Alternative Pedagogies in the English Language & Communication Classroom

Keynote Presentation

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(Re)Finding the Right Road
Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selv’ oscura
ché la diritta via era smarrita.  

In the middle of the journey of my life
I woke to find myself in a dark wood
Where the right road was wholly lost and gone  

and/or

At the midpoint of the path through life, I found
Myself lost in a wood so dark, the way
Ahead was blotted out  

BUT REMEMBER THE NOTICE…..

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’entrate

Abandon all hope, ye who enter here
QUESTIONS & THEMES FOR THIS LECTURE

• What ever happened to Communicative Language Teaching?

Why did we lose the right road?

• Reconceptualising Communicative Language Teaching

How can we rediscover the right road?

• Re-enacting Communicative Language Teaching

How can we target the right road?

A Curriculum Example: Re-defining and re-integrating Reading & Writing as Multiple Literacies in a L2
What happened to Communicative Language Teaching?

Why did we lose the right road?

Communicative Language Teaching (Breen & Candlin, 1981)

*Critically negotiating* the following resources each and together:

- Linguistic
- Cognitive
- Social
- Pedagogic

In the context of socially engaged curriculum design and delivery

“CLT had an ambitious educational agenda, based on a functional understanding (what language does rather than merely what it says), a dialogic view of the speech situation, and an ethnographic conception of the sociocultural context. It encompassed the use of both spoken and written language and the interaction between speakers and listeners, texts and readers. Breen and Candlin, drawing on Halliday’s functional social semiotics, summed it up as follows: ‘Communication in everyday life synthesises ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge – and the effects which are part of that knowledge ‘(p.91)” (Kramsch, 2006)

“In the last 25 years the pedagogical landscape has changed drastically. Not only has communicative competence become reduced to its spoken modality, but it has been taken as an excuse largely to do away with grammar and to remove much of the instructional responsibility of the teacher who becomes a mere facilitator of group and pair work in conversational activities…” (Kramsch, 2006)

C.Kramsch (2006) From communicative competence to symbolic competence. *MLJ* 90,2 (249-252)
Reconceptualising Communicative Language Teaching

How can we rediscover the right road?

#1 Focus on teaching, learning and advising on the 4 I’s as if components and principles of a curriculum map

1. Interactionality
2. Interpersonality
3. Interculturality
4. Inter-modality
Formulate a **Conceptual Framework**: The constructs of a curriculum

**Characterization**: How qualities of a domain and its activities are ascribed and displayed and categorised.

**Membership**: How groups and their members are included/excluded, identities conferred, selves and others controlled, knowledge recognised and status conferred.

**Responsibility**: How lines of accountability are determined, blame and credit attributed, boundaries of role and action identified, purposes invoked and claimed.

**Agency**: How individual and social pressures offer affordances and constraints on action and the relationships between persons and institutions.

**Identity**: How relationships between selves and constructs of gender, class, ethnicity etc are managed within the context of ethics and moral behaviour and between lifeworlds and institutional worlds.
Recognition: How persons, their actions and their entitlements are judged and warranted, disputed and maintained.

Relationship: How persons are intersubjectively positioned, by what interpretive repertoires; how these may be misframed and what roles may be adopted, challenged.

Capacity: How are actions judged and appraised, by appeal to what modes of reasoning and argument, how tacitly or openly negotiated and with what consequences for individuals and/or groups.
How can we target the right road?

TWO SAMPLE CONSTRUCTS FROM THE FRAMEWORK ELABORATED: SOME QUESTIONS TO PURSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF A READING & WRITING CURRICULUM

#1 RELATIONSHIP

Brings into view issues of inter-subjectivity and social role, of the place of mutual knowledge and reciprocal interpretation

• What interpretive repertoires/perspectives are drawn upon?

• What different roles are available to writers and readers?

• How are these subject to shifts and negotiations in action?

• What (mis)framings are involved?

• How is knowledge and experience differentially distributed between writers and readers and vv?

• What risks are run between writers and audiences?
#2 IDENTITY

Foregrounds the relationships associated with the self and issues of gender, class, group, age, ethnicity, history, language and culture.

