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Beyond a unitary conception of pedagogic pace: quantitative measurement and ethnographic experience

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English education policy-makers have targeted classroom time as a key area for regulation and intervention, with ‘brisk pace’ widely accepted as a feature of good teaching practice. We problematise this conventional wisdom through an exploration of objective and subjective dimensions of lesson pace in a corpus of 30 Key Stage 2 literacy lessons from three classrooms in one London school. Systematic classroom observation produced an anomaly: the lessons we experienced as fast-paced were rated objectively as slowest, and vice-versa. We contrasted the fastest and slowest episodes in the corpus, demonstrating that for these episodes the accepted measure of pace primarily reflected differences in utterance length. Linguistic ethnographic micro-analysis of the episodes highlighted predictability, stakes, meaning and dramatic performance as key factors contributing to pace as experienced. We argue, among other claims, that sometimes accelerating pupils’ experience—and learning—necessitates slowing down the pace of teaching, and that government calls for urgency may, perversely, make lessons slower.

Introduction

Some lessons press on relentlessly and even exhilaratingly while others seem to be suspended in time or crawl painfully towards their eventual conclusion. (Alexander, 2001, p. 418)

Time is a critical dimension of classroom life, yet it has received surprisingly little attention in English educational research. Policy-makers, on the other hand, have targeted time and its management as a key area for intervention on teaching practice. In particular, accelerating pedagogic pace has become a

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recurrent theme in attempts to improve primary school teaching in England, to the point where ‘brisk pace’ is widely accepted as an aspect of good teaching—in official prescriptions, in Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) reports and in teacher discourse.

Some empirical support for this idea has been provided by Smith and colleagues’ (2004) study of a national sample of Key Stage 2 numeracy and literacy lessons, which found that the only statistically significant difference between discourse in average and highly effective teachers’ classrooms is pace: highly effective teaching is faster. We employed Smith and colleagues’ system for analysing discourse (including calculations of pace) in our own study of literacy lessons in one East London school and were surprised to find that the ‘objective’ measures of pace contradicted our own subjective experiences as ethnographers observing the lessons. The lessons that we had experienced as relatively slow were found to have the fastest pace according to Smith and colleagues’ measures, and vice-versa. The current article emerged from our exploration of this anomaly. By revisiting video-recordings and analysing in depth lesson episodes that were scored as particularly fast or slow, we construct an account of the factors shaping the way pedagogic pace is experienced in the classroom. In this article we report on our findings from this investigation, critique attempts to measure pace without reference to content or context and explore the ideological underpinnings of government calls for fast pace. We argue, among other claims, that sometimes accelerating pupils’ experience—and learning—necessitates slowing down teaching.

Time and pace in English literacy policy

How teachers organise and manage time in their classrooms was until recently not an area of English government regulation. However, with the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) of 1998, time became a key area of scrutiny and intervention. First, the NLS stipulated a daily, dedicated ‘Literacy Hour’, divided into four 10–20 minute segments, each with distinct content and activity. Second, and more importantly for the purposes of this paper, the NLS *Framework* (DfEE, 1998) posits, among the five characteristics of ‘the most successful teaching’, that lessons should be ‘well-paced—there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed’ (p. 8).

These general principles have been reinforced in countless government documents and reports. For example, the report, *Building on improvement* (DfES, 2002), included as the first two of 14 ‘Key messages from the first phase of the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy’:

- Structured lessons help teachers maintain the focus on learning throughout the lesson and have led to an increase in the amount of time teachers spend teaching the class.
- Keeping the whole class working together for much of the lesson is effective in maintaining pace and the focus for learning. (p. 13)

The issue of pace, in particular, has been championed by Ofsted. It appears in their review of lessons learned from the first four years of the National Strategies (Literacy and Numeracy) (Ofsted, 2002–10 mentions of pace), in their summary of key aspects of outstanding secondary schools (Ofsted, 2009—3 mentions of pace) and in countless inspection reports.¹ The 2001 Ofsted report for Abbeyford Primary, the school in which we conducted the research reported here, favourably mentions ‘good pace’ or ‘brisk pace’ seven times. Regarding the teaching of English, for example, the inspectors write, ‘Lessons are usually brisk in pace and pupils are kept busy throughout. Occasionally, introductions are too long and, in such circumstances, a minority of pupils begin to lose interest.’ Likewise the school’s 2010 report mentions pace five times and ‘ensuring that the pace is suitably brisk’ is highlighted as one of the three ways in which the school can improve the quality of teaching before the next inspection.²

Where did this focus on timing and unwavering belief in brisk pace come from? We trace the origins of this approach to the convergence of three influences: school effectiveness research, concerns with pupil engagement and boredom and anxieties about perceived teacher complacency. We review these three factors in turn.

First, and most importantly, the emphasis on the efficient use of time—a daily literacy hour, with the majority of time devoted to whole-class teaching—has its roots in school effectiveness research, which gained in policy influence following New Labour’s rise to power in 1997.³ School effectiveness research compares more and less successful schools and educational systems in order to identify the organisational characteristics and pedagogical practices associated with high standards of pupil achievement. An indicative, and indeed important, document in this regard is Reynolds and Farrell’s (1996) Ofsted-commissioned ‘Worlds Apart?’ review of international surveys of educational achievement. The report presents evidence about the poor performance of English education relative to other industrialised nations and seeks to draw conclusions about what England can learn from her most successful competitors. The authors frame their discussion of international educational competition with anxieties about England’s poor economic performance. In this regard, much ado is made about the ‘Asian Economic Miracle’, which is partially attributed to the superiority of Asian educational systems and practices. Though the authors warn that not all educational practices ‘travel’ well cross-culturally, the report concludes with the recommendation that ‘English educationists now need to look beyond their own geographical boundaries to see why it is that other countries, in particular those of the Pacific Rim and successful European countries such as Switzerland, may be doing better than we are’ (p. 58).

Time and pace feature prominently among the practices identified as critical to other countries’ success. Superior performance in the Pacific Rim is partially due to ‘high quantities of school time...longer and more school days’ and ‘a well ordered rhythm to the school day...combined with well-managed lesson transitions that do not “leak” time’ (Reynolds and Farrell, 1996, p. 55). Likewise, in Switzerland ‘high proportions of lesson time (50–70%) [are] used for whole-class teaching’ (p. 56).

Finally, key to success in Hungary are ‘high expectations of what children can achieve, with greater lesson “pace” (itself aided by teacher control) and national guidelines that expect teachers to move to advanced topics quickly’ (p. 57).

Building on these and other school effectiveness studies, the Literacy Task Force (1997), which designed the National Literacy Project (precursor to the National Literacy Strategy), included ‘good management of time, involving maximising learning time and pupils’ levels of “time on task” in classrooms, and minimising the time spent on administration or control’ as the second of four ‘factors which characterise effective teaching in general’.⁴ Note that the logic here is primarily economic or managerial—a neo-Taylorist calculation of how to maximise pupil time on task and exposure to teacher and curriculum, without reference to educational aims or learning theory. And, all things being equal, this makes sense. Except, as we will show below, not all things are equal, nor should we want them to be.

A second factor focusing attention on time management and lesson pace is the concern with pupil engagement and boredom. This concern underlies the Inspector’s judgment in the Abbeyford Ofsted report quoted above, regarding how overly-long lesson introductions cause pupils to lose interest. It also underlies the fast pace of instruction in the Success for All programme, which Beard (1999) cites as a key influence on the NLS focus on pace.⁵ Finally, when we asked teachers at Abbeyford and elsewhere what they think Ofsted means by ‘fast pace’, their explanations invariably revolve around issues of pupil boredom and engagement.

