

Conversation as Educational Research

Introduction¹

Conversation is commonly conceived of as a casual talk between two or more people. For Maurice Blanchot, conversation does not lose this association, however, in his understanding, it is also a experience where language and the movement of thought takes priority, rather than the perspectives, positions, or arguments of particular individuals. It is, for him, an experience wherein thinking about what is said becomes more important than saying what we think. Through this formulation new perspectives on education and educational research can be thought. In conversation, representation, including self-representation, loses its force. This deprioritisation of the individual's ownership and development of their 'selves' also reduces and exceeds the educational authority and power attributed to dialogue and dialectic, which are often, in effect, alternating monologues. Blanchot's version of conversation as 'plural speech' (1993, pp. 215-217 [outlined in detail below]), unlike dialogue and dialectic, does not imply that contradicting and contrasting thoughts should be brought to shared consensus or internal resolution. The educational dimension of this form of conversation is not beholden to conceptual synthesis or argumentative progression. Conversation researches – but it does so in a manner related to strangeness rather than the confirmation and expansion of the known. Conversation is the 'movement [...] of turning together toward the infinite of speech' (p.341) rather than turning toward one another, in defence of one's propositions, or in order to develop them in the name of growth, accumulation, and production. Conversation 'develops' but in a non-linear and self-contradictory fashion. In doing so, it does not leave its initial propositions intact, distinguishing it from dialectic and dialogue.²

The argument presented in this paper is not intended to suggest that dialogue and dialectic are invalid forms of education or research. Nor will it be argued that dialogue and dialectic cannot be conceived under the umbrella term, 'conversation'. What will be argued is that there is something distinctive about conversation, especially in Blanchot's formulation of conversation as plural speech, that exceeds dialogue and dialectic, and therefore also readings of conversation that align it too closely with those specific forms. Further, it will be argued that Blanchot's idea of conversation as plural speech offers a unique way of conceiving of educational research and of education as research. Unlike dialogical and dialectical conceptions of educational research, it allows for a disestablishment of the subject and the scientific framing of research.³ Educational research is most usually conceived of as social science research, specifically concerned with accumulation or production of knowledge relating to the growth (or barriers to growth) of individual subjects or groups of subjects.

Equally, most philosophical research in education relies on a relatively fixed conception of the subject and knowledge. Research through conversation as plural speech is described in a manner that accounts for educational experience and development which does not reinforce the subject or an initial scientific proposition and its concomitant context. To propose conversation as educational research is not to posit a 'better' mode of scientific research but rather a conception of research that necessarily distorts, delays, and betrays scientific method. On the one hand, the description of conversation outlined in this paper is a recognition of educational experience that already occurs,⁴ and yet, because of the force that scientific logic imposes on educational thought, it not commonly conceived as such. On the other hand, it outlines a mode of non-scientific research (which is to say, research that abandons stable conceptions of the subject, knowledge, and the human, and suspends their significance) as an alternative mode of thought. This is partly an attempt to disrupt the received notion that education can only be experienced or understood as a scientific or quasi-scientific process that develops a subject in a linear fashion through the accumulation of knowledge. Research and education is here, through conversation as plural speech, conceived also as the movement of thought. Such an approach is not intended to delegitimize a scientific approach to research and education but rather to suggest that it is not the only approach to or experience of research and education, and also to outline what this alternative might look like and how it might be described.

