Moving from the Old to the New:
Research on Teaching Reading in and for the 21st Century

Acknowledging our colleagues

- The University of Sydney:
  Tim Allender, Eveline Chan, Jim Martin, Karl Maton, Erika Matruglio

- Macquarie University:
  John Hedberg, Penny van Bergen, Wilhelmina van Rooy

- University of Queensland:
  Georgina Barton, Kim Nichols, Tony Wright
“Futuring”

- not simply speculation or description
- Intervening in educational practices and policies by describing changes as pulled along by an imminent and inevitable future
- E.g., the national ‘digital revolution’ in education

But, “imminent, inevitable”…? Or even new?

- “... have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT
- are creative, innovative and resourceful
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future — are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others”

A gedanken experiment

- It’s 1909 and you want to write a literacy program that will “prepare young Australians to live and function effectively in the 20th century”

- What are you preparing them for?

for events like ...

- the Russian Revolution
- the First World War
- the remilitarising of Germany
- the Great Depression
- Japan’s attack on Manchuria and China
- The Second World War
- Hiroshima
- the Chinese Revolution
- the Cold War, (Korea, Cuba, Vietnam etc)
- Keith Richards
- Germaine Greer
- the collapse of the Soviet Union
- Resurgence of militant Islam
- the economic surges of China and India
and for processes like ....

- the automobile
- mass suburbanisation
- flight
- telecommunications
- mass migration
- digitization
- the massification of extended education in the West
- Keith Richards
- Germaine Greer
- Feminism
- civil rights
- and all the usual mass brutalities familiar to our pre-historic ancestors

“If you want to make God really laugh ...

... tell him your plans for the future”

Woody Allen
How good has our futuring been?
Who remembers the promise of ‘increased leisure time’?

As we now face our new ‘designed futures’: Enhancing productivity for C21

**Preview**

1. literacy lessons across the school years?

2. the changing qualities of literacy practices / capabilities across the school curriculum areas?

3. high stakes in learning, teaching and assessing ‘school literacy’?
My aims

• to convince you, with some illustrations, of the urgency of acting on both ‘support-’ and curriculum-literacy across the middle and secondary years

• to reconsider our concept of literacy as inextricably bound up with our notions about knowledge

What does literacy education look like in classrooms?

• the aspiration: ‘every teacher is a teacher of literacy’

  (or so say all of us)

• but we knew that already:

  “schooling is a matter of mediating the relationship between children and the printed text”

  (Olson, 1977, p. 66)
So...

- how do teachers mediate ‘the relationship between children and texts’ in Year 1 and Year 11?

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**E.g. ts Year 1 “reading post”**

Carefully turn over the page from the outside edge.

Here’s Mrs Wishy Washy

She doesn’t really look very happy, does she? You can tell because her hands are on her hips. And she isn’t smiling.

Let’s read page number 8.

Point to the number 8.

That’s right. The first word is ALONG. Point to it. Read it with me now. ...

JUST LOOK AT YOU, SHE SCREAMED.

She definitely not very happy, but I wonder what she’s going to do about it. Let’s find out. Turn over the page.

(from Baker & Freebody, 1989)
Feature 1: Establishing procedures and routines for reading

Teacher mediates what students should do and what they should think in relation to the text:

• establishes certain routines and procedures for ‘reading’, here and now, in this classroom –
  carefully turn over the page..., let’s read..., point to..., read it with me now..., turn over the page...

• provides an interpretation of the text orienting students toward a particular reading of it -
  She doesn’t really look very happy, does she?... I wonder what she’s going to do about it. Let’s find out.

... and again, a Year 1 reading lesson, this time with interaction

Feature 2: Question-Answer-Evaluation exchanges around reading of the text

ss    I SELL CHOPS AND STEAK. I MAKE SAUSAGES FOR YOU TO EAT.  

[INITIATION]

t    Who am I? Leonie ?

[RESPONSE]

s-L   The baker ?

[RESPONSE]

The baker ? Let's see if the baker is the one.

[REVIEW/FEEDBACK]

ss    No, I'M A BUTCHER

[RESPONSE]
Feature 3. Modeling / focusing cognitive processes for reading -> knowledge

Right we didn't talk about each one because we wanted to read it all through first but we can talk about each one now.

Let's have a look at what the elephant eats and let's have a think if the elephant is a meat eater or a plant eater, by what he eats.

Have a look at his food there, THREE BALES OF HAY, CEREAL CAKE, TWO LOAVES OF BREAD AND A BUCKET FULL OF CARROTS.

What do you think he eats, Leigh?

Feature 4: Developing systematic curriculum knowledge around the text

Let's have a look at what the elephant eats and let's have a think if the elephant is a meat eater or a plant eater, by what he eats.

Have a look at his food there Julie - THREE BALES OF HAY, CEREAL CAKE, TWO LOAVES OF BREAD AND A BUCKET FULL OF CARROTS.

What do you think he eats Julie?

A big eater.

Well we have got to decide if he is a plant eater or a meat eater.

I know

What do you think Mario?