Finally, the government’s focus on pace can be seen in part as a response to the popular perception that teachers were complacent, that when left to their own devices they squandered available time. This suspicion was perhaps most dramatically articulated in and promoted by the Ofsted (1996) report, *The teaching of reading in 45 Inner London primary schools*, which received wide publicity in the national press. The report painted a picture of teachers and pupils aimlessly passing time, with little to no direct teaching of reading at all:

The long stretches of time allocated to reading, moreover, were poorly used and at times detracted from the value of the work because the pace was too slow and progress minimal. Most classes had a daily session of individual silent reading. In some of these sessions, relatively little progress was made. Children were seen changing their books too frequently and without purpose. Their behaviour in these aimless lessons often deteriorated so that by the end few would be reading anything at all. (p. 22)

The NLS sought to combat such complacency by concentrating the teaching of literacy into one hour, mandating that 40 minutes of that hour be devoted to whole-class teaching and picking up the pace of teaching in order to instil a ‘sense of urgency’. Again, the fundamental concern is managerial—to control teachers’ work, for government to appear to be *in control*—and in this regard the Literacy Hour clock face is an expedient regulatory device, making ‘what teachers do in the class both visible and instantly accountable to even the most casual of observers’ (Moss, 2003).

The need to maintain fast pace would seem to run counter to other pedagogical concerns and traditions. Most famously, Row (1974) demonstrated that by slowing down the pace of teaching—specifically, by increasing wait time after posing questions from an average of one second to between three and five seconds—teachers received more confident and thoughtful pupil responses. This apparent relationship between lesson pace and the quality of pupil discourse is contradicted by the NLS *Framework*, which calls for ‘high quality oral work’ and ‘interactive teaching [in which] pupils’ contributions are encouraged, expected and extended’ alongside *brisk* pace (English *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, Moss (2004) notes how the fast pace and short time frames of the literacy hour restrict opportunities for teaching more complex, text-level literacy competencies, which involve greater pupil autonomy. ‘There is a danger,’ she writes, ‘that tasks shrink to fit the time slots available, whilst the time slots available are determined by the need to cover the curriculum’ (p. 129).

These criticisms highlight some of the tensions internal to teaching—e.g. between urgency and thoughtfulness, between breadth and depth of curriculum. Pedagogy involves the management and balance of these and other goals and concerns and different aims, issues, tasks and people are best served by different paces of teaching. Faster is not always better.

Moreover, pace is not unitary. Part of the problem with official approaches to pace is that they collapse multiple dimensions into this one term. To unpack the concept, Alexander (2001), helpfully distinguishes between five types of pace in his comparative study of pedagogy in five different cultural contexts:⁶

- *Organisational pace.* The speed at which lesson preparations, introductions, transitions and conclusions are handled.
- *Task pace.* The speed at which learning tasks and their contingent activities are undertaken.
- *Interactive pace.* The pace of teacher–pupil and pupil–pupil exchanges and contingent factors such as maintaining focus and the handling of cues and turns.
- *Cognitive or semantic pace.* The speed at which conceptual ground is covered in classroom interaction or the ratio of new material to old and of task demand to task outcome.
- *Learning pace.* How fast pupils actually learn. (p. 424)

These distinctions point to an inferential leap at the heart of calls for brisk pace: there is no reason to assume that interactive pace correlates with or is even a good indicator of cognitive or learning pace. Moreover, different types of pace are at the focus of different motivations for speeding up (or slowing down) lessons. For example, critics who call for greater urgency in the face of alleged teacher complacency are primarily concerned with organisational and/or task pace, while concern with pupil boredom is mostly focused on interactive and/or cognitive pace.

In this article, we focus in particular on the relationship between interactive pace (and other factors) and pupil engagement and/or boredom. We add to Alexander's differentiation between types of pace a further distinction, between *objectively measured* and *subjectively experienced* pace. Time's passing can be objectively measured; for example, the duration of time from 11:00 to 11:10 is 10 minutes. But, subjectively, those 10 minutes will likely be experienced as much longer when waiting for the delayed 11:00 train than when engaged in a meaningful activity.⁷ Likewise, three seconds of thinking time while the class ponder a genuinely challenging problem will be experienced differently than three seconds of waiting—again!—for everyone to train their attention on the teacher. The experience of pace is a function of content, task, context and concomitant expectations about appropriate timing. The remainder of this article is devoted to exemplification and elaboration of these and related factors.

Research site, design and methods

The issues and data discussed here are taken from a larger project, the ESRC-funded *Towards dialogue: a linguistic ethnographic study of classroom interaction and change* study (RES-061-25-0363). That study involved observation and videotaping of 73 literacy lessons in seven upper primary classrooms and a professional development intervention designed to encourage and support dialogic pedagogy. Data analysis integrated linguistic ethnographic tools (Rampton, 2007) and computer-assisted discourse analysis (Smith & Hardman, 2003a). In what follows we review the study site, design and methods, detailing in particular those parts of the study directly relevant to this article.⁸

Research site: Abbeyford Primary School

Abbeyford (a pseudonym, as are all the proper names in this article) is a relatively large community primary school in East London. We chose to work in this area because the local authority has a long-standing interest in dialogic pedagogy and a history of developing and implementing pedagogical innovations. A senior local authority advisor recommended Abbeyford Primary on account of its highly regarded, stable and experienced teaching staff and leadership team. Furthermore, the staff had positive experiences in a previous intervention and were keen to experiment with their practice.

Abbeyford Primary is located in a borough marked by significant socioeconomic deprivation, though the school is on a relatively more affluent edge of the borough and is attended also by pupils from a neighbouring authority. The majority of the pupils in the school come from white working-class backgrounds. While the school has until recently been among the higher achieving schools in the local authority, as reflected in standardised test scores, its position has slipped in the past few years. For example, Abbeyford was ranked 5th out of 35 schools in the 'league tables' comparing local schools in 2006, but 'fell' to 29th in 2009. School management

and teachers were under considerable pressure to reverse this downward trend and success in the standardised assessments task (SAT) tests and the upcoming governmental inspection was a major concern for all.

Data collection

From November 2008 to July 2009 we observed and audio and/or video-recorded 73 literacy lessons in a total of seven Year 5 and 6 classrooms. For each lesson we wrote detailed fieldnotes, which, together with the video data, formed the basis for discussion at weekly research team meetings. We conducted 15 interviews with 8 teachers, collected examples of lesson plans, pupil work and other artefacts and administered pupil classroom learning environment surveys. Finally, we facilitated and recorded 19 professional development workshops with the participating teachers, roughly half of which were devoted to planning units of work and half to collective reflection on recordings from the participants' classrooms. Preparation of extracts for these workshops required constant reviewing of recordings and fieldnotes to select focal issues and events, and transcription and micro-analysis of select episodes. Through this intense process of immersion in the classrooms and recordings we developed a good sense of the different cultures and teaching practices in each of the classrooms studied, including how we and other participants reacted to them. We developed expectations for each classroom, about which lessons were likely to 'press on relentlessly and even exhilaratingly' and which were likely to proceed more slowly 'towards their eventual conclusion' (see epigraph).

Systematic classroom observation of whole-class teaching in three classrooms

In order to investigate continuity and change in classroom interactional patterns we subjected a sub-set of lessons to computer-assisted systematic classroom observation. We sampled 10 lessons each from three teachers (i.e., 30 lessons in total). Two of the teachers, Ms Leigh and Mr Robbins, were from Year 5 classrooms and the third, Ms James, taught Year 6. All three had between 10 and 11 years teaching experience and all three had also been involved in the previous 'Teaching Through Dialogue' intervention.⁹ In selecting the 10 (out of 12 to 14) lessons for systematic analysis we chose the first and last lesson in each classroom and randomly selected the remaining 8 lessons from clusters distributed evenly across the period of observation.

Systematic classroom observation focused only on the whole-class teaching element of the literacy lessons (defined as a whole-class activity lasting longer than two minutes). This accounted for approximately 50% of the total duration of the lessons (i.e., 24 minutes of an average 48 minute lesson). For each whole-class segment we coded pedagogic activities and discourse moves by means of the systematic observation software, Noldus *Observer XT*,¹⁰ using a coding system adapted from that developed by Hardman and colleagues (2003a, 2003b; Smith

et al., 2004) (see Figure 1 for an overview of categories and codes).¹¹ We also used Hardman and colleagues' formula to calculate *pace*: the rate per hour of discourse moves in any given segment (i.e., total discourse moves divided by the total duration of the whole-class discussion).