Conversation as plural speech is developmental, although not in a manner that can be clearly attributed to a particular subject. The movement of thought as language can express (sometimes contradictory) biases and perspectives, despite not being aligned with a secure and stable subject. The intention of conversational research (through plural speech) is not to develop a subject (although this may occur), it is to develop thought. But to develop thought in this manner requires an understanding of research that exceeds the scientific method. Put simply, conversation as research, which is always in this argument always educational research, is the movement of thought, however banal or seemingly insignificant the findings of this process might be. A broader conception of research and education is, then, the idea of both as the movement of thought. This does not proscribe narrower and more specific, individually and socially 'useful' forms of education and research. Nonetheless, it is intended to unsettle their foundations and the shuttering of the breadth of educational experience and possibilities of research by the relentless imposition of scientific method. It must be emphasised, though, that the argument presented in this paper is not *against* scientific method, or more practically 'productive' and explicitly subject forming conceptions of education. Nor does this argument suggest that the idea of conversation as educational research should or even could replace dominant conceptions of education and research. Instead, this paper intends to describe (although not model) the experience of educational research that is not intended to 'produce' knowledge or form a subject. The movement of thought that conversation as plural speech facilitates does therefore not conform to, and

perhaps also problematises the self-certainty of, common conceptions of education and research.

Dialectic and Dialogue⁵

Conversation has already been the subject of scientifically oriented educational research, albeit in a manner that tends to reduce it to dialogue or dialectic, rather than treating it as a distinct experience. Demonstrative of the dialectical interpretation of conversation is recent research which utilises what are called ‘conversations’ to be able to experience ‘the value of identity formation as an emerging leader of learning and teaching’ and to be able to engage ‘in networks that bring legitimacy to their leadership actions within the university community.’ (Readman & Rowe, 2016, p. 1022). This dialectical process of leadership legitimation and identity formation is distinct from the idea of conversation as educational research, as it seeks to entrench that which is already apparent, rather than develop it in manner that might destabilize a subject’s self-certainty. Another similar example of the reduction of conversation to dialectic is that of ‘reflective career conversations’, which are implemented ‘to allow students to become aware and self-directive, to gain more control over his or her own learning’ as well as helping ‘the student to gain insight into his or her motives by giving meaning to recent experiences.’ (den Boer & Hoeve, 2017, p. 182). Conversation, as plural speech, can develop a subject but in a manner that destabilizes its autonomy through the language that accommodates it. Conversation is radically de-centring in the sense that the subject is formed through the movement of language. Rather than being able to possess language, the subject is possessed (or, perhaps, dispossessed) by language. Conversation forms but also deforms and dissolves identity, putting it always on the move. To find oneself in conversation is also to lose oneself in conversation.

Engagements with the idea of conversation in the context of educational philosophy and theory have looked especially at the ‘pedagogy of conversation’ in the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne (Williams & Williams, 2017) and, in an edited volume, the legacy of Michael Oakeshott’s concept of the ‘the conversation of mankind’ (Bakhurst & Fairfield, 2016). What is common to both of these concepts, and the development and interpretations of them provided in these texts, is the understanding of conversation as dialogue or dialectic, which is ‘open to the challenge of better argument’ (Williams & Williams, 2017, p 262) or, in more or less different ways, as a metaphor for liberal learning as personal development (Bakhurst & Fairfield, 2016). Such approaches are more dialectical than conversational in the Blanchotian sense related to plural speech, as they re-entrench the subject in all its autonomy and authority, whereas conversation carries the subject away. Conversation develops and envelops the subject through movement rather than through consolidation. The exceptions in the latter text are a chapter by Emma Williams (2016), which, primarily through a reading of Jacques Derrida, which is not at all incompatible with Blanchot’s approach, but is however

