Talking about Books in the Classroom: When Literary Reading Education Becomes a Shared, Social and Interactively-Lived Experience[*]

Rosa Pugliese[**]

Abstract

This study explores book talk and the storytelling occurring in it, among alternative formats to mainstream literary reading education. Drawing on Conversation-Analytical research on classroom interaction, it examines how this format is realized in a middle school classroom. After an overview of research on book talk and a description of the setting and organization of the book-talk sessions under study, we identify three structural components of the latter – pre-telling; telling of the story; suspension of the story's ending, as a key feature of the book talk – and scrutinize how these are interactionally accomplished by participants. The analysis shows how pupils manage their double role, as tellers and whole-class audience's members, in the frame of an instructional format that the teacher sites midway between an open and informal and a more constrained one. While offering some insights into literary education for children and youth, the study also adds to the ways storytelling in institutional settings may differ from that in everyday conversations.

Keywords: *children and youth's literary reading education; classroom interaction; book talk; storytelling; suspension of story ending.*

C'est à plusieurs qu'on apprend à lire tout seul.
(AFL-Association Française pour la Lecture)

In più, pensando alle conversazioni, ci si accorge che quello è il luogo dell'apprendimento a narrare, proprio perché si impara a dialogare con gli altri, a sentire la lingua come un dialogo con gli altri.
(Gianni Celati, Conversazioni del vento volatore, 2001)

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** University of Bologna, Italy.

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1. Introduction

In one of her blog pages on literary reading, an Italian middle school teacher argues for the "need to teach children to talk about books, to share doubts, to search for meanings, to negotiate interpretations, to re-create their own world through their readings" (Pognante, 2017). While reminiscent of pleas for direct contact with literary texts, as opposed to the traditional school forms of literature transmission being called into question for pedagogical, scientific and sociocultural reasons (Aeby Daghé, 2014), this teacher's statement is also emblematic of current trends in literature education that advocate for shared literary experience amongst students, as an affordance for building a solid relationship with books. Nothing could be further from contact based only on a 'lecture' format, as well as its corollary –namely a school assignment carried out individually merely in view of an assessment, which ends up being mostly a "school mime of interpretation" (Rosier 2004, quoted in Lemarchand-Thieurmel, 2017: 283).

Literary education can, in fact, be approached through a variety of alternative formats to the typical input-response-evaluation (IRE) structure of classroom talk (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), ranging from literature circles to book talk or book-club conversations, questioning the author, reading texts aloud, teacher- or peer-led discussion as collaborative reasoning on shared novel *reading*, interpretative debate, etc. While reflecting and enacting the shift of attention from the author to the reception of the text that has informed literary theory and the notion of the empirical reader, from the 1970s onwards, these alternative formats have been proposed in a range of international studies focused on *how* to teach literature. These studies have not been limited to merely considering pedagogical techniques; they have also concerned appropriate ways for the formative value of literature to take shape in current classrooms, as well as effective modes for promoting the reading experience, which is viewed as the bedrock of engagement with literary education itself. Moreover, this common focus on the praxis of literary education does not imply that a consideration of *why* to teach literature is thoroughly "achieved". On the contrary, inquiring into the significance and function of literature in school persists, even more so in the light of the contemporary socio-culturally changing conditions in which education takes place, i.e. of the communicative transformations induced by the global digital world and its significant impact on reading as well. The value of teaching literary texts is more relevant today than ever.

However, while literature instruction is acknowledged as incontestable (Nissen *et al.*, 2021) and the preservation of literature at school is strongly advocated by authors who are conceptually concerned with the philosophical and the pedagogical reasons for its legitimation (e.g., Schaeffer, 2011; Rouvière, 2019; Dera, 2020; Giusti 2014, 2020), the need remains for empirical research on new approaches. The concurrent appeal for this research is framed in a broader context of recognized importance to the scientific study of learning environments, be they school or out-of-school,

as places in which dialogue contributes to building knowledge (Burke *et al*., 2016): in the case in point, where education to reading literature unfolds through forms of talk and social interaction.

This paper explores book talk and aims to further understanding this practice, by analyzing its micro-interactional deployment as it takes place in a 2nd year class in a middle school, an under-researched educational setting from this perspective. More precisely, starting from the perspective of reading as a social process (Bloome, 1983; Green &Weade, 1991; Sterponi, 2007) and literature education as social practice (see section 2.), the paper investigates a pedagogical approach carried out by a teacher through the engagement of each pupil as a *reader-speaker*: each pupil is encouraged to provide their classmates with an oral talk and commentary on a book previously freely chosen from the library and read at home, in order to share their point of view on the book without spoiling the story, so as to arouse the listeners' curiosity and perhaps desire to read it. Midway between the open participation structure of a literature circle and a format based on pre-defined constraints (e.g., the prohibition of reading from written notes), this particular instructional frame was documented through a small corpus of video-recorded book-talk sessions and their transcripts, and complemented with ethnographic notes. By applying the methodological tools of sequential analysis provided by Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), the study captures relevant aspects of the interactive experience of book talk and the relationships arising between talk and learning.

In this paper, we focus on the sequential structure of storytelling embedded in the book talks, thus on the joint actions of the teller and the recipients (classmates and teacher), while the story is enacted and delivered. Our specific aim is to characterize this interactional practice in depth so as to determine – on this basis – what benefits book talk can offer to literary reading education.

The paper first considers definitions of *book talk* and presents a brief overview of empirical studies on these (2.). It then introduces the setting and data collection, further specifying the methodology adopted (3.). In the analytical section (4.), we address the teacher's agenda, mentioning too her positioning with regard to the debate on literary education (4.1), then describe the participation structure in the book-talk unfolding in the classroom (4.2), before focusing on the analysis of the structural components of storytelling, through some excerpts (4.3-4.5). The closing section highlights some key differentiating features of book talks and their implications for learning.

2. Background: research on book talk at school

Book talk is characterized by a fundamental combination of reading and talking, i.e. an individual act that turns into (or originates as) an in-

teractive social event. This essential feature has some commonalities with the diverse, informal adult reading groups which have become an increasingly common contemporary phenomenon, both as face-to-face encounters occurring in public places (libraries, bookshops, clubs, etc.; *cf.* Hartley & Turvey, 2002; Peplow, 2016) and, more recently, as online exchanges (Lima, 2017). The shared task-based and situated nature of these groups have inspired innovative literary practices in school settings using similar activities (*literary circles, reading texts aloud, book-club conversations*, etc.), whereby "reading becomes a highly social activity" (Peplow, 2016: 2). The purpose of "reimagining reading" in educational contexts (Kittle & Gallagher, 2018) has, therefore, found new options for its achievement.

Concerning *book talk*, its current definitions are available mainly in the teaching-related literature and popularized weblogs[1], where it is described as a short book presentation delivered with the aim of enticing listeners to read the book in question. At times the name is used as synonym of *literary study group* or *book club*, at others the latter is assumed as an overarching term whose sub-categories include book talk. Generally, a book talk offers a glimpse of the story read, its plot, characters and salient events. It can also include voiced quotes and assessments as well as explicit reading recommendations. While there is no one right procedure for doing this, since slightly different versions can be used successfully, it is commonly accepted that a book talk does not provide the audience with a telling of the whole story, as it is deliberately focused on motivating listeners to read the book. This is also the case for the book talks under analysis in this paper, which are based on sharing stories read individually, but independently of one another.

