UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPING LITERACY IN THE ESL/EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Literacy in the Australian Curriculum is defined in terms of the important role language plays in the construction of meaning in diverse social and cultural contexts and their related situations (ACARA 2013, Halliday & Hasan,1985; Vygotsky,1976). To this end, in this paper we will briefly review some relevant pathways to literacy, namely, the teaching/and learning cycle that informs the literacy pedagogy, and the language learning theories that underpin the accepted literacy approach choices. In addition, this paper will address an important link to literacy, namely, the intercultural understanding general capability. This will be done via a brief coverage of the work of Golding (2005) in relation to his suggestions regarding the development of 'a thinking classroom'. This will be achieved in an arena that also presents the views of other researchers (Pohl, 2000; Pope & Denicolo, 2001; Arthur, 2005; Lipson, 2006) who also believe in the importance of student and teacher wellbeing in the classroom. It is hoped that the discussions that are covered in this paper will provide a useful review of the relevant literature and related findings.

WHAT IS LITERACY?

The ensuing discussion of this section of the paper is based on the principles espoused by the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013: General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum).

Literacy represents the skills that learners develop and use across the curriculum, in a diverse range of contexts. These skills include the original listening, speaking, reading and writing frameworks and have, more recently, come to include other recognised achievements such as digital compilations of written, spoken and visual texts that demonstrate learner skills in the use of language for specific purposes.

Such literacy development throughout the learners' years of study enables students to engage in higher order thinking that augurs well for their future choices, either in their Professional undertakings when they join the workforce or when they continue on to University studies.

Literacy skills are taught across the curriculum and at every year level of schooling, developing abilities, over time, in analysing, evaluating and creating (Bloom's taxonomy (cognitive domain), 2001). Such thinking skills enable learners to make meaning of their discovery efforts; students learn how to discuss and present their ideas and opinions through debating and reflecting; they further learn to express their thoughts and feelings through

group work and interaction with others. Students are thus able to become graduates who are able to leave school via a a pathway that is ready to welcome informed participants willing to share their understanding and wisdom, both locally and globally (ACARA, 2013).

LITERACY FROM A MULTIMODAL PERSPECTIVE

There are many areas in which students are able to explore their literacy skills, with a keen interest shown by students for multimodal possibilities. The term 'multimodal texts' refers to the use of two or more different modes (ACARA, 2013) in one assignment or learning experience, with some examples being:

- Printed texts which offer multimodal options if, for example, one combines story-telling via posters related to one's favourite comics and/or books; and/or one considers media texts such as newspapers, magazines and flyers/brochures for elaborating on and presenting research inquiries and debates.

- Digital texts can be multimodal if, for example, one explores combinations of topics related to such motivational arenas as film making, web quests, animated stories, and class blogging.

- There are also a number of multimodal options that can be used when presenting portfolio studies in the classroom; these can include a mix of performances, drama presentations, readings, musicals, and art shows, just to name a few.

- Visual Literacy also provides an exciting arena for multimodal activities. It offers opportunities for combining a range of meaning making modes such as photo stories, cartoon slides and graphic design when presenting a research topic to the class; it offers the use of signs to explore images and maps to clarify locations and pathways.

The visual multimodal learning options are endless and can provide opportunities that are highly valued by students, as the following research findings reveal:

1. In research conducted in recent years, a group of secondary school students made positive declarations about their language learning journeys via visual literacy that included media and comics: 'visual learning is the best learning – it lets you be creative while learning; the (use of a) comic strip made it easy to learn the words; the comic strip was helpful as it was a fun way to learn – it (made it) easier to learn and helped us to learn (the) vocabulary.' (Rossetto & Chiera-Macchia, 2010, p.40).

2. Further research conducted in 2010 (Wyra, & Rossetto, 2010) found positive links made by senior, secondary students, progressing from 'cognitive to autonomous' status in their use of language and this was achieved via 'strategic visual, vocabulary learning' that included images and imagined links (2010, p.1).

3. Earlier research, conducted in 2008, noted similar positive responses by tertiary students, in relation to their views on how visual learning through comics and media had assisted their understanding and motivation in their primary years of schooling (Rossetto &Wyra, 2008 – conference paper presented in Paris, 2008).

LITERACY PEDAGOGY: PART ONE
Introducing and Connecting Text Types, Genre Theory and SFL.
A Rationale for Text Types:
One arena of pedagogical support for the successful development of the

teaching of Literacy is achieved through Text Type teaching which found its beginnings in the work of Martin (1997) who introduced Genre Theory and M.A.K. Halliday, the originator of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). There are many reasons that support a rationale for adopting a text type approach to Languages Teaching, in addition to the outstanding clarity and logic of Genre Theory and SFL:

- Students need to know how to produce personal, imaginative, persuasive, informative, evaluative types of writing and speaking and accordingly it is expected that they will be familiar with a range of text types.
- The Australian Curriculum is a national education model that advocates the text type approach.
- The current emphasis on Effective Teaching and Learning (DECD, 2012) is clearly directed at an integrated curriculum so that students build on strengths in diverse learning areas. A text type approach provides such a cross curricular focus.
- Transition ease for students in New Arrival programs can be facilitated through an integrated curriculum that approaches intercultural understanding through a deeper knowledge of texts and their meanings.

An Introduction to Text Types

In developing an understanding of text types and their importance it is necessary, first of all, to investigate further, the theories from which they stem. They are a significant part of Genre Theory and Systemic Functional Linguistics. Text Types1 represent the language we use in various ways when we communicate, whether through visual, digital, spoken or written pathways. All Language is text, be it at the word, sentence or clause level and all language/text types depend on the socio-cultural contexts in which they are used. Text types can be digital, visual, spoken or written within the same genre. (Please see Tables1-3, Appendix 1, for examples).

