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The ontology of authority: a theory of "language in use" in classroom management

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THE ONTOLOGY OF AUTHORITY:
A THEORY OF "LANGUAGE IN USE"
IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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To my wife Kate who has been long suffering and can now begin her own study after a ten year wait.

To Terry, Joy, Heather, Dick and Maxine who shared not only their time, effort and classrooms but themselves.
The aims of this study were twofold. They were:
• to illuminate the nature and role of language use that five teachers employed in their particular approach to classroom management.
• as a consequence of delineating this 'language in use', to develop a 'grounded theory' of classroom management which had been honed and polished in the real world of classroom practice.

Based in the naturalistic paradigm, this study utilised the hermeneutic-dialectic process as the primary methodological mode of inquiry. Beginning initially with the classic notion of participant observation, the hermeneutic-dialectic process provided the qualitative distillation mechanism whereby the intersubjective meanings of the respondents' language use in specific contexts could be constructed, and then reconstructed to form an interrelated whole.

Grounded in the data, a theory of classroom management emerged in which language was the key instrument of classroom management for these particular teachers. This thesis describes how language use provided the means by which a genuine relationship was formed between the teachers and pupils. This process has been depicted in diagrammatic form and described in detail.

This thesis concludes with a series of implications and recommendations for teachers, teacher training institutions and school administrators based on the principles emerging from this theory.
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