Additional features can be specified by comparison with other oral formats (e.g., pupil-led discussion groups on a single book read by all participants, in a given period, as it is generally the case for literary circles), with written ones (e.g., a formal book report or review), or with respect to a discursive style (e.g., more persuasive than an expository one). In short, organizing a book talk in the classroom means engaging pupils with *talking about a book* read, within a wider event that encompasses storytelling, among other discursive activities coming into play.

Moving to a brief overview of empirical studies on book talk at school, it should first be said that over the past three decades these have been mainly carried out in the field of methodology of literary education, with a primary focus on the design and accomplishment of book talk as a learning format. Most of these studies originated in the United States and the United Kingdom, where pioneering works by Daniels (2001 [1993]) and Chambers (2000 [1985])[2], which provide a framework for pupil literature

1 In both cases, guidelines are provided in the form of "tips for teachers" (Lepre, 2024) in order to implement book talks or suggest a workshop mode as a teaching practice (*cf.* Poignante & Poletti Riz, 2022).

2 As reported by Eriksson (2002: 79), Chambers (2000[1985]) coined the term *book talk* "for talk about reading in reader-response contexts".

circles and school book sessions, were first published. There have been an increasing number of studies also in France, Canada, Germany, and Scandinavian countries as well as Italy. In each of these areas, research offers various focal themes and emphases which also derive from diverse traditions in the theory and practice of literature education. Publications feature book clubs as an alternative framework for reading instruction (Raphael & McMahon, 1994) to overcome stereotypical interactions between teacher and pupils; they provide models for developing interpretive classroom communities of readers (Unrau & Ruddell, 1995), examine the feasibility of reading groups with respect to classroom management (Vanhulle, 1999), highlight the importance of verbal interaction for literature education (Janssen & Pieper, 2009; Hébert & Lafontaine, 2012).

More relevant to our current paper are interactional studies on literature education realized by drawing on conversational-ethnomethodological methodology. One of the first studies carried out within this approach is by Lewis (2001), who takes an in-depth look at 'what it means to read and discuss literature', and more specifically at four classroom literature practices (read-aloud, peer-led literature discussions, teacher-led literature discussions, independent reading), in the context of an American school.

In the present research landscape, it is worth mentioning the works by Gordon (2020, 2021) who applied and adapted conversation analysis to classroom talk-in-interaction on novels and poetry, addressing, among other aspects, spoken quotation in classroom talk around literature. Gordon (2021) theorized a Pedagogic Literary Narration by focusing on how "text-in-print and text-through-talk" are interrelated, so as to promote a teaching approach aimed at "high-quality classroom talk" and learning. Studies within the scope of CA address storytelling at home and at school (e.g., Filipi *et al.*, 2022). They draw on knowledge about storytelling that CA research on ordinary face-to-face interactions has greatly enriched, by focusing "on the practices of *telling*, rather than on the *story*" (Mandelbaum, 2013: 507; italics in the original).

Although more attention is generally being paid to the interactional aspects of storytelling, the literary practices of young readers at school still require in-depth examination in order to further the debate on how to relate educational research and teaching practice (Batini *et al.*, 2022).

3. Setting, data and methodology

3.1 *A plurilingual middle school classroom and its literary practices*

Located in a small town in north-central Italy, the middle school involved in the study is part of a Comprehensive Institute (IC) encompassing pre-school, primary, middle and high schools, located in a fairly extensive provincial area. The 2nd year class of middle school where the data were collected (in spring 2024) is composed of 21 pupils aged 11-12 years,

whose diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds naturally shape the class as a plurilingual and intercultural one.

For a better understanding of the book talks in the classroom, it is helpful to briefly recall what preceded them in the first school semester (autumn 2023), as these talks are designed to be their complement. Pupils had worked on the 'critique' as a text type, with the aim of writing one, first individually and then collectively, about the complete novel they had all just finished reading, as a task assigned to them all over the summer. Their jointly written critique was then submitted to and displayed in the library of their small town. Featured as *reader-writer* (Massol, 2017) this rewarding experience for them laid the groundwork for the subsequent oral approach to literary reading.

The starting point for a different social practice involving literature was no longer the same single novel assigned to the whole class, but an independent full reading of one's own freely chosen book. A writing component is still kept in this new practice, given that pupils are allowed to write notes (only) to structure their book talk and a partner classmate is in charge of writing on the whiteboard the details (title, author, characters, etc.), given verbally by the reader, in order to make it easier for the class to follow and understand.

3.2 *The data set and methodology*

As shown below, in Table 1, the corpus consists of 9 sessions of videorecorded book talk occurring during five Italian lessons (total 3 hours), fully transcribed according to (partially adapted) CA conventions. Participants were the teacher and 9 pupils (3 of whom from migrant background and at varying levels of acquisition in Italian) engaged in the book presentation and the related role of storytellers. In each lesson, individual talks were organized according to a schedule agreed with the pupils, who participated on a voluntary basis, knowing that they were free to talk about their book for as long as they needed; hence, the varying lengths of time of the book presentation, ranging from 8 to 30 minutes:

Pupils	Book titles[3] and author(s)	Data collection	Length of video-recording.
Ard (L1: Punjabi)	(a) *Il tesoro perduto di Nora* (*Nora's Lost Treasure*) graphic novel, by Marco Rocchi & Francesca Carità, 2021	15.4	11:19

3 Books titles are reported in Italian either because Italian is their original language (see (a), (b) and (e)) or because the Italian title is the one of the translated version read by the pupil (see (c), (f), and (g)). In the first case, the original Italian title is followed by our English translation for convenience; in the second case, the Italian title is followed by the title in the original language (see (c), (f), and (g). When the book kept its original title in the Italian translation, we report it as such (see (d), (h) and (i)).

Suk (L1: Chinese)	(b) *21 giorni alla fine del mondo* (*21 days to the end of the world*) graphic novel, by Silvia Vecchini & Sualzo, 2019	15.4	30:02
Crc (L1: Romanian)	(c) *Tredici. Se mi stai ascoltando sei arrivato troppo tardi* (*13 Reason why. If you are listening you are too late*) by Jay Asher, 2007 (also a Netflix series, 2016)	15.4	30:00
Ale	(d) *Coraline*, by Neil Gaiman, 2002	17.4	24:47
Mar	(e) *Bus 323. Viaggio di sola andata* (*Bus 323. One-way trip*) by Emis Killa, 2014	18.4	13:28
Let	(f) *Il fiume al contrario* (*La Rivière à l'envers*), by Jean Claude Mourlevat, 2009	19.4	10:24'
Cri	(g) *L'isola delle ombre* (*Shadow Island*), by Mike Deas & Nancy Deas, 2019	21.4	16:40
Fil	(h) *Dream team*, by Jack McCallum, 2014	21.4	08:36
Giu	(i) *Better,* by Carrie Leighton, 2022.	21.4	18:42

Table 1: Overview of book-talk sessions and video data collection

Pupils' self-chosen books, mentioned here to introduce the text types and themes referenced in the oral interactions, cover a variety of literary *genres,* including fictional and non-fictional narratives, and ranging from novels to graphic novels, biographies, fantasy stories, etc., as also shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: Overview of the selected books

This diverse small body of works also displays a range of different school levels regarding their intended readers, from lower secondary level texts to upper secondary ones (in a few cases). As a whole, the books are about popular literature targeted at (pre)adolescents. This could be seen to open up a number of issues on its cultural legitimacy and use at school, which are beyond the scope of the paper, although we will allude to these a little later (see 4.1).

