want to stay unnoticed and not draw additional attention to themselves.

In general Johnson uses very informal style in teaching and it is at times even harsh. She does not address her students by their surnames or by additional titles, such as *Mister* or *Miss* as in *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*. In the same way the students do not address her in any special way: they do not even use her name or call her *teacher*. Only in the latter part of the film do they start to call her as *Miss Johnson*. Although students often address teachers by using their professional title or other additional titles with surnames, there are some cases, as can be seen in this cinema production, where students do not find addressing the teacher that important. This makes the classroom discourse more informal and student-centred. However, it does not significantly decrease the teacher's authority in the classroom.

The students in *Dangerous minds* do not seem to see teachers as having much more authority than them and thus they do not bother with dealing in any professional or academically correct way with the teachers. Only at the end does Johnson seem to have reached the same level with her students. This can be seen when the students finally start to speak to her like to one of their own kind: "We see you as being our-like". They even admit that they need the education and the classroom discourses to continue with their learning: "You are a teacher, you got us what we need."

In addition to *Harry Potter*, contradictory addressing from different teachers can be seen in *Dead Poets Society*, where some of the teachers call the students as *boys*, which does not give the students a high position or make them seem as if they had a chance to have an influence on what they are learning. The brief introductions of other teachers, in addition to Keating, do not mention that the teachers call the students by their names during the class, as they speak to them on a very general level. Instead, Keating is shown to call the students by their surnames and adds the title *Mister*: "Mister Pitts, will you open your hymnal to page 542?" Unfortunately these addresses are not shown much in *Dead Poets Society*, and thus one cannot compare the possible different attitudes and opinions of the students towards other teachers than Keating.

**4.3.2 Outside classroom**

There are a number of private meetings with the teachers and the students in addition to traditional classroom confrontations in the data. McGonagall, for example, has private meetings with Potter, since she is the House Head of Gryffindor where Potter belongs. She gives him career consultation (2003:583-587), and during this session Potter and McGonagall use slightly more informal style of communicating. McGonagall calls Potter only by his surname, not adding the title *Mister* and Potter does not call McGonagall *Professor* during the consultation. The teacher talks encouragingly to Potter and advises him how to achieve his goals. In this way she creates a trustful atmosphere and helps Potter to know how and what he should study and pay attention to.

In addition to McGonagall, Snape has private meetings with Potter. Snape is described as unenthusiastic towards Potter as he is in the classroom. He calls Potter by his surname, but one can notice that he does this more to express his dislike towards his student rather that to keep the situation more professional, since he calls another bypassing student by his first name (2003:562). As one can notice in the book, Potter is more impressed by McGonagall's gentle and friendly way of helping than by Snape's cold style of addressing and helping Potter.

More personal communication style between the teacher and one student can be profitable when considering the actual classroom discourses with the whole class. This kind of positive effect can be seen in *Dangerous minds* when the teacher has separate private meetings with two bad boys of the classroom. In these conversations Johnson uses a calm tone of voice and encouraging words. Even though her style of communication is very informal, she manages to represent clear facts of the future events if the students do not behave and study properly. This conversation makes the youngsters, Emiliano and Raul, understand how their actions affect the general learning atmosphere, and how much Johnson cares for them and their education in a professional and even in a platonically deeper way. In addition to Emiliano and Raul, Johnson has private conversations with some other students and all results seem positive with regard to learning as in all cases the students start to participate more in the classroom discourses and support Johnson in her teaching.

When the teacher communicates with her students in private, she uses a calm tone of voice and encouraging words. She does not force them to anything, as instead she wants her students to think what is best for themselves in their own opinion, and not to accept everything the educational system says. However, in the classroom Johnson can use even quite harsh and powerful words accompanied with a determined tone of voice.

## 4.4 Peers as tutors

In addition to the traditional classroom situations, where the teacher plays a major role, the data introduces the usage of peer tutoring. This is a "system of instruction in which learners help each other and learn by teaching" (Goodlad and Hirst 1990:1). Later in this analysis, *peer* means "somebody belonging to the same group in society where membership is defined by status" (Goodlad and Hirst 1990:1). This means that the tutor is a fellow student and not a professional teacher.

One tutoring session occurs in the book *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix,* where Potter teaches his fellow students Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Umbridge's subject, since the teacher is unenthusiastic to show them how to protect themselves from the enemy. The tutoring group seems to work well with Harry as a teacher. Perhaps the group works together so well due to their own decision to choose Harry to be their teacher, and the choice was not made by any teacher.

As a peer tutor, Harry speaks in the first person plural, *we*-form. This can be seen as he describes the future actions occurring in his teaching sessions by saying "[W]e'll start with the Impediment Jinx, for ten minutes, then we can get out the cushions and try Stunning again." (Rowling 2003:401). Thus he makes it clear that he is learning as well as the others, and he is not a professional teacher who knows all the practised subjects better than the students. In addition to this, he tells his fellow-learners beforehand what they will be learning. This way he makes the students aware of the outline of the session and perhaps even lets them influence the learning sessions. Goodlad and Hirst (1990:92) also mention that it is significant for the students to have more opportunity to contribute their own ideas considering the learning situation.