less concerned with conversation than with thought; and a chapter by Paul Standish which, through an engagement with Stanley Cavell, contrasts conversation with dialogue, 'which can (though it need not) leave the subjectivities involved too secure in themselves, related too contingently to the thoughts that they exchange, and insufficiently exposed to the fate of the words to which, in speaking, they commit themselves.' (Standish, 2016, p. 122). In Standish's reading of Cavell, conversation suggests 'a turning of thought such that it cannot proceed solely, and in many respects does not proceed best, when it travels along straight, systematic lines: openness to conversation, a readiness to be turned (to be shaped, fashioned, sometimes diverted, sometimes rebuffed), requires that I do not seek to shore up my own identity but rather am ready for new possibility – that is, ready to become.' (p. 123). This final elaboration is that which, in the context of contemporary educational philosophy and theory, comes closest to the idea of 'conversation' that this paper seeks to introduce through a reading of Blanchot. Given their proximity, it is useful to distinguish more carefully between Standish's approach and my own. While Standish is concerned with subjectivities being too secure in themselves and shoring up their identity, he nonetheless seems primarily concerned with what an individual person can *take* from a conversation; 'as the field within which I might discover what my projects might be.' (p. 122). In contrast to this engagement with conversation, principally in the name of becoming or self-discovery, Blanchot foregrounds the speech of the other and the othering of speech. This is to say, Blanchot is less concerned with the individual development a conversation might facilitate than with the research made possible in the irreducible distance between interlocutors that language traverses, or, perhaps, converses.

Conversation

In the chapter of Maurice Blanchot's *The Infinite Conversation* titled, 'Interruption: As on a Riemann surface', before unpacking and problematising it, he defines conversation ('the most simple description of the most simple conversation') as being 'when two people speak together, they speak not together, but each in turn: one says something, then stops, the other something else (or the same thing), then stops.' (p. 75). The intervals produced by the interruption of the sequences of speech are necessary to allowing those sequences to be 'confirmed, contradicted, or developed' (p. 75). It is the interval or the pause alone that 'permits speech to be constituted as conversation, and even as speech.' (p. 75). This blurring of the boundary between speech and conversation draws attention to the potential conversational conditions required even for 'the repetition of an imperious monologue', a violence participated in by 'every head of state' (p. 75). However, 'Interruption is necessary to any succession of words; intermittence makes their becoming possible, discontinuity ensures the continuity of understanding.' (p. 76). These descriptions help to indicate how dialogue and dialectic have been so readily identified with a simple idea of conversation. If even the imperious monologue of a head of state can fit in to the basic logic of conversation,

then it might be little surprise that dialogue and dialectic also find a place. What Blanchot thinks is common to, and problematic in, specifically dialectical interpretations of conversation, such as those present in the educational literature described in the introduction to this paper, is that they tend towards unity. For Blanchot, 'the "I" wants to annex the other (identify the other with itself) by making of it its own thing, or by studying it as a thing, or, yet again, in wanting to find in it another myself, whether this be through free recognition or through the instantaneous union of two souls.' (p. 77).

Different from these unifying ideas of communication, is the approach that Blanchot formulates for speaking (and writing) which is '*to cease thinking solely with a view to unity, and to make the relations of words an essentially dissymmetrical field governed by discontinuity*' (p. 77 original italics). This would produce a 'non-unifying', 'non-pontificating speech capable of clearing the two shores separated by the abyss, but without filling in the abyss or reuniting its shores' (p. 78). Blanchot then further distinguishes between these 'two kinds of experience we have with speech', whereby the former is 'the speech of the universe, tending towards unity and helping to accomplish the whole; the other, the speech of writing, bears a relation of infinity and strangeness.' (p. 78). This can be analogised with the distinction drawn between the scientific and non-scientific modes of educational research in the introduction to this paper. Despite this distinction, though, Blanchot goes on to state that 'this decisive difference is nonetheless always ambiguous', as the silence which permits two people to speak 'is still no more than the alternating pause of the first degree; but in this alternance there may also, already, be at work the interruption by which the unknown announces itself.' (p. 78). With this important sentence, Blanchot suggests that even our most basic forms of communication might be conditioned by 'a relation of infinity and strangeness'; again, showing that these two forms of speech cannot be entirely disentangled. The same holds for scientific and non-scientific educational research, although the former often behaves as if the latter does not exist. For Blanchot, speech 'is between us, it holds itself between, and conversation is approach on the basis of this between-two: an irreducible distance that must be preserved if one wishes to maintain a relation with the unknown that is speech's unique gift.' (p. 212). However, the productivity Blanchot is concerned with is distinct from that performed in the Socratic dialogues or dialectic, (which remain scientific in the general sense defined above) and is 'not a matter of teaching something or of extracting the truth by going from one interlocutor to another, as did Socrates in order to keep seeking the true through the vicissitudes of an unyielding conversation.' (p. 213).