An unrecorded interview with the teacher on the pedagogical approach she adopted and the goal(s) she intended to achieve (see 4.1) complements this empirical dataset, which is a small collection but still sufficient to identify some significant phenomena.

In terms of methodology, Conversation Analysis (CA) as an empirical-inductive analytical approach (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) in its applied perspective (Kasper & Wagner, 2014) for examining talk-in interaction is an effective option in the particular context under study. By affording access to interactional details and providing principles and procedures for a close look, it can reveal the minute ongoing processes and the ways teacher and pupils, as well as pupils and their peers, display an understanding of each other's actions and coordinate the latter within the specific event. From this analytical perspective it is relevant to look at *how* participants orient to each another and to the books and stories talked about, as objects of their conversation in progress, as well as to the learning embedded in this institutional and ordinary classroom event. It is worth noting that the very view of storytelling as a recognizable unit of talk, encapsulated or interwoven with other discursive activities in the book presentation, arises as a participant-oriented categorization, as shown by "the story told" (lines 14-18) in the following short excerpt from the transcribed data:

Extract 1[4]

11	Teacher	Fim ma perché? che cosa ti ha colpito Fim di
12		questo: di questo libro- (0.6) partendo dal
13		racconto che: ha fatto
		Fim but why? what struck you about this: of this
		book, starting from the telling he: did
14	CRM	di questa spiegazione
		of this explanation
15	Teacher	sì. partendo dalla spiegazione,
		yes. starting from the explanation
16	FIM	la: la storia:
		the: the story:
17	Teacher	mh
18	FIM	(la) storia
		(the)story
19	Teacher	[sì]
		[yes]
20	FIM	[raccontata] (0.8) mh
		[told]

4 The participants' names have been replaced by abbreviations. In all excepts reported in the paper the translation from Italian has been kept almost literally.

4. Analysis

4.1 *The teacher's agenda on book talk*

Before focusing on the units of analysis isolated in the data from the participants' perspective, and zooming in on some illustrative excerpts, it is appropriate to both give a brief view of the teacher's agenda and the organization of the book-talk sessions, namely the participation structure in them.

As was clear from the interview, the teacher's agenda was driven by the ultimate broader pedagogical goal of fostering pupils' motivation to read and enjoyment in reading, both as a condition conducive for literature education and for becoming lifelong readers, a goal that also accounts for the free reading choices allowed to the pupils. In this view, the teacher is clearly positioning herself with regard to a long-standing debate on popular literature. In order to better understand the educational perspective that she outlined during our interview it is worth taking a digression here about some central issues in the debate itself.[5] The teacher is in line with authors who advocate for the preliminary importance of books as "objects of experience". Indeed, as Schaeffer (2014) argues, placing the reading experience at the groundwork of literature teaching means dealing with works as "objects of experience", before viewing them as "objects of knowledge", an assumption that – according to Giusti (2014) – has precisely the merit of breaking down the rigid demarcation between high ("real") literature and popular literature. Further, texts of both kinds are considered part of the narrative imaginary of a community, within a literary field that has broadened to include the notion of "media culture" (Rouvière, 2019).

Within this frame – and with reference to our data – it is not surprising that narration in different media formats (movies, cartoons, comics etc.),

5 Despite theoretical discussions over the past decades that have progressively legitimated popular literature, also allowing its inclusion in some school programs, typically – and throughout – it still does not find a proper place in today's more advanced field of literature teaching, due to a persistent hierarchical judgment of works of art. It is in these terms that, in France, for example, Raimond (2024) points out the discrepancy between theory and practice, while commenting on an article by the French scholar Porcher, who, as early as 1983, had drawn attention to the *littérature de jeunesse*, defining it as an *école parallèle,* and a highly influential one on young students. Furthermore, beliefs that popular fictional texts are only cultural by-products, commercially driven ones, hence not to be recommended in class, represent a priori limits to those teaching practices whose aim is indeed primarily to enhance the experience of reading, as a step to later focusing on the appreciation of a literary work *per se*, e.g. to introducing students to the diversity of reading levels of it. If some independent reading choices may, because of the controversial topics covered, originate tensions or polemics with teachers or adults in general (Sell, 2021), the very point remains that this kind of literary practice "is meant to give students choices, and therefore to bring youth culture into the classroom", as Lewis (2001:172) underlined, over two decades later (see 2.). The importance of self-selection of books in promoting reading in childhood and adolescence is a current topic of debate, further evidenced by a recent number of articles (Ee Loh *et al*., 2024) that have shed light on the so-called "volitional reading", i.e. reading for pleasure (Cremin & Scholes, 2024).

often inspired by the texts discussed, are referred to during the book-talk sessions (see Extract 6 and 9, later on). Likewise, it is significant that books are talked about by pupils in simultaneous connection with an array of material affordances available in the classroom: these range from book themselves, brought to class by some pupils, to teaching tools such as the whiteboard and the interactive lightboard, the computer screen, as well as visual displays of book trailers, specific drawings on book pages, etc. Classroom conversations on books appear mostly inseparable from the multi-codes and iconographic documents that shape the material environment in which they occur[6].

Turning back to the above-mentioned teacher's broader goal, it is noticeable that she has assigned the very same goal on a smaller scale – as it were – to her pupils, by creating the conditions for them to do this as part of their normal school activities. Through book talk, indeed, it is the pupils themselves who are expected to mutually take on the interactional task of engaging their peers, inducing their curiosity towards the book at hand, motivating them to read it.[7]

4.2 *The classroom participation framework*

In the shift from an independent reading at home to a scheduled public talk about one's book, a specific participation framework is constructed within the class. If telling stories in conversations "in itself establishes a particular interactive reality" (Becker & Quasthoff, 2005: 2), starting from the distribution of the structural participatory roles in the activity – tellers and listeners –, these same roles are alternatively taken on in the classroom book talk. Indeed, each pupil is, in turn, a storyteller, with the dual audience of their classmates and the teacher, and a listener, i.e. a member of the whole-class audience for the other tellings. This interactional configuration, which also comprises the role of the pupil's partner (see 3.1), is replicated in a horseshoe-shaped arrangement, as shown in the following figure:

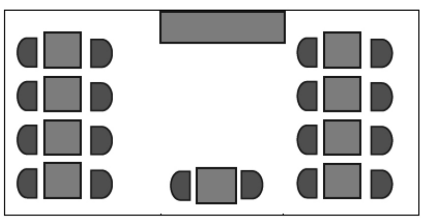


Figure 2: Layout of the classroom space

6 Although not an analytical focus of the current paper, the material environment surrounding book talks is worth analyzing in the light of recent studies on multimodality and materiality in talk-in interaction.