The results of this systematic classroom observation highlighted differences between the three classrooms that were more or less in line with our experiences (in terms of preferred activity type and discourse style), with one exception: lesson pace. The classroom with the slowest pace—Ms Leigh's—was the one we had experienced as most brisk and riveting. We should also note that Ms Leigh was recognised as an outstanding teacher by her colleagues and stood out as highly effective in the headteacher's monitoring of pupil progress. This anomalous finding led to further, micro-analytic investigation of two contrastive cases drawn from the corpora of high paced and slow paced teaching.

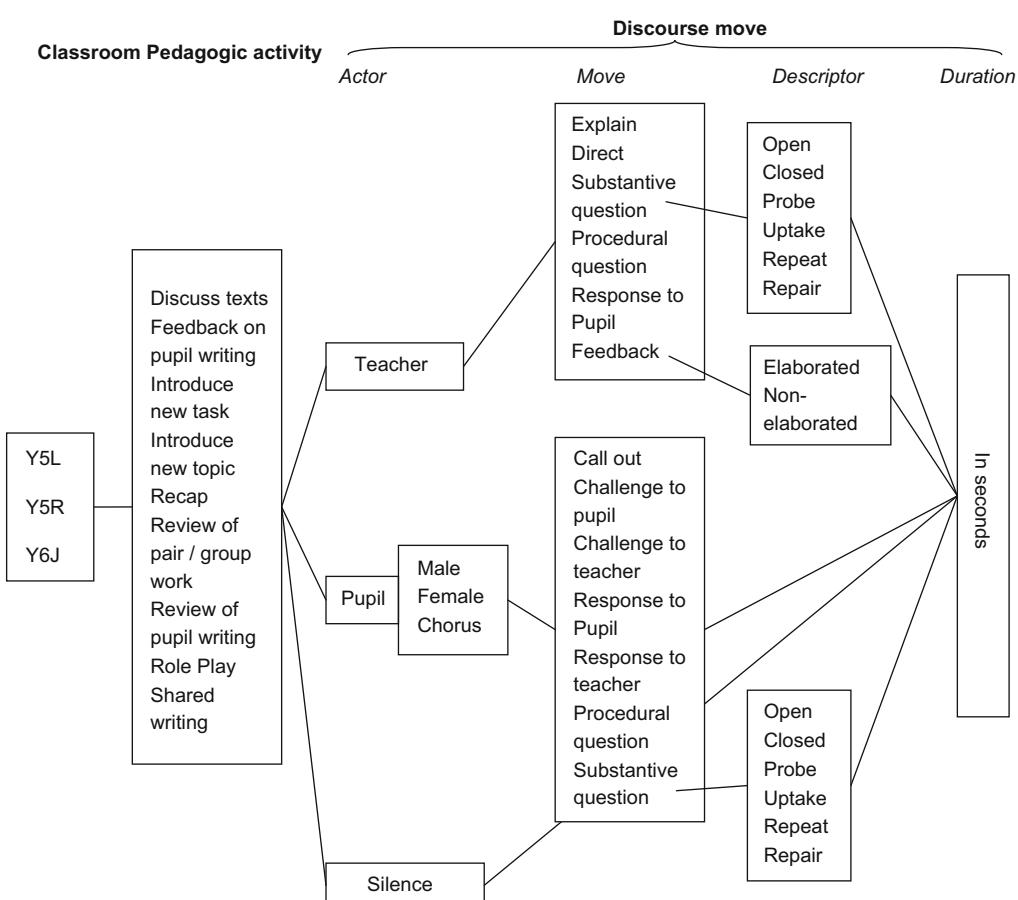


Figure 1. Systematic classroom observation categories and codes

Micro-analysis of contrastive episodes

In order to explore the qualitative differences between the two classrooms and their respective subjective paces, we identified two contrastive cases: the slowest episode from Ms Leigh's lesson corpus and the most rapid episode from the corpus of Ms James' lessons (based on systematic classroom observation). An episode is defined as a distinct activity within a given lesson and for the purpose of this analysis we ignored episodes with a duration of less than two minutes. Fortunately, the two episodes that emerged from this selection process were similar in terms of pedagogic activity (review of pupil writing) and lesson stage (conclusion).

Our analysis of these episodes was informed by linguistic ethnographic concepts and methods (see, e.g., Rampton, 2007; Tusting & Maybin, 2007). We repeatedly viewed and listened to the episodes and the lessons from which they were drawn, transcribed the episodes in detail and subjected select segments to line-by-line micro-analysis (see, e.g., Rampton, 2006). Throughout the process we attended in particular to our own subjective experience of pace and to other participants' embodied displays of involvement, attention and/or boredom. We also consulted fieldnotes and other recordings in checking the relevance of our analysis for the culture and practices in each teacher's classroom as captured in the rest of our data-set. Finally, we shared these episodes with numerous colleagues in order to explore their reactions, in particular with regard to questions of pace and engagement.

Findings

In the following section we summarise key findings from systematic observation of the lesson corpora and then from our micro-analysis of the contrastive episodes.

Lessons in Abbeyford Primary and in a national sample: systematic classroom observation

In this section we compare the classrooms in our sample to one another and to a national sample of literacy lessons collected by researchers at the University of Newcastle in 2001 (Hardman *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b). The aim of the Newcastle study was to investigate the impact of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (and, in particular, their focus on 'interactive whole class teaching') on the interaction and discourse styles of primary teachers working across a range of settings within England (Smith *et al.*, 2004). The national sample included 72 lessons divided equally between Reception, KS1 and KS2, of which 35 were in literacy and 37 numeracy. Of these lessons, 60% were taught by teachers categorised as 'highly effective', the remaining 40% by 'average teachers'.¹²

Findings regarding frequencies and rates of discourse moves (including overall pace) are summarised in Table 1. The numbers in the top half of the table show the 'rate' (i.e., number per hour) for teacher and pupil discourse moves. Rate is calculated as frequency per hour to make this data comparable to other studies

Table 1. Systematic observation of classroom interaction: summary of frequencies and rates

	Ms Leigh	Ms James	Mr Robbins	School average	National sample
Lessons sampled	10	10	10	30	35
Total whole-class teaching sampled (mins)	224	262	244	729	
Mean lesson duration (mins)	49	50	46	48	53
Mean whole-class teaching duration (mins)	22	26	24	24	32
Mean percentage whole-class teaching	45	52	52	50	60
RATE PER HOUR					
Teacher	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Explain	35	61	33	44	52
Direct	49	32	46	42	43
Open questions	20	16	18	16	22
Closed questions	30	24	36	34	13
Probe questions	38	31	26	27	50
Uptake questions	1	1	9	3	58
Repeat question	6	5	29	8	7
Repair question	5	4	33	11	14
Total questions	81	205	103	134	115
Challenge to pupil	2	3	1	1	2
Response to pupil	40	49	22		37
Elaborated feedback	42	6	6	5	13
Non-elaborated feedback	58	36	116	90	83
Total feedback	62	124	95	95	65

(Continued)

Table 1. (*Continued*)

	Ms Leigh	Ms James	Mr Robbins	School average	National sample
Pupil					
Call out	3	13	14	10	
Challenge to pupil	0	0	1	0	
Challenge to teacher	1	0	0	0	
Substantive question	5	5	14	8	
Response to pupil	11	2	20	11	
Total 'Spontaneous contribution'	21	19	49	30	10
Read aloud/pupil presentation	12	11	14	13	11
Response to Teacher	145	200	158	169	120
Choral response	19	52	15	24	9
Average duration (seconds)					
Pupil response to teacher	6	3	6	5	5
Pupil contribution (duration) (%)	32	23	41	32	25
PACE	498	772	578	623	469^a

Note: ^a This is the figure for 'highly effective' teachers; the measure for 'average' teachers was 414.

