

Teaching and Learning Multiliteracies

CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING LITERACIES

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The purpose of this book is to introduce the concept of *multiliteracies*, a term first widely used by the New London Group (1996) and later explored in more detail by Cope and Kalantzis (2000). The theory of multiliteracies draws upon a range of new ideas about new literacies that have been brought about by technological change and the globalisation of economies. The strength of the theory is that it balances new ideas about literacy with more established ideas by being situated in successful practice from current and previous approaches. While exploring this balance, teachers will be introduced to the language necessary to talk about these new literacies with their students. The aim is not to introduce unnecessary jargon but rather to provide the required metalanguage to address these emerging concepts.

The intended audience for this book is those teachers who are involved in the teaching and learning of literacy with students ages 5 to 12, that is, those in elementary, or primary, school. However, multiliteracies offer much that can be useful to teachers of older students up to age 15, particularly those involved in middle school education and the seamless transition from elementary to secondary school. Teachers in schools will benefit from a well-argued theory about multiliteracies in addition to well-developed and well-thought-out practices. If a practice works, then that is because it has a well-thought-out theoretical base. Conversely, a good theory must be able to be translated into good practice.

Consequently, this text outlines theoretical issues and presents a range of practical suggestions in order to achieve this balance. First, a number of Reflection Strategies are intended to focus teachers' attention on the issues that underlie the theory. Within these strategies are some practical activities designed to assist in the exploration of the theory. The Reflection Strategies appear only in chapters 1, 2, and 4 because those chapters contain new understandings about literacy, multiliteracies, and texts. In chapters 3–6, the focus moves from theory toward planning, pedagogy, and practice with multiliteracies. Throughout the book, the Theory Into Practice: Classroom Application sections encourage thinking about the classroom application of multiliteracies. These sections contain practical examples of activities to implement at the classroom or school level. These two specialised features are designed to bridge what is sometimes seen as a gap between theory and practice.

Chapter 1 outlines the conditions, at local and global levels, that led to the need for new literacies, particularly multiliteracies. These conditions, although they operate largely outside the classroom, need to be clearly

understood. Otherwise, multiliteracies will be seen merely as the current bandwagon or latest fashion rather than as a necessary development resulting from technological, cultural, and societal change. This approach is not simply the latest trend, which can be either adopted or ignored, but rather is essential if teachers and schools are to remain relevant to, and useful in, students' lives.

After the conditions that led to the development of multiliteracies have been explored, the focus turns to defining multiliteracies. Chapter 2 explores new concepts about text, introduces the Four Resource Model, and incorporates discussions about the range of semiotic systems that form the foundations of the new texts.

Chapter 3 explores the pedagogies that have developed to promote and support teaching and learning multiliteracies. This chapter makes a strong case for an emphasis on explicit teaching with a particular focus on the role of teacher talk, the structure of lessons, and the materials teachers should use.

Chapter 4 focuses on the use of children's literature as a way of initially exploring multiliteracies. Children's literature provides an ideal base from which to launch into new forms of text and the new literacies, and particularly the special qualities of postmodern picture books lend themselves to introducing students of all ages to multiliteracies. New trends in children's literature, particularly the postmodern picture book, are examined in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 examines still and moving images and suggests that exploring the codes and conventions of these images provides a starting point for teachers or schools that want to move away from an overreliance on print texts.

Chapter 6 presents a number of tools that can be used to address the question of balance in planning. The relationship of guided reading, outcomes-based curricula, the integrated curriculum, and schoolwide approaches to planning are also explored.

As the authors of this book, we hope that it encourages you to explore multiliteracies further and that it proves to be as exciting a journey for you as it has been for us and the teachers with whom we have worked.

Changing Times, Changing Literacies

In order to understand the term *multiliteracies* and its role in the teaching and learning of literacy, it is necessary to explore the concept of literacy. Part of this exploration includes developing an understanding of the influence of social, technological, and economic change on literacy. The focus of this chapter is to reflect on common literate practices, in other words, the ways people have used literacy in the past and present as part of their social, cultural, working, leisure, and civic lives. From these reflections, teachers and students can extrapolate the knowledge, skills, and processes about literacy that are required in order to operate successfully as citizens of the local and global community in the present and future. That is, they can begin to understand how they use literacy differently for different purposes and that knowledge, skills, and understandings about literacy have to be deep and flexible in order for them to use literacy successfully across all parts of their lives. Knowing this, teachers can develop appropriate pedagogies to ensure their students have literate futures.

The world continues to change in technological, social, and economic ways. As a result, the texts we use continue to change, the ways we use literacy will change as purposes and contexts change, and literacy knowledge, skills, and processes will continue to change. The literate person must be able to combine and recombine existing and new literacy knowledge, skills, and purposes for new purposes and new contexts using new technologies. Therefore, the ways we teach and learn literacy will need to change.