7 In a more abstract sense, this assignment consists of a kind of extended pragmatic speech act (a perlocutionary one), aimed at achieving effects in the very course of the talk.

Within the dynamic framework of these participatory roles, interactivity is displayed in varying degrees. While it is well sustained in most of the sessions, in which the majority of recipients are actively engaged, it appears weaker in a few. In these cases, for long stretches of talk, the pupil's oral narrative is deployed within a dyadic relationship with the teacher: the former remains visibly mainly oriented toward the latter, who, in turn, gives her support throughout the exchange, by recurring to constant backchannels (*yes, mh mmh, okay*) and direct scaffolding via a series of questions and answers, more typical of the standard IRE format (see 1.) than sequences of extended turns of telling and recipient responses. This is especially the case of a book talk given by a pupil with a migrant background who, still in the process of developing his competence in Italian, is less confident in this situation. Perhaps for the same reason he chose to read a graphic novel, so as to also rely on visual support to ensure his comprehension of the story. Although in this IRE local environment the active recipiency is lower, occurring close to the conclusion of the dyadic exchange, it is still manifested by some pupils who show attentiveness to the story told, through clarification questions or a general assessment about the story itself.

On the other hand, when interactivity is heightened (see below, 4.4, Extract 5), responsive behaviour on the part of listeners in the whole group is visible in several verbal and embodied forms of showing joint attention and interest towards the talk: through nodding, receipt tokens (*ah*, *oh, no::*), freely taken turns, open questions, active stances conveyed by comments or assessments, as well as gaze direction and bids for the floor, as shown in the following figures:




Figure 3 and 4: Classroom participation

The book talks are organized in phases, and their enacting and transition from one to the other is often prompted by the teacher, while their varied order is also related to the themes emerging from the story being told. Moreover, the pupils are engaged not only in telling the story they read but also in recounting their reading experience. This dual mode will surface in the sequences we analyze below, although our analytical focus is specifically on the storytelling mode.

Embedded in the interactional context of book talk, the storytelling unit can be characterized as a three-part structure. However, with respect to the structure of the storytelling (i.e. preface, the telling and recipient responses, a proper ending) that much CA research (e.g., Sidnell, 2010; Mandelbaum, 2013) has well documented on daily conversation[8], the most prominent difference occurring in classroom concerns the last segment. Indeed, the closing of the story is excluded in book talk, since, not revealing, or rather not *spoiling* the story constitutes its essential feature, as seen above (§ 2; § 4.1).

Accordingly, the data analysis was preliminarily structured into the following three sections: (i.) introducing the book and getting into the telling; (ii.) going further into the story; (iii.) suspending the story's completion (in order not to spoil it). This tripartite structure takes as its starting point the three overarching teller's actions, that configure the 'telling of stories' as social interaction. Therefore, they are examined in what and how is being interactionally accomplished between participants (the pupil-teller, the teacher and the classmates). This accounts for the subsequent specifications which qualify the first section as a teacher-prompted activity, the second as storytelling intertwined with the recipients' responses, and the third as not disclosing the ending of the story and audience reactions. Finally, since the key interest is on the interactional dimension, the books' specific content will not be given prominence in the analysis.

4.3 *Introducing the book and getting into the telling: a teacher-prompted activity*

Following Schegloff's (1997: 103) distinction between "storytellings that have to 'make their own way' and those that are responsive to inquiry, to invitation, to solicitation, or can be introduced under that guise", the pre-telling segment of book talk is responsive to a verbal solicitation by the teacher, made relevant by her, although within the time set by any single pupil on the commonly agreed schedule.

In what follows[9], we can notice how the teacher frames the activity, prompts it by allocating the turn to the pupil on call, while also addressing the whole class as primary recipients (e.g., in Extract 4); in short, the teacher co-accomplishes the opening of the book talk, through a series of interactional practices not limited to the opening itself, but involving other actions. Keeping a clear metalinguistic focus, the teacher's turns, in fact, are designed to orient pupils, by fulfilling actions such as re-establishing

8 It is, as usual, a matter of doing analysis by taking everyday conversation as "a kind of benchmark against which other, more formal or 'institutional' types of interaction are recognized and experienced" (Drew & Heritage, 1992: 19).

9 The line numbering in the extracts follows the progressive numbering of the complete transcript.

common ground around the task, and reminding the class of the rules to be followed before actually getting into the telling, reaffirming the goal to be pursued in talking about the book chosen. An instance of this last action is observable in the following fragment:

Extract 2: ADR – Book: *Il tesoro perduto di Nora* (*Nora's Lost Treasure*)

1	Teacher	sssh sssh sssh (2.5) allora. (1.4) Adr il tuo pubblico è
2		lì↑ (0.3) eh? (0.3) eh:m come sempre (0.7) presentiamo il
3		libro in modo che i tuoi compagni (0.4) siano invogliati
4		(0.5) a leggerlo. (0.6) mh?
		ssh ssh ssh (2.5) so. (1.4) Adr your audience is there↑
		(0.3) u:m as always (0.7) let's present the book so that
		your classmates (0.4) are drawn (0.5) to read it. (0.6) mh
5	ADR	il- questo libro è il tesoro perduto di nora,
		the - this book is nora's lost treasure

Several turn-units comprise the teacher's turn here, which in fact encompasses a shift from class management (through shushing as a reminder for everyone to get ready for the upcoming story) to the scheduled activity (by the use of *so* as a typical entry device; line 1) and to the pupil on call, to whom she offers the floor. In these micro-discursive moves, it is worth noticing the teacher's choice of words: *your audience* and *as always* respectively point to the public nature and performativity of the task, as well as to a common classroom practice by now, one that has become a routine. Occurrences of the same words are found in the beginnings of other book-talk sessions in the data set, where they function locally as ways of re-stating the proper frame for the upcoming telling.

In the following Extract 3, after a brief exchange between the teller (Crc) and his partner pupil (Vio), the launching of the new book talk is carried out via a highly interactive organization:

Extract 3: CRC–Book: *Tredici. Se mi stai ascoltando sei arrivato troppo tardi* (*13 Reason why. If you are listening you are too late*)

1	Teacher	(intanto) Crc può iniziare <a presentare il suo libro>
		(in the meantime) Crc can start <presenting his book>
2	VIO	questa qui è una i? e questa cos'è? ((*si rivolge a Crc e*
3		*indica qualcosa sul foglio degli appunti che tiene in*
4		*mano*))
		is that an 'i' here? and what is this? ((*turning to Crc and pointing to something on the page of notes in her hands*))
5	CRC	( )no perché c'è scritto [così nel libro
		( )**no because it is written[that way in the book**
6	VIO	[è una e? [è una e?
		[is it an e? [is it an e?
7	CRC	[si è una e. è
8		una e
		[yes, it is an e. it is an e
9	VIO	((*inizia a scrivere alla lavagna*))
		((*she starts writing on the whiteboard*))
10	Teacher	allora (1.2) ci presenti il tuo libro ci dici il titolo
11		le cose, (0.8) eh (0.5) sempre con la- con l'attenzione
12		(0.8) a (1.5) fare in modo che i tuoi compagni (0.8)
		so (1.2) you present your book to us, you tell us the title the things, (0.8) eh (0.5) always with the- with the attention (0.8) on(1.5)ensuring that your fellows(0.8)
13	CRC	capiscano
		understand
14	Teacher	capiscano
		understand
15	CRC	e vogliano leggere
		and want to read it
16	Teacher	e e poi possano eh interessarsi >alla lettura del libro.<
17		sì>
		and and then they might take an interest in reading the book. < yes >
18	CRC	allora (0.4) intanto il mio libro si chiama[tredici]
		well (0.4) first of all my book is called [thirteen]
19	Teacher	[sssh sssh]
20		°sì°
		[shh shh]
		yes