(including the national sample). If, for example, a teacher posed five open questions in 20 minutes of whole-class teaching, this would be reported as a rate per hour of 15. Rate is recorded for each individual teacher and for the school as a whole (i.e., the average for all three teachers) and this is compared with the averages reported by Hardman and colleagues for the 35 literacy lessons included in their national sample (Hardman *et al.*, 2003a; Smith *et al.*, 2004).¹³ The percentages to the left of ‘rate’ show each question type as a percentage of total questions posed.

The table shows a number of important differences among the Abbeyford teachers’ lessons and between them and the teachers in the national sample.¹⁴ Teachers at Abbeyford Primary asked fewer closed questions than the teachers in the national sample (34 versus 50%), instead posing more open questions (i.e., questions for which there is no single, predefined correct answer) and probe questions (where the teacher stays with the same pupil to extend their initial response).¹⁵ Pupil discourse accounted for a greater percentage of whole-class teaching time in Abbeyford lessons (32 compared to 25% in the national sample). Finally, the average pace of lessons in Abbeyford Primary was over 30% faster than in the national sample, 623 discourse moves per hour compared to 469 for ‘highly effective’ teachers (the measure for ‘average’ teachers was 414 moves per hour). At least part of this difference may be attributable to differences in methodology. In the Newcastle study, researchers coded discourse on a hand-held device while observing the lesson, in real time. In our study, discourse was coded retrospectively, based on video-recordings of the lessons, which facilitates greater thoroughness in capturing discourse moves (in fact, we often paused and replayed the video to double-check our coding).

More important for our purposes here are the differences among the Abbeyford Primary teachers, in particular the differences between Ms Leigh and Ms James’ lessons. There are substantial differences across just about every area measured: Ms James tends to pose more closed questions (35%), while Ms Leigh favours probe questions (38%); Ms James provides overwhelmingly non-elaborated feedback (94%), while Ms Leigh balances non-elaborated (58%) with elaborated (42%) feedback; pupils’ contributions in Ms James’ lessons are on average half as long as those in Ms Leigh’s lessons (3 versus 6 seconds). With regard to overall pace, Ms James’ lessons were considerably more brisk than those of Ms Leigh: a rate of 772 versus 498 discourse moves per hour, or 55% faster. Interestingly, the two classrooms also differed with regards to the relative consistency of pace: in 9 out of 10 of Ms James’ lessons average pace ranged between 710 and 920 moves per hour; in Ms Leigh’s lessons, average pace fluctuated greatly, between 170 and 620 moves per hour.¹⁶

As noted, we were surprised by the findings with regard to relative pace, so we began to look more closely at recordings of the two teachers’ lessons in order to understand what might make an ‘objectively’ fast-paced lesson *feel* slow, and vice-versa.

Analysis of contrastive episodes

In order to delve more deeply into the different paces of Ms James' and Ms Leigh's classrooms, and especially to explore the subjective experience of pace in them, we selected for close examination an episode from each (as explained above). In this section we first contrast these two episodes through a summary of rates and frequencies of discourse moves, then describe each episode in turn, analysing the factors that appear to influence the way pace is experienced in these two classrooms.

We should say at the outset that neither episode particularly grabbed our attention, nor did either particularly bore us. Both offer glimpses of routine classroom experience. They do not allow us to pinpoint the factors that determine the subjective experience of pace. Rather, we use these episodes to reflect on phenomena that were common in each of the classrooms' cultures and pedagogic practices and that are relevant to the different experiences of pace in them.

Contrasting episode rates and frequencies. Table 2 summarises the rates and frequencies of discourse moves in the two episodes, contrasting them with the averages for each teacher's lessons. Neither episode should be considered typical: there are no closed questions in either segment (as opposed to averages of between 30–35%) and both include a greater proportion of elaborated feedback (20% instead of an average of 6% for Ms James and 60% instead of an average of 42% for Ms Leigh). Ms Leigh's lesson is characterised by a much higher than average rate of pupil participation (53 instead of 32%) and by pupil utterances that are over three times longer than average for her lessons. But, of course, the point of our sampling was not to find typical episodes, but rather to identify contrastive cases. To this end, we chose segments for which the differences in pace were most pronounced; the episode from Ms James' lesson corpus is over three times faster than the episode from Ms Leigh's lesson and slightly more than double the average rate of the highly effective teachers in Hardman and colleagues' study.

What precisely does it mean that one episode was three times faster than the other? To what factors can this difference in 'pace' be attributed? One possibility is that participants spoke three times more rapidly in Episode 1. We checked this hypothesis by measuring the rate of words spoken, which was virtually identical in the two segments: 2.78 words per second in Episode 1 versus 2.80 words per second in Episode 2. Another possibility is that there were longer and more frequent lulls in the conversation in Episode 2. But this hypothesis must also be rejected: while there was one relatively long 8-second pause in Episode 2, overall pauses account for 3.68% of the duration of the Episode (compared to 3.26% of the time in Episode 1). Rather, it appears that the difference in pace is almost entirely attributable to utterance length, especially pupil utterances: in Episode 1 pupils' turns lasted 3 seconds on average, compared to 20 seconds in Episode 2. Which duration is optimal? That primarily depends, of course, on content and context, which we explore in the next sections.

Table 2. Contrasting the episodes: summary of frequencies and rates

	Ms James			Ms Leigh		
	Episode 1	Corpus average	Episode 2	Corpus average		
Duration (seconds)	183		382			
Number of discourse moves	48		29			
Pace (rate per hour)	946	772	273	498		
Teacher moves (rate per hour)		(%)	(%)	(%)		(%)
Open questions	118	33	29	14	19	25
Closed questions	0	0	71	35	0	0
Probe questions	118	33	34	17	47	63
Uptake questions	0	0	9	4	0	0
Repair/repeat question	118	33	62	30	9	13
Total questions	355		205		75	
Elaborated feedback	20	20	8	6	28	60
Non-elaborated feedback	79	80	116	94	19	40
Total feedback	99		124		47	
Pupil participation (% duration)	21		23		53	
Average duration of pupil moves	3		3		20	
						6

Episode 1 (Ms James' lesson). Episode 1 is taken from a lesson on persuasive writing in Ms James' Year 6 (i.e., age 10 to 11 years) class in June 2009. In a previous lesson, the pupils had written a letter to the local council, with the purpose of persuading the council to pick up the school's recycling, a service which had recently been terminated. In the first half of this lesson Ms James guided the pupils through a checklist of generic features characteristic of good persuasive writing (e.g. points backed up with evidence, good sentence openers, present tense). She then distributed a photocopy of a letter written by one member of the class, Sam, as an example of a good persuasive letter. The pupils analysed Sam's letter regarding these generic features, initially in pairs and then in whole-class discussion, following which the pupils evaluated their own and/or their partner's letter.

Episode 1 begins at the end of this lesson. Ms James stops the group work and calls upon several individuals to comment on their own or their partner's letter and, in particular, state what the pupil-writer might do to improve their work. Paul mentions that his partner Greta needs to add more connectives to her letter, Harley says that his partner Julie needs to put more evidence in her letter and Vanessa says that Tilly needs to use more persuasive words. In each case, Ms James probes the pupils' criticisms, explicitly drawing comparisons with Sam's letter and elaborating on what connectives, evidence and persuasive words entail. Ms James

concludes the episode (and lesson) by asking, ‘who feels that looking at Sam’s letter has really helped them to decide whether or not their letter is good or bad?’ She then gives the pupils another minute to work on their letters before packing up (see Appendix for full episode transcripts).