Change as the New Constant

Change is an overarching characteristic of the later 20th and early 21st centuries and will likely continue to be so. Change affects all aspects of teachers' and students' lives, from the global to the local, and is realised in workplace and leisure activities. It is so influential that life in the 21st century is often referred to as *new times*. Because workplace, leisure, social,

cultural, and civic environments are changing as people deal with globalisation and technological advances, the ways people practice literacy are also changing. Consequently, the teaching and learning of literacy need to change. Students not only need a broader knowledge base about texts and literacy; they also need the resources, attitudes, and strategies to adjust to and develop responsive and appropriate literate practices when necessary. They need to be able to cope with changing times and changing literacies.

Workplace Change and Globalisation

Workplace change and globalisation require different literate practices to those that were predominant in the period immediately following World War II. As A. Luke and Freebody (2000) suggest,

Being a child, being an adolescent and, indeed, becoming literate, have changed in some fundamental ways. The tool kit of basic skills that served many of us well in the 1950s is inadequate today. (p. 7)

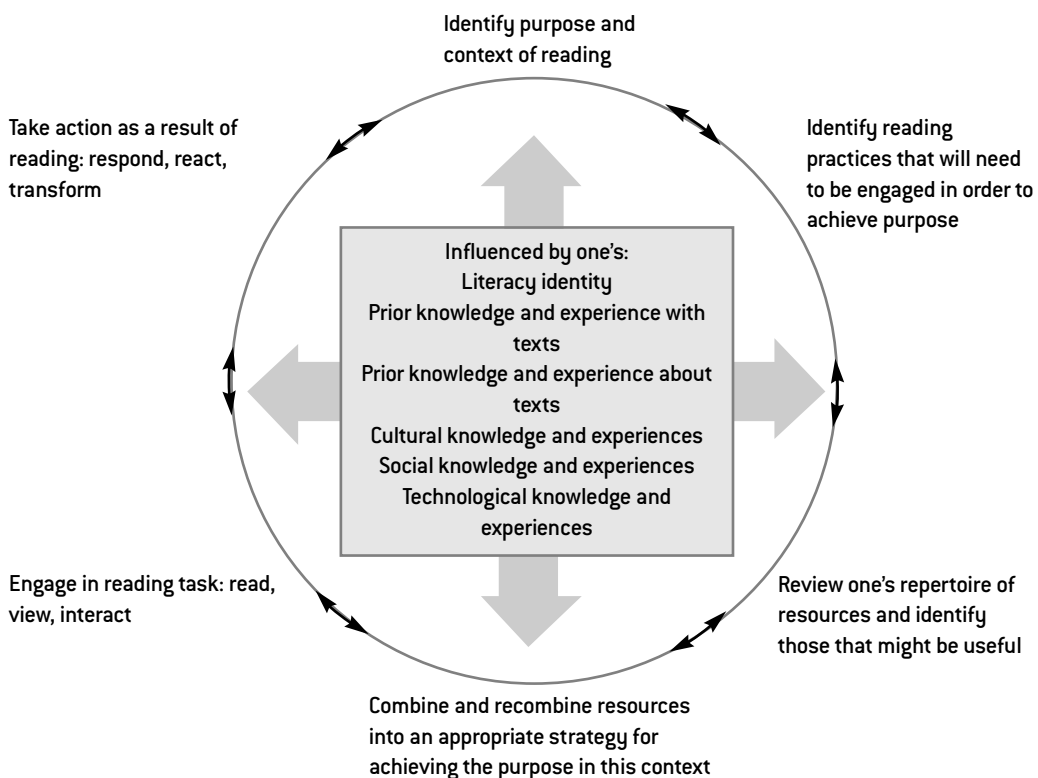
The 1950s-style literacy toolkit referred to by Luke and Freebody was largely concerned with the technologies of print on paper, that is, reading and writing words. Although some texts had illustrations, diagrams, and photographs, the teaching and learning focus was on interpreting the one meaning of the printed word, with little attention given to the role, or the reading, of the illustrative or diagrammatic text. Similarly, the influence of page layout on meaning was all but ignored. This basic, print-dominated literacy toolkit suited a world in which jobs were secure, were usually held for life, and required only basic literacy skills with the technologies of the day: pen and paper, or typewriter and paper. Workplaces at this time were largely hierarchical, and each person had a specialised set of tasks that required a specific set of literacy skills. Therefore, people seldom needed to complete tasks that required a broader range of literacy skills or the adaptation and use of current skills in new ways.