A joint meaning construction, collaboratively produced (lines 10-16) by the teacher and the pupil, is developed on the main goal of the task, through an array of language resources. On the pupil's side, we can note the completion (*understand*, line 13) of the last part (*ensuring that your classmates*) of the utterance (line 12) just heard and a further specification of it (*and want to read it*, line 15). On the teacher's side, a basic syntactic symmetry is observable, which relies on repetition as uptake (line 14), on a link to the previous turn by means of the same repeated connective (*and*, line 16), and on affirming the task's goal again at the end of the turn (line 16), though in a less assertive tone than that of the pupil, as the verb *might* instead of *want* suggests. Their reciprocal alignment is made evident throughout the sequence.

One more detail can be noticed here: in line 18, the pupil indicates he is aware that he will keep the floor assigned to him for longer than it is usually the case, as *first of all* suggests. Having access to more extended turns is implicit in the practice itself, which, however, can be actually deployed

after abiding by predefined rules, i.e., providing background information (title, author, genre, etc.) related to the book as source of the story.

While in this extract a shared orientation to the task's ultimate aim is emphasized, compared to the rules for introducing the book, which are indeed only evoked (via a noun, *title*, and a summary generic word, *the things*; lines 10-11), in the next Extract 4, the pre-telling component of book talk is intertwined with the teacher's actions targeting an orientation to the rules that pupils are expected to follow, made more relevant when they neglect to follow them in the right order:

Extract 4: ALE – Book: *Coraline*

1	ALE	(il libro) si chiama coraline, (0.5) ed è un libro che
2		è: stato scritto di recente, perché è stato scritto
3		nel duemila e diciassette.
		( ) it is called coraline, (0.5) and it is a book that has been: recently written, because it has been written in two thousand and seventeen.
4	Teacher	sì!
		yes!
5	ALE	e: (3.0) °diciassette° *((rivolta verso Ann, che sta*
6		*scrivendo i dati del libro alla lavagna))*
		and (3.0) °seventeen° *((addressing Ann, who is writing information about the book on the blackboard))*
7	Teacher	okay! (1.0) allora, quando diciamo (0.6) sssh sssh
8		(0.8) quando diciamo il titolo del libro? subito dopo
9		cosa diciamo Fil?
		okay! (1.0) well when we say (0.8) shh shh (0.8) when we say the title of the book right after what do we say Fil?
10	FIL	e:h iniziamo a parlare
		hu:h we start talking
11	Teacher	no. dopo il [titolo],
		no. after the title,
12	ALE	[diciamo il genere]
		[we say the genre]
13	Teacher	dopo il titolo?
		after the title?
14	LIN	l'au[tore]
		the au[thor]
15	Teacher	[Adr-] Lin?
		[Adr-] Lin?
16	LIN	l'autore
		the author
17	Teacher	l'autore (1.0) l'autore. quindi questo è
		the author (1.0) the author. then this is
18	ALE	allora eh: que- l'autore di questo libro è neil gaiman
		then eh: that-the author of this book is neil gaiman
19	Teacher	ni:l gaiman *((ripete il nome correggendo la*
20		*pronuncia))*
		ni:l gaiman *((she repeats the name while correcting the previous pronunciation))*
21	ALE	[°nil gaiman°]
22	Teacher	[sì]
		[yes]
23	ALE	ed è un: un libro fantasy horror.
		and it is a: a fantasy horror book.
24	Teacher	mh di genere?
		hm what genre?
25	ALE	[°fantasy horror°]

The first (analyzable) turn by the teller constructs an initial description of the book and is first acknowledged with a confirmation token (line 4) by the teacher, who then addresses some pupils in the class because they are evidently not yet attending to the new book talk that has just started. While asking a question concerning everyone, as typically indexed by 1st plural form (*what we say*), the teacher selects Fil (line 9) as the ratified recipient for the expected answer. However, his answer turns out to be incongruent as shown by the teacher through a sharp initial *no* (line 11) and the repetition of the appropriate order (*after the title*) to follow. In overlap with this repetition, Ale, the pupil in charge of the telling, provides a different, though still inapposite answer (line 12). The teacher shows again that this is the case, now by simply repeating the question, which counts as an additional solicitation in this sequence of actions. Finally, Lin offers the correct answer (line 14), in a turn co-occurring with the teacher's gaze direction toward her and the pupil beside her, to prompt their intervention. Thereby, the audience's attention has been re-established, the expected order is reset and further confirmed by the teacher's twofold repetition of the right item (line 17), and the telling is now allowed to start (line 18).

Marked by urging – on the teacher's part – a specific order of the informative details about the book, the sequence enclosed in lines 7-17 displays the institutional side of the classroom book talk in this session, which is in fact configured, for the time being, as a formalized event. Relatively free in terms of length of their presentation and telling, pupils are required to previously follow the constrained criteria underlying the format, as an appropriate mode of introducing their literary text. Insisting on these criteria is presumably meant by the teacher as providing support for the ultimate individual learning of a formal frame in which any book talk can be placed. This assumption aside, though, another aspect is worth noticing in the interactional moves along which the sequence evolves: the contingent initial inattentiveness by some pupils, in response to which the teacher's action of addressing and soliciting them to provide the required details was generated, appears to shift to publicly displayed attention as a shared action (*cf.* Kunitz, 2018) that finally leads to the right answer.

Whether or not pupils actually comply with the tight order of book details in any single session, the formal framing is predictable for every book talk session. Conversely, the talk itself appears much open and unforeseeable, being an event in the making, an ongoing activity in which the teller and recipients construct interactions that are shaped more informally.

4.4 *The storytelling in progress and recipients' responses*

As shown above, a transitional phrase (*the book is called/is about…*) recurs to signal a shift from the teacher's initial solicitation to the pupil's getting into the telling. It is interesting to notice how its sequel might be soon impacted by the audience's involvement which is displayed not only through both cues of attention in listening (e.g. the teacher's continuers

that flank the teller's flow of discourse without interrupting it; see 4.2 above) but also by more substantive interventions. Indeed, participants – both teacher and peers – also take the floor, while the story is being delivered by the pupil-teller, to ask questions or to comment even on the initial accomplished turns of telling (lines 13 and 14-17, in the following Extract 5), through accentuated interjections such as *aah*. These change-of-state tokens (Heritage, 1984) provide double evidence of how story appreciation is continuous, permeable, and not delimited to story completion (Filipi *et al*., 2022) or to story suspension (see below, 4.4), as well as of how – not unlike everyday conversations – participation in book talks characterizes storytelling as a co-authored (Duranti & Brenneis, 1986), multi-voiced and an interactionally achieved practice.