Against such dialectical and dialogical performances, Blanchot proposes a situation wherein 'a mutual promise is made that commits the play of thought to a common openness in [a] game in which the players are two speaking beings and through which thought is each time asked to affirm its relation to the unknown.' (p. 213). This game is an attempt to reach an 'infinite affirmation' and there is never 'a question of winning, that is, of arguing or giving

proof in view of some truth to be known.’ (p. 213). The players become ‘momentary respondents to this thought of the unknown’ and ‘[f]orgetting is the master of the game.’ (p. 214). Here he claims that

Rather than dialogue, we should name it plural speech. Plural speech, inasmuch as in its simplicity it is the seeking of an affirmation that, though escaping all negation, neither unifies nor allows itself to be unified but rather always refers to a difference always more tempted to defer. This is a speech that is essentially non-dialectical; it says the absolutely other that can never be reduced to the same or to take a place in the whole. (p. 215)

Blanchot analyses this description of plural speech with a game of dice where each player plays for the other rather than against them, and where there is ‘no gain other than *the very possibility of playing*’ (p. 216). Blanchot describes this game, and the plural speech and research concomitant with it as

A non-personal intimacy from which the particularities of each person cannot be entirely excluded but which, in principle, does not take them into account. Indeed each player may bring his particular existence into play, but as a player he is without particularity, introduced by the game into anonymity and reduced to the abstract truth of the infinite risk that takes from him all determined social reality: without history, without anecdote, himself an unknown through this relation with the unknown wherein he affirms himself, and each time asking (as though it were an implicit rule) that all that is known of him be forgotten, or at least not brought into the game. (p. 217)

Such a game might then be imagined in the context of education and educational research, certainly in classrooms, but also in something like teacher professional conversations as a mode of research and development. Teachers talking about education might, for example, be productively mobilised as a form of professional development and also academic research, by means of teachers leaving aside their individual situatedness, and calling upon their intellectual and experiential expertise in a conversational, rather than dialogical or dialectical, mode. The content and turns of such conversations would not only be an important means through which to recall, elaborate on, and develop educational thought and expertise for those directly involved, it could also potentially provide opportunities for academic researchers. In a manner that might interlink with more scientific modes of research, these conversations, even without interruption from researchers, could produce significant data for reflection on educational expertise. However, they might also provide a context within which to explore a variety of educational, social, political, and ethical theory in a conversational manner, thus allowing teacher expertise to inform innovative theoretical or empirical

reflection and innovative theoretical or empirical reflection to meet with teacher expertise. Such conversations, though, might not only be academically or professionally useful, they might also be a response to an ethical accord between all those concerned enough with education to want to talk about it.⁶ While such research might inform explicitly scientific research, its basic structure is non-scientific, and it also pulls at the seams of the scientific claims made for qualitative or action research. Equally, conversation as educational research requires no formal or institutional context and can be experienced (or ‘conducted’) anywhere the ‘movement [...] of turning together toward the infinite of speech’ (p.341) is possible.

Conversation as Educational Research

For Blanchot (1993) there is a clear association between conversation as plural speech and research. The speech relations ‘in which the unknown articulates itself’ cannot be ‘direct, symmetrical, or reversible, will not form a whole, and will not take place in a same time’ (p. 6). As such, a ‘linear language of simple development’ or of ‘assertion and answer’ – ‘*a language where language itself would not be at stake*’ – would be inappropriate for research (p. 6, original emphasis). In attempting to produce an alternative approach to ‘the language of research’, which accounts for the ‘demand of discontinuity’, he asks