- What ethical and moral issues are raised in teaching writing and reading?
- What relationships between persons, bodies, selves?
- What connections between the lifeworld and the socio-institutional world?
- How are these connections constructed in particular writing and reading sites?
- How are particular writing and reading identities constructed (dis)enabled, afforded and constrained or even jeopardised?
1. Mapping Reading & Writing in a L2/FL as an integrated field of literacy research and practice: the conditions of production and reception of texts: contexts, purposes, author(s) and audience(s)

2. Multiple perspectives on Writing and Reading: describing, interpreting and explaining texts, processes and practices

3. Genre as a central construct in Reading & Writing in a L2 program; ‘entextualising’ and ‘recontextualising’ meanings as interpersonal accounts: text trajectories in practice

4. Socio-cognitive processes and relationships in text generation and understanding: Reading and Writing as discursive and mediating abilities and practices

5. Researching Reading & Writing as literacies: issues and practices in planning projects inside academies, organisations and in vernacular contexts

6. Teaching Reading and Writing as an integrated process of praxis: exploiting multimodal resources for teachers and learners
THINKING ABOUT READING & WRITING AS INTEGRATED PROCESSES

Two models of the Writing process

Knowledge telling: writing down what is in your mind: telling what you recall
Knowledge building and transforming: problem-solving involving interaction between text processing and knowledge processing, rethinking & restating goals

Two models of the Reading process

Text-based model (statements of facts inferentially linked in the text)
Situation-based model (mental representations containing contextual information)

“In general, being an expert reader and writer within some domain means reading and writing in ways that maximise the productive interaction between these activities and others going on at the growing edge of expertise”

Perspectives on Reading & Writing

Expression: Focus on Texts

• Texts as *artefacts*, as context-free objects
• Texts as *textualisations* of genres
• Texts as *representations* of interactive communication
• Texts as *discourses* representing beliefs, values, arguments
• Texts as *prototypical instances* of social and institutional practices
• Texts as *reproductions and ratifications* of roles & relationships
• Texts as *trajectories* in time and space
Perspectives on Reading & Writing:

Interpretation: Focus on Process

• Writing as *personal expression*

• Writing as a *cognitive process* engaging with the reader

• Writing as *social construction*: textography and communities of practice

• Writing as *social interaction*: audience and intertextuality

• Writing as a *cultural act*: issues of rights, identities and roles

• Writing as a *critical process*: power and ideology
Perspectives on Reading & Writing:

Explanation: Focus on Research

• Text linguistic analysis

• Analysis of the writing task: protocols, self-reports & interviews

• Social constructivist analyses of writing communities and practices

• Integrated, situated, multi-perspectived analysis of intertextuality & inter-discursivity
Perspectives on Reading & Writing:

Realization: Focus on *praxis*

- Case studies of writing as social and public action
- Case studies of writing as transferrable methodologies
- Case studies of writing as collaborative action
Researching the Writer – Reader

Relationship

Good writing: I know it when I see it?

Writing and the display of expertise?

Writing and effects on thinking?

Writing and the portrayal of selves: autobiographical, discoursal, authoring?

Writing and communicative competence?

Writing and identity and positioning?
LITERACY AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE: SIX PROPOSITIONS


1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices: these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts

2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life

3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible than others

4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices

5. Literacy is historically situated

6. Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making
An assertion:

If we view literacy as a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill then it is always embedded in socially constructed principles.

“ Literacy practices are always contested, always rooted in a particular worldview, conceptions of identity, knowledge and being, and always linked to domination and marginalisation”


A question (and for our Workshop):

What issues do the positions taken in this Lecture raise for educational policy makers, curriculum designers, tutors & researchers?
And to end on a more optimistic (but still challenging) quotation from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* relevant to this investigation

... *che, ben che da la proda veggia il fondo, in pelago nol vede; e nondimeno èlì, ma cela lui l'esser profondo.*

....*for though from the shore it sees the bottom, in the open sea it does not, and yet the bottom is there but the depth conceals it.*

Paradiso:  Canto XIX, lines 58-63

Thanks!

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