In order to show how this dynamic is carried out, the following two extracts have been selected from the dataset. In the first one (Extract 5), the teacher's turn (line 7) also appears to fulfil an action aimed at drawing *all* pupils' attention to the ongoing story – and, implicitly, to the goal of their shared task –, an action that succeeds in obtaining its effects, as the ensuing short exchange among five classmates (lines 13-17) demonstrates:

Extract 5: LET – Book: *Il fiume al contrario* (*La Rivière à l'envers*)

1	Teacher	il fiume al contrario.
		the upside down river.
2	LET	°comincio?° allora.=
		°shall I start?° so.
3	Teacher	=sì
		=yes
4	LET	il libro che ho letto si chiama il fiume al contrario
5		(0.6) è stato scritto da jean claude mourlevat che è
6		anche l'autore di jefferson? (2.0) e:hm
		the book I read is called the upside down river (0.6)
		it has been written by jean claude mourlevat who is
		the author of jefferson as well? (2.0)e:hm
7	Teacher	ssh ssh ssh ssh
8	LET	è ambientat- non dice il tempo esatto però è
9		ambientato nel passato.
		it is set- it does not say the exact period but it is
		set in the past.
10	Teacher	guarda che hai già attirato l'interesse di qualcuno
11		eh? avendo detto che è l'autore di jefferson qualcuno
12		si è già [risvegliato da.]
		look, you've already attracted someone's interest,
		huh?
		having said that he is the author of jefferson,
		someone has already [awakened from]
13	MAR	[chi è jefferson?]
		[who is jefferson?]
14	ALm	(guarda questo qui)
		(look, this one)
15	FIP	a:h
16	ALf	ah!
		aah!
17	ALE	è lo stesso autore!
		he is the same author!

It is also worth noting that the pupil (line 4) does not merely indicate the author's name (lines 5-6), but specifies that he is also the author of another work, entitled *Jefferson*, evidently known to her classmates or to some of them. In the adding of this detail, a common ground shared among peers is recognizable as a feature of the class community.

In the second extract – a continuation of Extract 3 (see above, 4.3) the pupil on call develops his telling – and reading experience – of the novel both in extended and in very short turns. The rather active engagement with the story by his peers, in fact, leads him to interact with them and the teacher too, by briefly commenting on their responses, while he still is in the process of telling the story:

Extract 6: CRC – Book: *Tredici. Se mi stai ascoltando sei arrivato troppo tardi* (*13 Reason why. If you are listening you are too late*)

14	CRC	è un romanzo di jay asher tratto da una serie netflix. **is a novel by jay asher based on a netflix series.**
15	Teacher	sì **yes**
16	CRC	ed è anche una storia vera. **and it is also a true story.**
17	ALm	((*sottovoce*)) °non è vero ho visto il film!° ((*in a low voice*)) **it's not true I saw the movie!**
18	Teacher	ssh ssh ssh ssh

19	CRC	allora (0.5) un giorno (0.5) un ragazzo (0.5) di nome
20		(0.5) clay jensen (0.5) ritorna (0.5) da una lunga
21		giornata di scuola (0.2) a casa. appena arrivato nota
22		che davanti alla porta di casa sua (0.2) c'è un
23		misterioso pacchetto. (0.8) entra e poi lo apre.
		so then (0.5) one day (0.5) a boy (0.5) named (0.5) clay jensen (0.5) returns (0.5) home from a long day of school (0.2) upon arriving he notices that there is a mysterious package in front of his (0.2) door. (0.8) he goes inside and then opens it.
24	ALm	oh oh
25	ALf	il pacchetto?
		the package?
26	Teacher	mamma mia! a- avete sentito che che clima che ha
27		creato cri?
		my gosh! d- did you hear what a climate cri created?
28	CRC	è tragico
		it's tragic
29	Teacher	in pochissime parole? (1.0) °mi metto- mi metto qui°,
30		((*si allontana un po' dalla cattedra, poi fa cenno*
31		*alla classe di fare silenzio*))
		in very few words?(1.0) °I will be over here, I will be here° *((she steps back a bit from the desk, then she beckons the class to be quiet))*
32	Teacher	scusate (0.5) od- ho interrotto vai
		sorry (0.5) od- I interrupted. go on
33	CRC	no è che questo libro è veramente (0.3) °tragico°.
		no the fact is that this book is really (0.3) °tragic°.
34	(VIO)	evita magari
		avoid it, huh, maybe
35	CRC	dentro il pacchetto ci sono sette audiocassette.
		inside the package there are seven audiotapes.
36	ALf	sette ((*sottovoce*))
		seven ((*in a low voice*))
37	( )	( )
38	ALf	[°audiocassette°] ((*sottovoce*))
		[°audiotapes°] ((*in a low voice*))
39	CRC	[durante l'ascolto] clay capisce che le cassette sono
40		state registrate (0.5) da una ragazza di nome anna
41		baker. una sua compagna di classe (0.6) di cui lui
42		era follemente innamorato. (2.0) ehm però non ha avuto
43		mai il coraggio di esprimere le proprie emozioni con
44		lei. (1.5) poche settimane prima [lei si era
		[while listening] clay understands that the tapes were recorded (0.5) by a girl named anna baker. one of his classmates (0.6) with whom he was madly in love. (2.0) however, he never had the courage to express his emotions with her. (1.5) a few weeks earlier [she had
45	MAR	[(un sottone)
		[(**such a sottone**)
46	Teacher	ssh ssh ssh ((*fa cenno a MAR di fare silenzio*))
		ssh ssh ssh ((*she beckons MAR to be silent*))
47	CRC	poche settimane prima lei si era suicidata. (1.8)
48		dentro le sette cassette,

		a few weeks earlier she had committed suicide. (1.8)
		inside the seven boxes,
49	Teacher	è una mattina che va così con questi libri eh?
		this is how things go this morning with these books eh?
50	VIO	che bello
		how beautiful!
51	Teacher	il filo conduttore[: è quasi lì
		the common thread [: it's almost this one
52	VIO	[una mattina bellissima!
		[a very beautiful morning!
53	Teacher	per fortuna che adar ci ha sollevato un po' il morale
54		all'ini[zio
		luckily adr cheered us up a bit at the beg[inning
55	ALf	[sì adr!
		[yes adr
56	Teacher	e ci ha dato le energie eh? per: per andare avanti! (0.3) bene!
		and gave us the energy huh? for: to keep going! (0.3) good!