The episode is marked by a series of rapid exchanges of brief questions and responses. At one level the pace is brisk and business-like: focused on getting through the task at hand in a direct manner. However, it is precisely this business-like manner that slows down our experience of the episode. The pattern of questions is repetitive and predictable: ‘Whose text did you look at?’ ‘What do you want to say about it?’ ‘How was Sam’s text different?’. Likewise, the pupils offer stock answers, referring in each instance to previously identified generic features, which have been rehearsed throughout the lesson. One result of the focus on generic features, combined with the brevity of pupil responses, is that we (and other observers) receive practically no information about the texts under discussion. In effect, the original texts—pupils’ letters to the municipality—are replaced in conversation by labels such as ‘persuasive words’, ‘connectives’ and ‘evidence’. Since the importance of these generic features has already been established, there is no issue to engage our attention, no controversy, tension or puzzle to occupy our mind.

Ms James’ rapid and snappy questioning exhibits a sense of urgency. However, one paradoxical effect of this urgency is that in her urgency to push the lesson forward Ms James ends up doing the bulk of the work. So, for example, after Vanessa offers her criticism of Tilly’s letter (more persuasive words), Ms James asks the class, ‘Does anyone here feel that the person [whose text] they’re looking at has used some good persuasive words?’ Following a two-second pause, during which time no pupils volunteer, Ms James reminds the class of which words Sam used, and explains why persuasive words are important. A similar dynamic of pupils out-waiting their teacher develops in Extract 1, with Ms James’ probing of Harley’s criticism of Julie’s letter.

Extract 1. Putting evidence in

- 46 Ms James: anybody else like to make any comments
 47 ((*Harley raises his hand*))
 48 Ms James: Harley
 49 who’s are you looking at
 50 Harley: Julie’s
 51 Ms James: okay what do you want to say about Julie’s
 52 Harley erm she didn’t really put any evidence in
 53 Ms James: whereas Sam has put quite a bit of evidence in
 54 Julie:::
 55 (.)

56 didn't bother to use much of that
 57 so where's she getting all her points from then
 58 (4)
 59 Harley: er
 60 Ms James: she's made some points
 61 [but has she backed any of it up with evidence
 62 [(*Julie reaches across to point something out to*
 63 *Harley*)])
 64 Harley: erm (only one)
 65 Ms James: what's she said then
 66 Harley (xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)
 67 Ms James: so soon there'll be no space in landfills left
 68 okay
 69 but Sam has been mo::re (.)
 70 specific
 71 by saying- giving a time
 72 hasn't he
 73 from the facts that we sa:w on the board
 74 there was only about 14 years left
 75 Julie's not been specific enough
 76 would you agree that that's
 77 something you need to [improve
 78 Julie: [(*(nods*))]

Harley's criticism of Julie's letter is that 'she didn't really put any evidence in' (line 52). Ms James explicitly compares this feature of Julie's letter with Sam's letter, which was analysed in class (lines 53–56) and then asks Harley how Julie supported her argument in the absence of evidence, 'so where's she getting all her points from then?' Following this question there is an uncharacteristically long four second pause (line 58), after which Ms James revises her line of questioning. 'She's made some points', Ms James says, 'but has she backed any of it up with evidence?' (lines 60–61). By summarising Julie's argument by saying, 'she's made some points', Ms James in effect retracts her previous question about what these points were based upon. Her new question, 'Has she backed any of it up with evidence?' is an invitation to Harley to repeat his original criticism (cf. line 52). At this point, however, Julie directs Harley's attention to evidence she did include in her letter (lines 62–63), which Harley then repeats (line 66).¹⁷ Finally, Ms James takes it upon herself to elaborate the differences between the quality of the evidence in Sam and Julie's letter and why the former is superior.

In our discussions with her, Ms James frequently complained about her class's lack of cooperation in whole class discussions, which she attributed to low ability and/or reticence to speak up in front of the group. In light of these comments and our analysis of Episode 1 (and similar episodes), we suggest that the culture of Ms James' classroom involves a positive feedback loop in which pupils' hesitation to respond encourages Ms James to both lower the cognitive demands of her questions and also do the bulk of the work of answering and elaborating herself. This dynamic is represented graphically in Figure 2. Important implications of this dynamic are low stakes for participating pupils (i.e. it doesn't really matter if you answer Ms James' questions or not), a low level of tension in classroom discussions and limited meaningful content for observers to engage with.

Episode 2 (Ms Leigh's lesson). Episode 2 is taken from a lesson on story writing filmed in Ms Leigh's Year 5 (i.e., age 9 to 10 years) class in January 2009. Earlier in the week of this lesson, pupils wrote a first draft of a 'timed story' (written under conditions of limited time to simulate the national tests), which Ms Leigh assessed, providing pupils with their assessment levels and targets for improvement. The pupils then rewrote their stories. In this lesson, the pupils are tasked with working together with a partner to highlight the changes between their first and second draft and to discuss in what way these changes improved their story. Ms Leigh tells the pupils that at the end of this task she will call on five pairs to report back to the class and thus everyone should be prepared to say something. Episode 2 takes place after this task and involves Ms Leigh's elicitation and probing of pupils' reports on how they have improved their stories.

The episode includes four exchanges. First, Gina describes the plot of her story at length (1 minute, 16 seconds). Ms Leigh asks her how she improved her story, and Gina explains that she didn't actually make it up to the section relevant to her

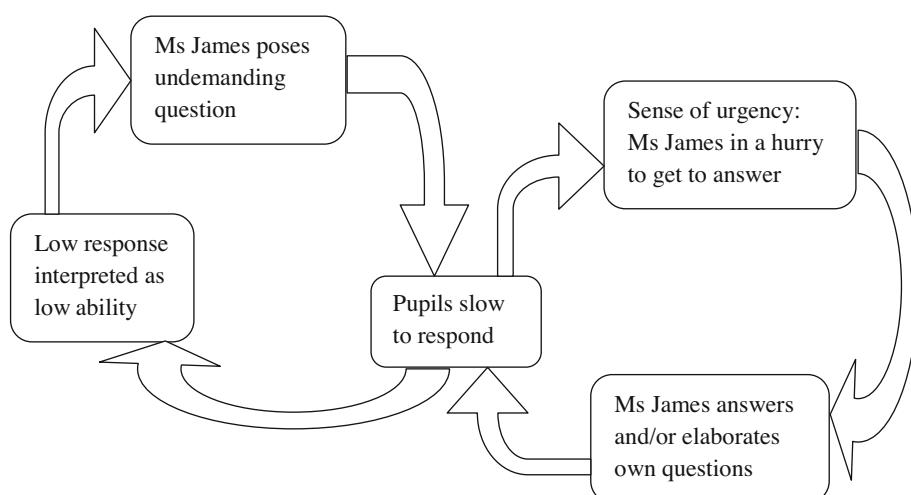


Figure 2. Relations between Ms James' sense of urgency and the class's slow response

target of starting a new line when a new person speaks. Second, Carl tells how ‘instead of using “and” all the time to link [his] ideas, [he] used loads of different connectives’ and made his story “a lot more interesting”. Ms Leigh probes Carl at length (1 minute, 29 seconds), asking how he achieved this improvement and requesting concrete examples. She follows up Carl’s example of how he described the intensification of a snow storm with a dramatic retelling of a similar example from a book she read the previous night (see extract 2 below). Third, Gavin comments on how he ‘kind of lost track’ when reading the first version of Carl’s story, but ‘really got into it’ in the second version. Again, Ms Leigh probes this comment, asking what was different in the second story. Finally, Ms Leigh returns to Carl and asks, ‘So what are you going to do for your next story that’s going to make Gavin go, “I’m well into your story”?’

