Professional learning

Language-based learning in early childhood and teacher interactions

Response to a picture book

Read the following classroom transcript and answer the questions below.

T: Well now, here is another picture. Now what do you think this is a picture about? Have a look at it.

Ps: A bus.

T: Yes, it’s a picture of a bus. All right, well, who do you think is going to catch the bus? Who’s catching that bus?

Ps: Kindies.

T: You think it might be kindies. What about you Tony?

Tony: Um . . . school [?girls].

T: You think it could be a school bus. I think it could be too. Have a good look at it. What do you think Kim?

Kim: I think it’s a preschool.

T: You think it could be a preschool. Might be preschool. What about you Verity?

Verity: First class.

T: First class and what do you think about it Jennie?

Jennie: [? I think it’s a preschool].

T: You think it’s a preschool. Well who can tell me something about the picture?

Ps: Me.

T: Tell me all the things you can see in it. Right . . . Len?

Len: People.

T: You can see people in the picture. Yes, Steve?
Steve: [I can see wheels] in the picture.

T: I didn’t hear you Steve. Can you call out a little bit louder?

Steve: Wheels.

T: Yes, there’s wheels, wheels on the bus, aren’t there? *(Some pupils are amused.)*

Pupil 1: If there weren’t any wheels on the bus, it would go bang. *(Thumps his fist in his hand).*

P 2: I know.

T: It certainly would. It wouldn’t be able to drive along the street. Terry?

*(R. Hasan, 1987)*

**Questions**

- What types of information are the teacher’s questions trying to elicit:

  factual, descriptive details about the picture

  or

  inferences and opinions about what’s happening in the picture?

- How do you know this from the teacher’s language, that is, the questions she asks?

- Why do you think the teacher guides the discussion in this way? What might be the pedagogical goals of this activity?