Just after the book introduction, Crc does not seem to have heard the disagreement uttered in a low voice by his classmate who contests his definition of the book story as a true story (line 17), as his lack of response suggests. Hereafter, his first narrative turn (line 19) is produced through the use of the present tense, which dramatizes the event told and creates suspense. Indeed, a noticeable recipient responsiveness follows: a token of astonishment by one pupil (line 24), a clarification question asked by another (line 25), and the teacher's emphatic exclamation in the first unit of her turn (line 26). The interrogative form she resorts to, in her subsequent utterance co-occurring with her gaze directed toward the whole-group class, also conveys her positive assessment of the teller's ability in setting the scene and creating "in very few words" a kind of atmosphere, which, however, is soon qualified as tragic by the teller himself (line 28). The teacher's involvement, first verbally signaled, is further highlighted by her embodied behaviour, as she moves from the desk to a better position to listen to the story's progression (line 29). Significantly, these actions depict her as a teacher-participant who is now taking the main role of listener and a fairly engaged one, while setting aside for the moment her role of a teacher concerned with monitoring the task in progress.

Within this dynamic of talk, Crc takes the floor again, after being prompted by the teacher (through *vai – go ahead* – a motion verb functioning as discourse marker) to carry on with the story, whose interruption she has just apologized for. Related to the continuity of interaction, the turn-initial token no in Crc's utterance (line 33) also indexes a tone shift – with respect to the previous interactants' emphatic responses – in dealing with the topic. Indeed, Crc now qualifies the story as a "really tragic" one, an upgrading that receives a critical comment by his partner Vio (line

34), in the form of a suggestion to avoid that tone; however, Crc ignores her disaffiliative response. Apart from his first reaction to his recipients' interventions, Crc restarts his narrative without showing any further sign of being influenced by the vocal chattering that surrounds him during the telling (lines 36, 38, 45). When another classmate shows his responsiveness in mid-telling, through a short, evaluating[10] and overlapping comment (line 45), Crc, in fact, goes on with the narrative, as if following his own plan, up to the point of announcing a dramatic event regarding the female protagonist.

After having motioned a pupil to be silent, the teacher herself interrupts Crc to comment on the dramatic event he has just referred to. Her turn (line 49) gives rise to a short sequence which involves two other pupils, hence the flow of Crc's telling is momentarily stopped. It is interesting to note the teacher's choice to comment on that event by means of an ironical acknowledgment of a coincidence: two stories dealing with the same tragic event, as if a "common thread" linked those being told that morning. The confirmation she requires through the interjection *eh* is then elicited in the form of an antiphrastic utterance (line 50) by a pupil, who clearly aligns with the teacher's previous turn. Both participants are displaying disaffiliation through their comments, which, at the same time, act as an attempt to keep a distance from the negative dramatic content (*cf.,* Branner, 2005) just mentioned by Crc, by intertwining a humorous use of words to be meant in their opposite senses (lines 50, 52). Indeed, in her subsequent turn (line 52), the teacher makes the sense actually assigned to those words explicit, in an indirect way, i.e, by evaluating the first narrative listened to, the one told by Adr, who had "cheered them up" in the morning, since his story was positively positioned in comparison to the current one.

Characterized by sustained recipient engagement throughout the talk, this extract shows paradigmatically the interactive character of storytelling in book talk, an event collaboratively constructed by recipients, who produce verbal and embodied responses in such a way as to support it, even when disaffiliation towards the narration is displayed.

4.5 *Suspending (not spoiling) the story's completion*

The book talk's inherent feature of purposely not revealing the story's ending is dealt with as a topic of interest in each presentation. All pupils are oriented to this and make explicit reference to it, even when "there is nothing to be spoiled, since people already know how the story ends", as pointed out by one pupil in the presentation of his book (*Dream team*), a biography of a famous American basketball player, which includes the recounting of his team's victory at the Olympic games.

10 It is the case of *sottone*, a teenager slang word which describes "a person who manifests a strong attraction or obsession for someone, adopting submissive attitudes": https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/parole-nuove/sottone/23562 (our translation).

Apart from this single case, in the other eight sessions, considerable attention is paid to not giving away the completion of the story as an essential condition to arouse curiosity and stimulate interest in reading it. Shared by everyone as salient, this concern is also demonstrated by the recurrent use – throughout the collected data – of the verb *to spoil,* in its Italian largely used, and well-known form *spoilerare* or *fare uno spoiler* (literally: 'make a spoiler'). Located in diverse points within the telling, these linguistic choices transpire when pupils refrain from progressing in the telling, sometimes by abruptly blocking it. Their account for this action functions meta-communicatively on the book talk as a whole, and sometimes it is the teacher who gives it, on completion of the pupil's turn, as it can be seen, for example, in the ensuing extract (line 19):

Extract 7: GIU – Book: *Better*

11	Teacher	eh:m quindi nel primo libro vengono presentati questi due (0.7) ragazzi che si innamorano (1.5) nel secondo libro invece?, **eh:m, so in the first book these two (0.7)teenagers who fall in love are presented (1.5) in the second one instead?,**
12	GIU	lui inizia ad aprirsi **he begins to be more open with her**
13	Teacher	hm
14	GIU	si apre molto e infatti gli parla: della sua famiglia **he is much more open with her and in fact he talks about his family**
15	Teacher	hm
16	GIU	e della cicatrice che aveva: sul fianco **as well as about the scar he had on his hip**
17	Teacher	sul fianco. **on his hip.**
18	GIU	adesso non vi spoilero ovviamente perché, **now I won't spoil anything of course because,**
19	Teacher	perché è un momento un po' particolare del libro che vale la pena leggere. **because it is a special moment in the book that is worth reading**
20	GIU	sì **yes**

It also occurs that the teller conveys indecisiveness about whether or not to disclose some details near the high point of the story; however, other members in the audience may make the decision for them by "contesting" the disclosure, an action that also counts as a sign of interest toward the story, as the teacher makes clear in the following extract (lines 85-87), where we can also note how she projects the pupil's agency (*can you tell us about it?*, line 76) within the educational agreement they have established on the activity:

Extract 8: LET – Book: *Il fiume al contrario* (*La Rivière à l'envers*)

75	Teacher	mh mh (0.8) ah il motivo per cui è andata a cercare
76		quel fiume! (1.2) e ce lo puoi dire?
		mh mh (0.8) ah the reason why she went looking for that river! (1.2) can you tell us about it?
77	LET	eh se spoilerei (0.3) **spoilererei** un po'
		eh if i would spoil (0.3) i would slightly spoil it
78	VIO	sbl- l- l- ((*imita Let che si stava ingarbugliando*
79		*nel pronunciare 'spoilererei', poi entrambe*
80		*sorridono*))
		sbl-l-l *((she imitates Let who was getting tangled up in pronouncing 'I would spoil it', then they both smile))*
81	Teacher	ah. (0.8) va bene. preferisci:=
		ah. (0.8) that's fine. you prefe:r=
82	LET	=però se volete °lo dico.°
		= but if you want °i will tell you°
83	FIP	no no
		no no
84	ALm	[no]
		[no]
85	Teacher	[no] mi sembra che c- tu abbia già: catturato
86		l'interesse di qualcuno dei tuoi compagni quindi
87		(0.2) lo lasciamo così.
		[no]it seems to me that you have already attracted the interest of some of your classmates so (0.2) let's leave it at that

The pivotal strategy adopted by pupils for not unveiling the closing, while they attempt to catch the audience's interest, consists in a *cliff-hanger* statement[11], whose effects are indeed similar to a suspenseful situation produced by a film. One instance of this, possibly influenced by the very fact that the book inspired a film series – and showing the intertwining of media in the experience of teenagers – is in Crc's turn (*or watch the series,* line 55) of the following extract (a continuation of the Extract 6 reported in 4.4):

11 "A cliffhanger is a situation or part of a play or film that is very exciting or frightening because you are left for a long time not knowing what will happen next"; https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english.