How can one speak so that speech is essentially plural? How can the search for a plural speech be affirmed, a speech no longer founded upon equality and inequality, no longer upon predominance and subordination, nor upon reciprocal mutuality, but upon dissymmetry and irreversibility so that, between two instances of speech, a relation of infinity would always be involved as the movement of signification itself? (p. 8)

However, this desire to develop plural speech is itself conditioned by the problem of affirmation, development, and even ‘assertion and answer’. As such, it would seem that Blanchot, rather than suggesting that plural speech could exist in the absence of any experience of continuity, proposes an approach to research which heeds the ‘demand of discontinuity’ that the continuous must (and does already, although often unnoticed) turn to. It is, then, in the context of these reflections on research, that Blanchot’s later statement – ‘speaking, like writing, engages us in a separating movement, an oscillating and vacillating departure.’ (p. 28) – might be understood. The unknown is articulated through the movement of oscillation and vacillation that conditions all speech. What Blanchot draws attention to is not the necessity of a final break from development, as some kind of misguided (un)ethical obligation, but rather to the realisation that development is always conditioned by discontinuity. It is rather in discontinuity that a more complex and unknown development might be turned to. This is the case even if, in terms of the already existing structures of development, a discontinuous ‘development’ might be considered unproductive. The reverse

might also be true, wherein the discontinuous 'development' is far more productive than a linear development from an original proposition might have been. In this reading, it might not be difficult to see what is meant by his statement that: 'Whoever would advance must turn aside. This makes for a curious kind of crab's progress.' (p. 32).

Blanchot returns to similarly educational questions in the chapter 'A rose is a rose...', where he also stylistically models conversation as educational research.⁷ The text is itself presented as the 'development' of a conversation between two interlocutors, parodying and critiquing dialogue and dialectic, while also turning away from them. His two interlocutors (who are both him and also not him) concern themselves with how (inspired by the philosopher, Alain – pen name of Émile Chartier) one might 'learn not to develop' which would 'be a matter of thinking by separate affirmations. Someone says something and goes no further. Without proof, reasoning and logical consequence.' (p. 339). Significantly, through the form of plural speech that his own text sometimes exhibits (in the breaking up of his speech, as if into plural, unnamed interlocutors), Blanchot seems to stand against allowing this approach to overdetermine his thinking, at least in terms of defending reason:

Generally, when someone says something, he or she relates it (implicitly or not) to an ordered set of words, experiences, and principles. These connections of coherency, this search for a common order, and the methodological progression through which thought transforms itself while remaining the same belong to the exigency of reason. A developed thought is a reasonable thought; it is also, I would add, a political thought, for the generality it strives for is that of the universal State when there will be no more private truth and when everything that exists will submit to a common denominator. (p. 339)

Despite the tone of this proclamation, he follows this by using the speech of another interlocutor to state that this is, 'A great and fine exigency. Let us develop our thoughts'; the other responding, 'We will most certainly never say anything against reason, except to provoke it, for it easily falls asleep' (p. 339). It is through the necessity of the provocation of sleeping reason that scientific research comes into question, and that other forms of research can be outlined. That is to say, forms of research not primarily concerned with growth, accumulation, and production, or 'whose principal merit is to conform to our habits or our cultural ideal.' (p. 340). He goes on to say that 'to learn not to develop is to learn to unmask the cultural and social constraint that is expressed in an indirect yet authoritarian manner through the rules of discursive 'development.'" (pp. 339-340). It is an unlearning of received propositions and paths for development that would then not be rehearsed within the rhetoric of cultural and social constraints. Authoritarian rhetoric is, for Blanchot, developed most visibly in a 'sermon or a televised address: we know perfectly well that their 'truth' lies not in

the least in the ideas that are expressed, but wholly in their oratorical development and gesticulation.’ (p. 340).