We were struck by a number of key differences between the two episodes. First, Ms Leigh’s elicitations were minimally restrictive—e.g. ‘Your story, tell me about it’, ‘How?’ and ‘Give us an example’ (compare these with questions in Episode 1, such as ‘Where’s she getting all her points from then?’ ‘What’s she said then?’ ‘Has she backed any of it up with evidence?’). And, indeed, the less restrictive elicitations were often followed by extended pupil responses. Second, the stakes for pupils in this episode were higher: answers counted and no answer went unchallenged. Third, while Ms James projected urgency, Ms Leigh projected patience: she tolerated long answers, lengthy pauses (e.g. waiting 11 seconds for Carl to answer one of her challenges) and going ‘off-script’ (e.g. her own recounting of a scene she read the previous evening). Fourth, discourse in the episode was much more coherent: utterances responded to and built upon the previous ideas (e.g. Gavin’s comment regarding Carl’s story). Finally, in addition to eliciting and probing pupils’ answers, Ms Leigh also told them a story—more precisely, she performed the story dramatically for them. This performance is transcribed in Extract 2.

Extract 2. ‘That’s what keeps the interest in the story’

- 118 Ms Leigh: excellent
 119 well done
 120 so you could see it building up
 121 and that helps when you’re a reader
 122 because it means it builds up the tension
 123 last night I was reading a book
 124 and there was a man who was trying to find his wife who’d been
 125 kidnapped and his child was with him as well
 126 and he had to go into this cellar
 127 and he could have just said

- 128 ((*acts out the actions as she says them*))
129 that he went down into the cellar
130 opened the door
131 walked along
132 and found them in the corner
133 but the book-
134 I couldn't sleep last night
135 and my heart was pounding so hard
136 I was terrified
137 ((*acts out the actions as she says them*))
138 he opened the door (.)
139 it was dark (.)
140 he took his first step down (.)
141 and there was a drip drip drip
142 [he couldn't hear any humans breathing
143 William: [(xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)]
144 Ms Leigh: he took another step down
145 and a scuttling in the corner
146 bravely he stepped further into the inky darkness
147 Anon: ahhhh
148 Ms Leigh: he could see a shadow scuttling around in the corner
149 was it a human
150 was it-
151 Anon: (xx[xxx])
152 Ms Leigh: [(xxxx)]
153 as he stepped down and suddenly
154 behind him
155 he could hear
156 ((*whispered*)) steps (.)
157 and what happened in this story was that he got trapped
158 inside the cellar
159 with his wife and his child
160 but- the way it was described yesterday was so: exciting
161 my heart was going so quickly
162 because it slowed down the action
163 it gives you that atmosphere
164 the pace to your writing

165 so you doing that
 166 and saying
 167 slowly the storm built
 168 the sky darkened
 169 the (air) felt heavier
 170 everyone began to worry
 171 it builds up the action
 172 it makes the reader think
 173 what's going to happen next
 174 and that's what keeps the interest in the story
 175 Gavin we're going to make you the last one
 176 sorry I haven't had chance to speak to everyone

The transcript cannot do justice to Ms Leigh's use of movement and voice to enliven her retelling and the positive effect of her dramatic performance on pupil engagement. Ms Leigh's 'breakthrough to performance' (cf. Hymes, 1975) occurs in lines 134–138. First, she comments on her own response to the story—'couldn't sleep...heart was pounding...I was terrified'—thereby offering to her classroom audience a frame for listening to the story. Next, she slows down her delivery, lowers her voice and acts out the actions as she performs them. Many of the pupils respond enthusiastically. Pupil engagement peaks during this performance, though Ms Leigh has 'slowed' down the lesson—literally, by talking more slowly and at length and also by deviating from the announced lesson plan.

Discussion and conclusion

We opened this article with the observation that English education policy-makers have targeted classroom time as a key area for regulation and intervention and that 'brisk pace' has become widely accepted as an element of good teaching practice. We noted that accelerating pedagogic pace has been justified primarily on the grounds of efficiency (maximising pupil time on task and exposure to curriculum) and pupil interest (faster lessons are presumed to be more engaging) and suggested that underlying calls for faster pace are concerns about alleged teacher complacency. We cited Smith and colleagues' (2004) study that showed that highly effective teachers maintain a faster pace than average teachers and also noted research and pedagogical traditions that problematise the equation of fast pace and good pedagogy. Finally, we critiqued a unitary conception of pace that conflates interactive, cognitive and learning pace and argued that objectively measured pace may not coincide with pace as subjectively experienced.

We explored and elaborated these ideas through empirical investigation of pace in a study of classroom discourse in Key Stage 2 literacy lessons in an East London school. Systematic observation of a sample of 30 lessons from three

teachers' classrooms produced an incongruous finding: the lessons we had experienced as fast-paced were rated objectively as slowest, and vice-versa. In order to better understand this anomaly, we selected for contrastive micro-analysis the fastest and slowest episodes in the corpus. Examination of the systematic observation data showed that the measure of 'pace' for these episodes primarily reflected differences in utterance length (rather than, for example, rate of speech). Key issues that emerged in the contrastive analysis of subjective experience of pace in the two episodes include the following:

- *Predictability*: the predictable pattern of questioning and prevalence of stock answers were a key factor in slowing down our experience of Episode 1. In contrast, in Episode 2, Ms Leigh posed less restrictive questions and deviated from her previously announced lesson script.
- *Stakes*: in Episode 1 the stakes for pupils were relatively low: answers were rarely challenged and, in the one case in which Ms James did probe a pupil response, she rescinded her question when a response was slow to arrive. Pupil responses in Episode 2 were more consequential: Ms Leigh challenged most answers and gave ample time for pupils to formulate and express their ideas.
- *Meaning*: the brevity of pupil responses and the emphasis on generic features in Episode 1 led to a disappearance of the texts being discussed and as such very little content to engage participants' attention. Episode 2 exhibited greater coherence, with contributions building on one another to construct a meaningful and coherent line of enquiry.
- *Dramatic performance*: in Episode 2 Ms Leigh told a story, engaging pupils' attention through dramatic performance.

Such were the key factors contributing to subjective experience of pace in these two episodes. These factors will not necessarily be salient in other classroom cultures: there are clearly many more ways to speed up or slow down subjective lesson pace. The key point that emerges from this contrast is that the experience of pace is rooted in the meaningful content of the conversation, including the extent to which this content is new and/or surprising to participants, if and how the conversation matters and how participants treat one another's contributions. At their extremes, objective and subjective pace may be inversely related: meaningful and important content requires us to slow down in order to attend and think; less consequential ideas require that we speed up, to get through the material as quickly as possible.

This hypothesis may help explain Smith and colleagues' (2004) finding that 'highly effective' teachers display a faster pace than average teachers. Recall that this difference in pace was the only significant difference between the two groups of teachers, both of whom 'spent the majority of their time either explaining or using highly structured question and answer sequences. Far from encouraging and extending pupil contributions to promote higher levels of interaction and cognitive

engagement, most of the questions asked were of a low cognitive level designed to funnel pupils' response towards a required answer' (p. 408). Given such pedagogy, a brisk pace makes sense—no reason to slow down to ponder questions that are designed to funnel responses toward a required answer. Moreover, perhaps the faster pace leads to greater curricular coverage (all other factors remaining equal). But it makes little sense to advocate faster pace across the board, *a la* Ofsted or the NLS, or to indirectly promote the sort of pedagogical practices that are aligned with such a fast pace. There is an important lesson here not only about pace, but about the conservative nature of designs for researching the effectiveness of teaching strategies that treat dominant pedagogic contexts as given. Teaching strategies are always embedded in pedagogic cultures, upon which their success depends. By testing the effectiveness of such strategies, without reference to their broader contexts, researchers limit the potential scope of their findings and bias their studies in favour of innovations that work within status quo classroom cultures and pedagogic frameworks.

Finally, it is worth emphasising the perverse effects of government calls for urgency and fast pace on the classrooms studied. Ms James internalised these pressures, which were amplified by SATs tests that her Year 6 class had just sat, and they were at the root of the problematic dynamic speeding up her teaching in a way that slowed down our experience of it. Ms Leigh, on the other hand, who taught in a non-externally tested year group and enjoyed a relatively privileged position in the school, was to a certain extent less exposed to these pressures.