Extract 9: CRC – Book: *Tredici. Se mi stai ascoltando sei arrivato troppo tardi* (*13 Reason why. If you are listening you are too late*)

51	CRC	clay, durante questo racconto, (0.5) scoprirà degli
52		oscuri segreti (0.5) di persone che lui conosceva
53		veramente bene (0.5) e del perché anna si è
54		suicidata. se volete sapere anche voi il perché
55		(0.2) leggete il libro. (0.8) o guardate la serie!
		clay, during this telling, (0.5) will discover dark secrets (0.5) about people he knew really well (0.5) and the reasons why anna committed suicide. if you also want to know the reason why (0.2) read the book. (0.8) or watch the series!
56	Teacher	ah!
57	ALE	è su net[flix?]
		it is on netflix?

Comments and appreciations from the audience also focus on how effectively the strategy of excluding the story's ending has been applied, which also implies how successfully the book-talk task has been accomplished, as it is the case in the extract that follows. In the game of captivating the audience, we can notice, in Extract 10, the contrast between the teacher's explicit appreciation (lines 90, 94) of the teller's ability in stopping the narration just before its climax and the pupils' "disappointment" about it (lines 89, 93, 97):

Extract 10: ALE – Book: *Coraline*

82	ALE	[lei-] esatto! però poi
83		sono spariti perché lei è entrata nel corridoio.
84		lei inizia a pensare che l'altra sua madre poteva
85		aver rapito le anime dei geni↑tori, (0.8) e rientra
86		nel corridoio. se volete andare come: °va-° se
87		volete sapere come va a finire dovete leggere il
88		libro.
		[she-]right! but then they disappeared because she went into the hallway. she begins to think that her other mother could have stolen her pare↑nts' souls (0.8)and she walks back into the hallway. if you want go a:s °go° if you want to know how it ends you have to read the book.
89	some students	no::!
		no::!

90	Teacher	ah ah ah ah attenzio:ne attenzio:ne ci ha lasciato
91		proprio (0.8) <con la suspense> (0.8) eh <col fiato
92		sospeso.> (0.5) mo:lto bene=
		ah ah ah pay attentio:n pay attentio:n she left us really (0.8) <in suspense > (0.8) eh <with baited breath> (0.5) very good=
93	(VIO)	=ci son rimasta malissimo=
		= i am so disappointed=
94	Teacher	=mo:lto bene! pendevamo tutti dalle tue labbra di
95		questo racconto e sul più bello tu. (0.5) hai detto.
96		(0.8) andate avanti a leggere il libro voi.
		=ve:ry good! we were all hanging on your words for this story and just as you were getting to the climax (0.5) you said (0.8) you go ahead and read the book
97	ALM	per non dircelo
		for not telling us

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

The preceding analysis has focused the three-part structure of the storytelling occurring in classroom book-talk sessions, against the backdrop of an overall picture of their organizational features, and in the wider sociocultural frame of an ever-open debate on literary education. With the aim of describing the functioning of book talk as a non-standard instructional format, some of the key interactional practices emerging in each structural part have been illustrated, through a few selected extracts from the dataset.

If conversational storytelling as joint construction and interactional achievement is well-established, on the strength of much CA research in a variety of contexts, how this is collaboratively and minutely achieved when storytelling takes place in multiparty classroom interaction have not yet benefited from the same amount of study, and much less so in educational settings with adolescents. In this perspective, the description above has sought to add to this domain, by providing evidence for the ways in which participants, in their alternate roles, are engaged in storytelling.

Unlike delivering a monological type of talk in lengthy turns produced for a routinized school questioning on literary texts, tellers are involved in constructing a dialogue with their recipients, *while* telling the story and their own reading experience of it. Likewise, classmates as audience participate by taking an active role in responding to the stories told, in the here-and-now. As shown above, they may intervene at the very beginning of the telling or – more often – they take turns in the mid-telling sequence, to ask questions (Extract 5) or comment on the plot (Extract 6) or, indeed directly interact both with other recipients

to share information on books (Extract 5) and with the narrator, when addressed to by them as whole audience (Extract 8), or also when they emphatically react to the way they are handling the suspension of the story's epilogue (Extract 10).

A voiced audience, certainly not a silent one, accompanies the telling in progress. The teacher also acts as a member of this audience, by taking up space within it to produce ongoing comments, hence legitimizing the same initiative by the pupils. She symmetrically positions herself as a participant (as especially shown in her turns in Extract 6) and not only as the educator who is in charge of monitoring the task's progress.

Moreover, both teacher and pupils as recipients align themselves to the story in progress and (dis)affiliate to the teller's stance. Pupils also sometimes assume the role of co-tellers (as in one instance in Extract 6 and in other few cases not reported here), as "knowing readers-participants" in the ongoing story, because they have either already encountered the book in the conversation or they have watched the film series inspired by it.

The distinctive dialogical character of book talk, as created during telling, usually affects the flow of the telling itself and prompts the narrator to interrupt it, albeit briefly. It also occurs that an interruption does not undermine the narrative by the speaker, who in fact takes up the story again as if following a predetermined development (e.g., in Extract 6). In similar cases, pupils seem to sway between two modes of experiencing the task they are involved in, that is, between *task as plan* and *task as process,* according to the distinction first made by Breen (1989).

As a whole, while the teacher-led pre-narrative component projects extended turns by the teller, the actual unfolding of these is quite interactive. From a teaching perspective, the "dissonance" between the structured initial part of the task, well demarcated in its boundaries and order, and the pupils' free initiatives that characterize book talk in its subsequent parts, is only apparent. It is not just the initial structured moments that appear targeted at shaping pupils' formal competence, but also the open dialogical exchanges, transpiring when the telling and/or the suspension of the story's completion are at play. This offers a potential opportunity to learn both an expository discursive style in talking about books, and the ability to narrate.

In fact, it is precisely the blending of formal and open properties that made the book-talk sessions examined here so rich and lively at an interactional level. This main feature also leads us to consider book talk as the locus of multiple socialization processes: to reading literature, to talking publicly about literary texts and, in a wider sense, to becoming members of a classroom community of varied readers who are engaged, more or less consciously, in creating a reading culture.

Appendix

Transcript Conventions

>word<	talk is speeded up
<word>	talk is slowed down
word	underlining indicates emphasis
°soft°	softer, quieter sounds
WORD	loud talk
wor-	a cut-off of the preceding sound
‘	omission of a sound or normal contraction
wo::rd	a sound stretch of immediately prior sound
.	falling intonation, conclusive
,	continuous intonation
?	rising intonation
!	surprise intonation
=	no break or gap between turns
[word]	square brackets indicate overlap
[[word	simultaneous onsets
(0.3)	number in seconds indicates length of an interval
( )	the talk is not audible or unintelligible
(word)	uncertain understanding
((*word*))	((*notes in italics on non-verbal behaviour*))

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