This latter form of linear development, which keeps everything intact and continuous as it progresses, is not defensible through the logic of reason and is instead protected only by the social context which legitimates it and gives power to its rhetoric. The same might be said for dominant scientific conceptions of education and research as linear development. Blanchot makes the point that ‘[t]he violence of the unreasonable man who gives himself over to some passion is no more menacing than the violence of the man who wants to be right and wants reason to be his.’ (p. 340). To this he opposes ‘true thoughts’, which ‘[f]ar from being statements of authority, scorning proof and requiring blind obedience, true thoughts shun the violence that is inherent in the art of demonstrating and arguing.’ (p. 340). It is this latter form of violent development that the crab’s progress, associated with the plural speech of research, must refuse, interrupt, and turn away from. This is the case, perhaps especially, in terms of our own ‘development’. Blanchot’s alternative form of non-linear and self-contradictory ‘development’ must be approached as a refusal of and interruption to the horizon demarcated by the habits of thought produced within cultural and social constraint:

True thoughts are thoughts of refusal: refusal of natural thought, of the legal and economic order, which imposes itself like a second nature, and of the spontaneity, without research and without caution, which is merely habitual movement that pretends to be movement that is free. True thoughts question, and to question is to think by interrupting oneself. (p. 340)⁸

Conversation productive of the ‘true thought’ expected of research, then, is hardly simple spontaneity, but is instead the specific refusal and unworking of the received habits we perform as ‘second nature’. To the refusal of natural thought and that of the legal and economic order, there might also be added the natural thought associated with education (including the emphasis given to such processes as ‘becoming’) and the educational order.

In contrast to the self-contradictory, non-violent, and non-linear ‘development’ of true thoughts, Blanchot again puts into question the dialogical and dialectical usurpations of conversation and their self-justification as supposedly ‘educational’ activity. He describes as ‘odious’, ‘a room where people are speaking, each one taking a discussion as far as it will go, as though each were alone with his own reasoning and seeking to include everything in its development’ (p. 340-341). In an attempt to formulate a non-odious relational context, one of Blanchot’s interlocutors goes on to describe a conversation he observed between two men, where one would speak of ‘some truth he had taken to heart’ and ‘the other would listen in silence, then when reflection had done its work he would in turn express some proposition, sometimes in almost the same words, albeit slightly differently (more rigorously, more

loosely, or more strangely).’ (p. 341). He conceives of this as ‘the strongest of dialogues’, wherein

Nothing was developed, opposed or modified; and it was manifest that the first interlocutor learned a great deal, and even infinitely, from his own words repeated – not because they were adhered to and agreed with, but, on the contrary, through the infinite difference. For it is as though what he said in the first person as an ‘I’ had been expressed anew by him as ‘other’ [*autrui*] and as though he had thus been carried into the very unknown of his thought: where his thought, without being altered, became absolutely other. (p. 341)

In Blanchot’s description, ‘these two men had in a certain sense nothing in common, except the movement (which brought them very close) of turning together toward the infinite of speech, which is the meaning of the word conversation.’ (p. 341). Separate from this general definition but specific to this particular illustration of it is the concept and practice of repetition, which is ‘the insistence of a questioning that interrogates at various levels, without, however, affirming itself in the terms of a question [...] repeating not in order to cast a spell over speech, but rather to disenchant speech with speech itself, to tone it down rather than stifle it.’ (p. 342). In nearing the conclusion to that chapter, and repeated here, nearing conclusion to this paper, one of the interlocutors draws attention to their paradoxical (but rhetorically significant) development of the claim that ‘true thoughts are not developed’, asking, ‘Now what have we ourselves done but develop this refusal to develop, thus contradicting it and contradicting ourselves in the very demonstration?’ (344). In response, the other interlocutor states that

At least this should signal to us that there are no thoughts that do not end up, as they are developed, and even within a rigorous and sequential logic, by presupposing new postulates that are indispensable to this development and that are nonetheless incompatible (or whose compatibility cannot be demonstrated) with the initial postulate. (p. 344)

It is, in a sense, the conversation that develops, rather than the thought. Or else, the thought develops in its movement by being turned away from. This is again what Blanchot calls a crab’s progress and a mode of thinking which educates through interrupting oneself by means of conversation.