Because workplaces were largely hierarchical in structure, only people in higher or executive positions would normally interact with interstate or international clients, largely through phone or letter and only occasionally travelling to meet person to person. There was little pressure to understand much about other cultures and how social and cultural practices might affect communication and negotiation, because there was less globalised business. For people conducting international business, the communication and travel technologies meant that they rarely had to deal with clients and colleagues face to face.

Globalisation and the increasing use of digital technology have had great effect on workplaces and working lives and consequently on the literate prac-

A multiliterate person should approach literacy as a problem-solving activity that involves analysing the context and purpose of the task, deciding on a plan of action, and identifying and accessing appropriate resources (see Figure 3). As the person engages in the literacy task, he or she should self-monitor and note if the approach is successful or if the strategy needs to be reviewed and modified. If developing multiliterate students is the goal of literacy teaching, then teachers need a way of identifying the different purposes for engaging in literate practices and the resources that might be needed for each purpose. Teachers also need to identify pedagogies that teach students to analyse tasks, problem solve, identify resources, and self-monitor. Therefore, rather than mainly focussing on lists of content in the multiliteracies program (the what), planning for the teaching of multiliteracies needs

FIGURE 3
Using the Four Resource Model as an Aid to Balanced Planning



Source: Anstey, M., & Bull, G. 'Reading as a Strategic Socially Situated Process'. In *The Literacy Labyrinth* (2nd ed., p. 99). Pearson Education Australia, © 2004. Used with permission.

Planning for Multiliteracies

The focus of this chapter is on planning for the teaching of multiliteracies in the elementary school. The main issues are of balance in planning and approach to planning. This chapter will not address questions of how to plan lesson by lesson because teachers already have detailed experience in this area. Teachers have local knowledge of what is most suitable for the community that they serve, and they also best know the needs of the students for whom they are responsible. The aim here is to develop a number of templates that teachers can use to determine whether they have achieved balance in planning. These templates are termed *auditing instruments* because they encourage a review of a sequence of lessons or units of work that have already been completed. The instruments also can be used in a wider context to investigate programs of work and approaches to planning. Consequently, the auditing instruments investigate three popular approaches to literacy teaching and learning: guided reading, outcomes-based planning, and the integrated curriculum. The final auditing instrument presented can be used to review a whole-school literacy plan.

Why Balance in Approach Is Important

Earlier chapters made the point that particular approaches to literacy teaching are necessary but not sufficient. Although an approach may serve a very useful purpose and be necessary for successful learning, it may not be sufficient. As a case in point, the learning of phonics is central to success in decoding. However, by itself, it is not sufficient as a program or approach to literacy teaching. No pedagogy is sufficient by itself even though it may be essential in certain contexts or for particular purposes. The same holds true for planning. Specific approaches to planning suit certain purposes but are not sufficient for all occasions. Although it would be convenient for teachers if one planning approach would suffice, this would negate existing knowledge about individual differences in students and the effect of purpose and context. To assume that one approach will always work is to presume that one size fits all. Teachers need to look critically at the planning that they engage in, and the approaches that they use, to ensure a balance across possible methods.

Development of Auditing Instruments

Choosing appropriate auditing instruments depends on the particular balance a teacher is trying to achieve and also on the material he or she is trying to balance. This chapter presents six instruments that teachers may wish to implement in their classrooms for different purposes. They are by no means the only ones that teachers could employ and serve only as examples for teachers to generate their own.

Auditing Instrument for the Four Resource Model

Teachers can use the auditing instrument for the Four Resource Model to re-examine the ways they have been teaching literacy. It can be very useful if teachers want to follow the necessary but not sufficient idea of reviewing their planning to see if they are relying on only one method of literacy instruction. In some cases the same objective is repeated, for example, if a teacher is practicing a new skill or strategy or dealing with a group of students who need repeated instruction in a particular area. More often, however, teachers will want to determine whether they have balanced the use of certain methods over time. Table 10 represents a simple instrument that can be used to audit your planning to judge whether you have been overly relying on one aspect of the Four Resource Model, thus limiting the range of strategies for reading your students acquire.

TABLE 10
Four Resource Model Auditing Instrument

Activities and materials in which the student is engaged primarily as a meaning maker , drawing on prior knowledge to make literal and inferential meaning.	Activities and materials in which the student is engaged primarily as a code breaker , breaking the code of a variety of semiotic systems to make sense of the marks on the page.
Activities and materials in which the student is engaged primarily as a text user , using the text as part of a real-life reading situation.	Activities and materials in which the student is engaged primarily as a text analyst , gaining understanding about how texts work, why they have been constructed, and how they shape values and attitudes.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE: CLASSROOM APPLICATION

Activity 1

Use Table 10 to review the use of the Four Resource Model in your classroom.