A plant eater

Yes because before all these things were baled for hay what were they?
**Feature 5: Elaborating on student responses, training continuity of relevance (in this case)**

- t  Yes because before all these things were baled for hay what were they?
- s  Flowers
- t  Where did it come from?
- s  The grass
- t  Good girl - it grew out in the paddocks didn't it. They were plants weren't they?

... 

- t  What about this cat food down here? Where would that come from do you think?
- s  The shops
- t  Well it would come from the shops. Where did it come from before it came to the shops - James?
- s  From the ground
- t  Well they don't just dig it out of the ground do they?

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**Skipping ahead 10 years to Senior Biology**

**Root Structure**

- lesson on the structural and functional relationships in cells
- linking previous lessons and pracs
- orchestrating a ‘reading + commentary’
- using this specialised Biology text (handout)
Year 11 Biology: Root structure
(moving pictures #1 please [Bio_Clip1.mp4])

Where is literacy education located here?

*Question-Answer-Evaluation exchanges around reading of the text*

s  ... LIKE OTHER PARTS OF THE PLANT, ROOTS ARE COVERED IN EPIDERMIS, BUT THE EPIDERMIS DOES NOT HAVE A WAXY LAYER SINCE THIS WOULD =

t  = Why doesn’t -- sorry, stop there. Why doesn’t it have a waxy layer like the leaf? Please, Mischa? [INITIATION]

s  That’s- if it’s waxy the water would be able to-- [RESPONSE]

s  Good [EVALUATION]

   but what’s the point of having a waxy cuticle on top of a leaf though [INITIATION]

s  It keeps the water in, it stops it evaporating [RESPONSE]
**Focusing cognitive processes for reading -> knowledge**

s  um MANY PLANTS... DEPEND ON A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL SYMBIOTIC ASSOCIATION WITH FUNGI ... THE ROOTS, HOWEVER, BECOME INFECTED WITH A FUNGUS, ..., FORMING A MY- (.)

t  It’s a condition. Don’t worry about it. Yep. Keep going....

s  ... THE FUNGUS OBTAINS IMPORTANT ORGANIC COMPOUNDS SUCH AS SUGARS AND AMINO ACIDS. IN RETURN, THE FUNGUS GREATLY INCREASES THE ABSORPTION OF WATER AND MINERALS BY THE PLANT.

**Elaboration / commentary on text**

s  ALSO, THE FUNGUS OFTEN PROVIDES CERTAIN GROWTH SUBSTANCES... PROTECTION AGAINST ATTACK BY MICROORGANISMS.

t  Good because the fungus- you can also almost call it an aleopathy as well because it secretes substances that don’t allow other microorganisms to infect the plant because it’s protecting its food source basically. Keep going.
Summary: secondary school classrooms vs ‘reading’ in the early years?

- inferring outward to both earlier knowledge and subsequent learning
- structuring levels of importance
- similar routines, focusing on content and conceptual understandings
- secondary students more likely to be held accountable for knowledge

Example from a senior Music lesson

- students analyse a piece of music (a pavane) and compare its features with another (an estampie)
- listen to music, read from score, discuss in groups and write a description
- “alien observation” vs structuring description around musical elements: rhythm, texture, phrase structure

freely analyse it... just do it as if an alien landed from outer space and you’re trying to describe to them what a pavane is like. What would you tell them? That’s what I’m asking you to do. But you need your music beside you to help you.
Senior Music lesson: Pavane cf. estampie
(moving pictures #2 please [Music_Clip2.mp4])

Knowledge building through ... gradually
... talking like a textbook

• bring to bear sensory and theoretical knowledge to describe what is heard

• recognise musical elements of and the specialised terms used to describe them, and analyse how they work together

• articulate these understandings through the logic of the discourses of music

  ... So have we all written this, “a clear sense of phrasing or a clear sense of sections”?

• regular shuttling between everyday language and specialised language
### Two myths about literacy development (that no one believes)

- literacy learning is completed in the early years of schooling and this is best achieved through phonics programs
- middle and secondary school students have the literacy resources for learning in the disciplines
- but in our classrooms, assessment practices and school systems, we act as though these myths are truths
If you want to test....
Students, teachers, schools, communities, systems and governments should want to know

• about students’ understanding, appreciation, use, and production of texts that have ecological validity both in and for school, and in and for the growing experiences as members of our society

by ‘ecological validity’, we mean ...

“ecological validity”: “to give accurate portrayals of the realities of social situations in their own terms, in their natural or conventional settings”
(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 110)

• for us, learning that establishes portable knowledge about interpretation and textuality, across disciplines, that is:
  – learning that is accompanied and driven by an appropriately rich and comprehensive metalanguage
  – learning that is focused on interpretation -- broadly construed -- including interpretation informed by multimodalities and ‘critical analysis’, as appropriate to the discipline/curriculum
From W.E.B. du Bois ...

It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year. It is today that we fit ourselves for the greater usefulness of tomorrow. Today is the seed time, now are the hours of work ...

From *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

From Antonio Gramsci, we need...

an historical conception of the world that understands movement and change, and that appreciates the sum of effort and sacrifice which the present has cost the past and which the future is costing the present.

(From *Notes on Education*, 1971)
References