Concluding Thoughts (to be interrupted)

It has become common to associate research and development, ‘R&D’, and it would be crude and wrong to say that what Blanchot offers is an idea of research without, against,

and outside development. Development is still possible and even desirable but, in Blanchot's sense, does not keep intact that which is developed 'from', and it also turns away from constraints that are masked as developments, such as those common to dialogue and dialectic. In *The Infinite Conversation*, conversation is described as research, and that research educates. This education, though, does not help us to grow, it helps thought to move.

Conversation, while serving a practical function in the context of education and educational research, also performs a role as an analogy for educational experience more generally. Instead of individualising and linear, progressive growth metaphors, conversation provides a means of conceptualising a form of education that deprioritises individual development in favour of the movement of thought. However, this movement itself, as educational research, helps to develop individuals' thought in unanticipable directions; directions which interrupt the very thinking that was to be developed.

This paper has argued that educational research is broader than that which is prescribed and confined by scientific method. As well as sometimes seeming to 'produce' knowledge and form subjects, as in the scientific model, educational research as conversation also destabilizes and provisionally abandons knowledge and the subject through the movement of thought. The argument of this paper is ultimately a proposal for an alternative way of conceiving of how one might engage in educational research is also a description of already occurring experiences that are no less educational for not conforming to a scientific model of education that requires a relatively stable conception of 'subject' and 'knowledge'. A limited and limiting model of 'scientific' education is incongruous with a significant volume of post-Hegelian thought, notably the work of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, and, as this paper has intended to show, Maurice Blanchot. To think conversation as educational research is also to think education as more than just growth, accumulation, and production.

References

References to author's previous work will be added to this list and its relevance outlined in endnote 5 below.

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the two anonymous reviewers, who helped me to recognize and emphasize the most important parts of the argument I make in this paper.

² For a critical evaluation of these and other features in the context of critical pedagogy, see Burbules 2000.

³ While a sufficient summary extends beyond the remit of this paper, for an important example of Blanchot's critical engagement with the human sciences see Blanchot (1993, pp. 249-252).

⁴ A reference to author's previous work on this subject will be made in this footnote and added to the list above.

⁵ This brief literature review only sketches examples of how conversation has been utilised as a byword for dialogue and dialectic in educational research. In an attempt to streamline the argument of this paper for an educational audience I have not engaged with commentary on Blanchot's idea of conversation, as none of these commentaries emphasise its educational dimensions or its relation to research, that Blanchot asserts. For the otherwise relevant components of these readings, which exhibit minor differences to each other and my own, see: Robbins (2004, p. 78-79), Smock (1996, p.126), Bruns (1997, p. 141, pp. 151-152). There are only two examples of academic work that, beyond brief references, relates Blanchot's ideas to educational thought: Peters (2004) and Zhao (2014). However, both of these texts are specifically concerned with art education and neither engage with the ideas of conversation or research.

⁶ A list of which would include students, parents, governors, politicians, and employers – all of whom could usefully be brought into such research and extend its potential impact.

⁷ While the remainder of this section attempts outline Blanchot's modelling of conversation as educational research in this chapter of *The Infinite Conversation*, interested readers are advised to consult this short text directly to further inform their understanding of what this version of conversation, research, and education might look like in practice (see Blanchot, 1993, 339-344).

⁸ While beyond the remit of this paper, and more obviously political, there may be some resonance and also productive difference between what Blanchot expresses here, Rancière's dissensual demonstrations (2010, pp. 141-142), and the plurality implied by an 'ecology of knowledges' (Santos, 2014, pp. 199-202), and the 'epistemic friction' necessary to the 'guerrilla pluralism' implied in 'the epistemology of resistance' (Medina, 2013, pp. 281-291).