This article arose from an attempt to make sense of counter-intuitive findings about pace in our classroom interaction data. The more we delved into the topic, the more uneasy we became with how pedagogical pace has been conceptualised, measured and regulated. Hence, the thrust of the article has been to critique current, problematic approaches to pace. In concluding the article, we would like to emphasise that we remain convinced that time is a critical dimension of classroom life and that pace is consequential for engagement, curriculum and learning. It is precisely because of pace's importance that we need more sophisticated ways of talking about, studying and supporting it.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Schagen and Weston's (1998) factor analysis of issues in a data-base of Inspection Reports, which includes, under the 'Teaching and Lessons' category, the following topics: 'lesson content and activities; challenge, pace and motivation; objectives for lessons; progress of pupils' learning'.
2. Pace is not mentioned in the 2007 report.
3. Reynolds and colleagues (1996) boasted that 'the Labour Party will fight the next General Election on a policy platform explicitly based upon the insights of effectiveness knowledge'. Reynolds was personally involved in policy design as member and Chair, respectively, of the Literacy and Numeracy Task Forces; one of the other authors of that article, Michael Barber, was the Chair of the Literacy Task Force and first Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit in the Department for Education and Skills.
4. Beard (2003) specifically cites Scheerens (1992) as having informed the work of the National Literacy Project. Also relevant here, though only marginally discussed in School Effectiveness work, is US research on instructional time, engaged time and academic learning time (see Berliner [1990] for a review).
5. Note that the Beard review of the NLS evidence base was composed after publication of the NLS Framework *Success for all* justified fast pace as important vis-a-vis efficiency (time is limited, every minute counts), motivation (avoiding boredom) and opportunities for varying the modes of learning (thereby responding to different learning needs and styles). It is worth noting that *Success for all* emphasises fast pace primarily vis-a-vis early reading; the NLS adopted the emphasis for all aspects of literacy teaching (based on personal communication with Don Peurach. For an in-depth study of *Success for all* see Peurach, 2011)
6. It is not coincidence that we are drawn to Alexander's categories in seeking to problematise the official, unitary approach to pace. Alexander's comparative study of pedagogy and culture includes a critique of the comparative methodology of the international school effectiveness research that informed the NLS and related policies (see above), and his framework for re-thinking the notion of pace responds directly to the one-dimensional approach taken by the NLS and Ofsted during that period (Alexander 2001, 418–426). By situating pedagogy within cultural and historical contexts, Alexander highlights the impossibility of selective 'borrowing' of distinct and decontextualised pedagogic practices.
7. The example of waiting for a train is taken from Heidegger (1995), to which this discussion of time and boredom is indebted more generally. See also Erickson (2004) on *chronos* and *kairos* and Breidenstein (2007) on the ubiquity of boredom in classrooms and why it is such an under-researched phenomenon.
8. Further elaboration on the study and its methods may be found in Lefstein and Snell (2011a, 2011b, 2011c).
9. Selection of the teachers was based upon these issues and by technical considerations regarding completeness of the data-set of other teachers' lessons.
10. See Snell (2011) for a review of this software package and discussion of methodological issues arising.
11. Further details regarding data collection, coding category definitions and main findings may be found at Snell and Lefstein (2011).
12. This measure of 'effectiveness' was calculated using Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data provided by the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management (CEM) Centre at Durham University.
13. Hardman and colleagues do not distinguish between Reception, KS1 and KS2 or between 'effective' versus 'average' teachers for the sub-sample of literacy lessons. This distinction is made only for the corpus as a whole (i.e., all 72 lessons).
14. Note that there is not a one-to-one correlation between the categories adopted in our analysis and those used in the Newcastle study. For example, we added to the Newcastle categories

- differentiations between elaborated and non-elaborated feedback and between various forms of pupil spontaneous contribution. Further, we introduced a new category, 'response to pupil', that was used to code teacher responses to pupil questions and other discourse moves that did not neatly fit into other categories (e.g. statements which were neither 'explain' nor 'feedback') and that tended to fall outside of the canonical Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) cycle.
15. The proportion of open questions in both sets of data represents a considerable increase on the findings of the earlier ORACLE 1976 study, where open questions formed only 5% of all questioning (Galton *et al.*, 1980, p. 87) and of the follow-up study in which 12.8% of questions asked in English lessons were open (Galton *et al.*, 1999, p. 74).
 16. One of Ms James' lessons was an outlier, with an average pace of 500 moves per hour. In our fieldnotes from this lesson we note: 'Ms James tries some of the ideas we discussed in the planning meeting—notably, the discussion of whether the sample text provided by the Borough is a good piece of writing—but the pupils are generally unwilling to cooperate with this line of questioning, though they are more forthcoming vis-à-vis more traditional questions and tasks (e.g. to highlight the generic features in a text). Afterwards Ms James is very frustrated by the lesson and the pupils' participation in it.'
 17. We cannot know for certain what Julie pointed out to Harley, and what Harley said in line 66; our interpretation here is based on how Harley responded to Julie and on Ms James' response to Harley.

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Appendix. Full episode transcripts

Episode 1 (lesson in Ms James' Year 6 classroom)

1 Ms James: can I just erm
 2 stop you for a moment
 3 you carry on writing
 4 can I just erm stop you for a moment
 5 I'm over here this time
 6 ((pupils turn around to face the teacher))
 7 Ms James: ((waves))
 8 would anybody like to just make a comment about the:
 9 one of the letters that they've got in front of them
 10 at the moment
 11 anybody like to just say something
 12 about the letter that they're writing
 13 [(if not I will give you some more)
 14 [(*(Paul puts his hand up)*)
 15 Ms James: right Paul who's are you looking at
 16 Paul: Greta's
 17 okay so what do- what do you want to say about Greta's
 18 Paul: needs a bit more connectives
 19 Ms James: needs
 20 some mo::re
 21 Paul: connectives
 22 Ms James: connectives
 23 does Greta start her sentences off
 24 the same way a:s Sam did
 25 Paul: sometimes
 26 Ms James: sometimes
 27 is she using connectives within her paragraphs
 28 Paul: (xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)
 29 Ms James: started off with
 30 Paul: the children
 31 Ms James: the children
 32 okay
 33 which do you think is more effective then
 34 the children
 35 o:r
 36 in addition
 37 furthermore
 38 naturally I feel
 39 Paul: Sam's
 40 Ms James: you think Sam's one is a little but more effective
 41 would you agree with that Greta

42 Greta ((nods))
 43 Ms James: so your openings to your paragraphs
 44 so your sentence openers there
 45 okay
 46 anybody else like to make any comments
 47 ((*Harley raises his hand*))
 48 Harley
 49 who's are you looking at
 50 Harley: Julie's
 51 Ms James: okay what do you want to say about Julie's
 52 Harley erm she didn't really put any evidence in
 53 Ms James: whereas Sam has put quite a bit of evidence in
 54 Julie:::
 55 (.)
 56 didn't bother to use much of that
 57 so where's she getting all her points from then
 58 (4)
 59 Harley: er
 60 Ms James: she's made some points
 61 [but has she backed any of it up with evidence
 62 [(*Julie reaches across to point something out to*
Harley))
 63 Harley: erm (only one)
 64 Ms James: what's she said then
 65 Harley (xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)
 66 Ms James: so soon there'll be no space in landfills left
 67 okay
 68 but Sam has been mo::re (.)
 69 specific
 70 by saying- giving a time
 71 hasn't he
 72 from the facts that we sa:w on the board
 73 there was only about 14 years left
 74 Julie's not been specific enough
 75 would you agree that that's
 76 something you need to [improve
 77 Julie: ((nods))
 78 Ms James: okay [anybody else
 79 ((*Vanessa raises her hand*))
 80 Vanessa
 81 Ms James: erm I think she needs to put more erm (.)
 82 Vanessa: persuasive words in
 83