In addition to *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*, there are some study groups presented in *Dead Poets Society*. Although the groups are only briefly presented, one gets the idea that the students themselves choose when to have a study group meeting and when not to have one. They get to choose the topics themselves, without any teacher input. In addition to this, they do not have any particular student as a peer tutor, as they change the tutor according to the topic at hand and who is the best student in that particular subject.

However, this variety of teachers and topics does not seem to disturb the students at all, since they seem to enjoy themselves in the presence of other fellow-learners in a non-academic atmosphere. The setting is almost the same as in *Harry Potter*: the students meet outside the classroom, and they divide into smaller groups in which the peer tutor then teaches the topic at hand. This seems to help the students to concentrate and participate more on learning.

Unlike in the film and book discussed so far, no clear peer tutoring is presented in *Dangerous Minds*. Most of the film concentrates on the communication taking place between Ms. Johnson, the teacher, and her students. However, there is one group activity included in the film when the students find matching poems from two different poets in small groups. The viewers can only see that the students are searching and reading books in a library. From these brief introductions to learning groups, one can see that the students work harder and concentrate more on the given task in small groups than in the full classroom. The study groups do not seem to have a particular leader to help the others, as instead they all do their fair share. However, one should pay attention to the information that the group that finds the most matching two poems gets a prize. Therefore one cannot be sure whether the concentrated learning situation is due to smaller groups or to the possible prize.

In addition to Goodlad and Hirst, Read (2008) seems to believe that giving students more agency can help the classroom discourse. She introduces the term of *pseudo-adultification* in her article, which is defined as

> whereby the teacher speaks and responds to the pupil as if the latter were actually an adult of (almost) equal agency and power as the teacher, and through this communication builds up an 'expectation' of the pupil that he/she will behave in an 'adult' manner. (Read 2008:613.)

She seems to believe that the classroom dynamics improve by giving a student more authority to the discourse and gives the student an opportunity to have an effect on the lesson. This *pseudo-adultification* can be seen, for example, in *Dead Poets Society* where Keating treats his students as adults and fully capable of deciding their own opinions and beliefs. However, as Read (2008) mentions, despite the *pseudo-adultification*, the teacher's authority is remarkable in classroom discourses and the students are often aware of this. The *adult* manner Read (2008) mentions can also be seen in Harry Potter, where Harry acts in an adult-like manner as a teacher, even though the teaching is not situated in a particular classroom with a professional teacher to teach them.

Overall, giving students more power in the classroom and making peers as tutors seem to improve the learning situation and make learning more relaxed and interesting to the fellow-students. Nation and Newton (1997:244) say that the students can also make errors and ask for repetition freely in group-based peer interaction without endangering their status in front of the whole class. Even Goodlad and Hirst (1990:90-91) found out that the students felt that the peer tutors gave them "the opportunity to experience different teaching methods with someone nearer our own age." Thus the data implies that peer tutors should be used to achieve higher participation and learning possibilities.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The intention of the analysis was to study how in fictional data the communication used by a teacher or a peer tutor affects the students' learning and how meaningful or unpleasant the learning situation is due to the discourse occurring between the teacher and the student. Moreover, the styles of communication being used in the different data were under examination.

The results were quite as expected, as the communication style and the content of the communication used by the teacher had a significant effect on the students during learning. The teachers who spoke with encouraging words and warm tones to the students had more reciprocal and voluntary classroom discourses than

the teachers who sounded cold and harsh. The teachers also managed to maintain the academic atmosphere in their classrooms and this did not have any negative impact on the students. In addition to the findings of the importance of teachers in classrooms discourses, the findings in studying a peer tutor's role in a learning situation were significant. The study groups where a student was chosen to teach the others had in some cases more eager and studious atmosphere than the classroom discourses led by a professional teacher. It seems that the students' ability to choose their study groups and the peer teacher had a significant effect on the learning situation.

These results give advice to teachers, as these cultural productions analysed in this candidate's thesis reveal what kind of communication is seen as positive and what kind of communication is seen as negative in the collected data samples. Teachers should encourage the students to form and keep up their own study group, if they do not discover the idea themselves. Teachers could try different kinds of study groups by choosing the peer tutor or by letting the students choose their own groups and tutors. The style of communication is also very dependent on the teacher, as he or she can change widely the tone and the contents of the speech used in the classroom discourse. Therefore the teachers should pay attention to the discourses occurring in and even outside the classroom, since they do affect the eagerness of learning.

However, it is good to remember that the present study analyzed oral communication and its effects through fictional productions. In addition to this, the reactions and opinions of the students are limited, since the data concentrates on particular students or class. Thus one cannot solely rely on the results seen in the data. In addition to this, one should be aware of students being individuals, and that they do learn and react to discourses used by teachers in a range of different ways. These data examples give only a small amount of information on how the students can react to different classroom discourses.

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