

Student group work has held long-accepted importance in classroom organisation and pedagogical design as contributing to learning, participation and social engagement. Over decades, the study of student group activity has sought to show how learning is produced, displayed, and negotiated through social interaction.

This paper presents research focussing on how students in their group activity manage and produce learning-centred talk without teacher presence. Using Conversation Analysis (CA), the paper seeks to identify the interactional resources employed by students, addressing the taken-for-granted nature of how talk works to accomplish small group activity. To do this, these main research questions are addressed:

- What interactional resources do students employ in small group activity when the teacher is not present?
- How do student-student interactions in small group discussions influence the accomplishment of group activity? and
- In what ways do student managed interactions orient to and enhance individual and collective meaning-making in small group activity?

This qualitative study was conducted in six middle primary classrooms in three primary schools in rural New South Wales. Video and audio recordings and researcher field notes were gathered as primary data, and included a total of 80 recorded observations of student-only interactions in literacy focused group tasks. Recordings were viewed, catalogued and selectively transcribed using the Jefferson transcription notation system, commonly used in CA.

Students were found to use talk to propose ideas, seek clarification, challenge or build on others' contributions, and manage participation, with CA showing the details of how this was managed through various multi-modal interactional moves including (i) negotiating dispute; (ii) providing and soliciting three forms of feedback; and (iii) using a range of approaches to reorient to and reengage with the set task. Findings of this study suggest that students can successfully accomplish and make meaning in their small group activity independently of the teacher.