84 Ms James: Tilly [needs to use more persuasive words
85 Vanessa: [(*nods*)
86 Ms James: okay
87 does anyone here feel that the person they're looking
88 at has used some good persuasive words
89 (2)
90 like Sam had shocking
91 it would be a sensible idea
92 I'm concerned
93 (.)
94 is that something we're lacking a little bit
95 have we all got the evidence
96 but we're not being persuasive (.) enough
97 if you were writing an advert
98 a persuasive advert
99 you'd be getting the people in
100 you'd be trying to hook them in
101 wouldn't you
102 with the language that you're using
103 okay
104 now who feels that looking at Sam's letter
105 has really helped them too:
106 decide whether or not their letter is:
107 good or bad
108 who thinks this has been a help
109 ((*most pupils raise their hands*))
110 Ms James: okay
111 right you defin-
112 you said it was David
113 didn't you
114 you said you thought that this was a big big big help
115 I-
116 you've had a chance to see a letter
117 which might have been better than yours
118 or not so good as your- as yours
119 now we're just going to continue for another minute
120 before we put our books away
121 so you've got another minute everybody
122 and then we'll be packing up

Episode 2 (lesson in Ms Leigh's Year 5 classroom)

1 Ms Leigh: So::
 2 I said you all had to be prepared
 3 to be able to give me an answer to my questions
 4 now let's see
 5 (.)
 6 Gina
 7 (.)
 8 your story
 9 tell me about it
 10 Gina: erm
 11 well in my first one
 12 I done erm
 13 about er a young girl
 14 that erm found a:
 15 weather machine
 16 and erm (.)
 17 she erm dropped it
 18 when she was running about because she was so excited
 19 and erm
 20 when she dropped it it turned on
 21 and she erm
 22 and suddenly it turned into a big electrical storm
 23 and erm
 24 she erm (.)
 25 she tried to stop it but she couldn't
 26 so she erm told her nan
 27 and her nan had magical powers
 28 and erm she-
 29 she erm made it stop the electrical storm
 30 but erm but-
 31 once she'd stopped the electrical t- storm
 32 it turned back the time and she started the day again
 33 and erm (.)
 34 sh-
 35 erm the the young girl like was really forgiving
 36 and erm said that she was so so sorry
 37 and erm she learnt her lesson
 38 so she said that erm-
 39 erm-
 40 she would never ever do it again
 41 Ms Leigh: okay
 42 Gina: and she really was sorry
 43 Ms Leigh: so what improved in your story

44 Gina: erm I-
45 my target was that-
46 to: erm start a new line when a new person speaks
47 erm- I've erm-
48 done that and-
49 but the thing is
50 I haven't-
51 because I haven't got up to the bit erm
52 that I was supposed to
53 I didn't describe it as much
54 but I added a bit more on so-
55 erm like I was going to describe it after
56 Ms Leigh: okay
57 thank you
58 who got a good improvement
59 from their first to their second
60 think about your first score
61 think about your second score
62 who got a good improvement
63 Carl you were straight away there
64 Carl:
65 Ms Leigh: tell us what you did differently
66 Carl: well instead of using and all the time to link my ideas
67 erm
68 I used loads of different connectives
69 and like made it a lot more interesting
70 Ms Leigh: how
71 Carl:
72 instead o:f
73 just going from one idea to another
74 erm- I did it
75 I did the one idea
76 and then st-
77 and then I carried that idea on
78 and then I changed it- like slowly
79 instead of going from one idea to another
80 Ms Leigh: how
81 (3)

82 Ms Leigh: what did you-
83 you stood there with your-
84 you sat there with your piece of paper you went
85 right
86 first of all
87 they did this this this and this
88 so when you came to write it the second time
89 you were writing writing writing
90 what words o:r grammar o:r (.) punctuation or-
91 how did you actually make-
92 what did you do to make it more detailed
93 did you give me more adjectives
94 did you give me a simile
95 did you add in some new action
96 that you didn't have before
97 Carl: I added in some new action
98 I give more similes
99 and I had a lot more adjectives
100 Ms Leigh: and so can you give me an examples
101 of some of the words that you chose
102 that were a bit better this time
103 that actually helped to improve
104 how much detail you could put into your story
105 (3)
106 Carl: erm
107 (8)((Carl looks through his story))
108 Carl: well when I did the snow st-
109 when I was sat talking about the snow storm
110 I sai-
111 erm one of the-
112 I di-
113 in the old one
114 the person said that the snow storm was coming
115 and in the new one
116 I did it-
117 it was getting heavier and heavier

- 118 Ms Leigh: excellent
119 well done
120 so you could see it building up
121 and that helps when you're a reader
122 because it means it builds up the tension
123 last night I was reading a book
124 and there was a man who was trying to find his wife who'd been
125 kidnapped and his child was with him as well
126 and he had to go into this cellar
127 and he could have just said
128 ((acts out the actions as she says them))
129 that he went down into the cellar
130 opened the door
131 walked along
132 and found them in the corner
133 but the book-
134 I couldn't sleep last night
135 and my heart was pounding so hard
136 I was terrified
137 ((acts out the actions as she says them))
138 he opened the door (.)
139 it was dark (.)
140 he took his first step down (.)
141 and there was a drip drip drip
142 [he couldn't hear any humans breathing
143 William:
144 Ms Leigh: [(xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)]
145 he took another step down
146 and a scuttling in the corner
147 Anon:
148 Ms Leigh: bravely he stepped further into the inky darkness
149 ahhhh
150 he could see a shadow scuttling around in the corner
151 Anon: was it a human
was it-
(xx[xxx])

- 152 Ms Leigh: [(xxxx)]
 153 as he stepped down and suddenly
 154 behind him
 155 he could hear
 156 ((whispered)) steps (.)
 157 and what happened in this story was that he got trapped
 158 inside the cellar
 159 with his wife and his child
 160 but- the way it was described yesterday was so: exciting
 161 my heart was going so quickly
 162 because it slowed down the action
 163 it gives you that atmosphere
 164 the pace to your writing
 165 so you doing that
 166 and saying
 167 slowly the storm built
 168 the sky darkened
 169 the (air) felt heavier
 170 everyone began to worry
 171 it builds up the action
 172 it makes the reader think
 173 what's going to happen next
 174 and that's what keeps the interest in the story
 175 Gavin we're going to make you the last one
 176 sorry I haven't had chance to speak to everyone
 177 Gavin:
 178 I've got something to like say about Carl's story
 179 because the first one I kind of lost track
 180 like-
 181 Ms Leigh: [(*(nods)*)
 182 Gavin:
 183 but the second one I really got into it
 184 like (I want to know what happens next)
 185 Ms Leigh:
 186 what do you think he did differently
 187 that made you so engaged with his writing
 188 Gavin:
 189 it was like the words he used and that
 190 and he didn't actually like give it away
 191 Ms Leigh:
 192 (that the storm was coming)
 193 so it's that build up again
 194 so do you understand why- what the difference is
 195 Carl:
 196 Ms Leigh:
 197 so if you understand you should be able to tell me
 198 in your next story what you're going to do
 199 so what are you going to do for your next story
 200 that's going to make Gavin go
 201 "I'm well into your story"

196 Carl: well I'm going to make it more interesting
 197 make it so you want to read on
 198 and do it
 199 so if-
 200 make it like I did with the snow storm
 201 where it gets-
 202 like really slows you up
 203 like you were saying
 204 the sky gets dark quicker
 205 like the sky gets darker
 206 erm
 207 the air gets thicker
 208 Ms Leigh: yep
 209 brilliant
 210 that's all I wanted to you to be able get out of
 211 this week's worth of writing
 212 what are you going to do differently
 213 we are going to have so stop there
 214 because it's time to go to dinner

Transcription notations:

(xxxxxx)	Talk indecipherable
(text)	Transcription uncertainty
(.)	Brief pause (under one second)
(1)	Longer pause (number indicates length to nearest second)
(())	Description of prosody or non-verbal activity
[Overlapping talk or action
[
text	Emphasised relative to surrounding talk (underlined words)
te:xt	Stretched sounds
sh-	Word cut off