Genre Theory and SFL2:

Genre Theory was developed by a group of researchers lead by J.R. Martin and includes Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), created by M.A.K. Halliday. This group of researchers introduced Genre Theory, in the first instance, to enhance the cultural context of language use. Genre Theory represents the purpose of the text or the Context of Culture and the related Context of Situation focuses on SFL which is used to study the field, tenor and mode of a text.

Genre theory[3] refers to social processes and activities as they are enacted through texts, within specific cultural contexts (Martin, 1997). The main aim, for each student, is to identify the specific purpose of each genre for which language is used. For example, language may be used to provide instructions or directions; it may seek to persuade, inform, explain, narrate or debate an issue. Genre theory identifies this Cultural Context of language use.

The Context of Culture identifies culturally agreed features of language use: the category and purpose (Genre); the structure and/or scaffolding/staging required for texts in particular genres and the technicaland/or key lexis (vocabulary) needed.

The Context of Situation refers to the analysis of the language features of particular text types. Such an analysis is undertaken via a study of the three major functions of language. The first major function focuses on the field (ideational metafunction). This arena provides information about the happenings in specific fields of activity

(e.g. Sport, Dance, Cuisine) and the related SFL grammar focuses on the participants, the processes and the circumstances.

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1 Texts are 'useful ways of (presenting) the social processes that are realised through the use of language.
Texts are the ways we get particular things done through language – the ways we exchange information and interact socially (DETE Publication Poster, 1999).

2 Genre can be defined as a staged goal-oriented social process or activity (Martin, 1997). This reflects the conviction that cultures evolve particular ways of structuring (or staging) particular types of texts, both spoken and written, and that this staging is the culture's agreed way of most effectively and appropriately achieving the purpose for which the text was evolved (NSW TAFE Commission Foundation Studies Training Division, 1995, p.11).

3 Genre theory was developed from SFG (systemic functional linguistics) by a group of systemicists led by J.R. Martin. What genre theory does is to separate out the cultural purpose of a text from the other three register variables (field, tenor and mode) and posit it as a fourth component in the construction of appropriate texts. This fourth component (genre) relates to the purpose of given text within a culture and is therefore the realisation of the context of culture rather than the context of situation (NSW TAFE Commission Foundation Studies Training Division, 1995, p.11).

The second function category is tenor (interpersonal metafunction) which concerns itself with social connections between speakers and listeners or writers and readers, to cite two examples. The grammatical choices in this tenor mode focus on social relations such as power, age and status; the mood of the text may be interrogative (inquiry via questions), declarative (via statements) and imperative (via commands and instructions). The mode function of a text (textual metafunction) is concerned with the manner in which the text is communicated. The systemic functional grammar for this arena is dependent on whether the text being analysed is written, spoken, dialogic or monologic. Similarly, attention also needs to be taken regarding whether the text is an outcome of visual, face to face contact or via viewing a media program, as this will also determine the language choices used.

Scaffolding and Lexis provide the structure and content for particular text types within a genre. The Structure accords with cultural expectations as specified by the category or genre. The Lexis (vocabulary), is also pivotal, identifying more clearly, as it does, the specific text types within a genre; an example would be the use of a culinary lexis when creating and/or following a recipe.

LITERACY PEDAGOGY: PART TWO
The Teaching and Learning Cycle

The teaching and learning cycle for text type teaching consists of a journey that has three stages. The cycle provides an effective Literacy Pedagogy that assists and supports students by offering a 3 stage constructivist model in which students are able to commence with explanations from the teacher, move to group discussions and finalise their work by producing an informed independent model (see Appendix 2 for Scaffold/Structure Models and Appendix 4 for the Teaching and Learning Model):

Stage 1→ Deconstruction	Stage 2→ Joint Construction	Stage 3→ Independent Construction √☺
In this section the teacher helps the students examine the	In this section the teacher provides the students with the same genre	At this stage three students have acquired practice via modelling from

Genre and then the specific Text Type by looking at the Purpose and then moving on to studying the Field, tenor, and Mode. This helps the students establish the procedure required. Genre=Procedure Text Type: Recipe for Pasta Sauce	but a varied text type. The students discuss the same steps the teacher went through, with the group. This helps them to establish the correct procedure. Genre=Procedure Text Type: How to make a phone call in a public phone box	the teacher and learning in their groups. They are now able to choose the Genre and the Text Type of choice and proceed via the steps they have practised in Steps 1 and 2. When they have created a Text Type they then present it to the class and then answer questions. Finally they write in their Reflection Journal about what they learnt and how they learnt. Genre=Procedure Text Type: How to make a phone call in a public phone box

A THINKING ENVIRONMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Before we can develop a thinking environment in the classroom, Lipman (2006) believes that respect in the classroom is essential; we need to establish a pathway that enables us to 'put ourselves in the other person's place', going beyond 'merely playing at being ethical' (2006, p.270). Arnold's (2005) view concurs with Lipson. He is of the opinion that we need to develop our empathic intelligence and only then can we experience empathy that will enable us to engage in teaching practices where there is 'respect for, and understanding of one's own and others' inner worlds' (Arnold, 2005, p.68). According to Arnold (2005), empathic pedagogy, requires teachers who bring that little bit extra to their teaching through a conscious enactment of values that includes an understanding of the learners and their needs, a commitment to providing creative, adventurous pathways for learning and a recognition of the need for engagement through the essentials of enjoyment and challenge. Such teaching requires 'high expectations of students' and a positive commitment from the teachers (Arnold, 2005, p. 60) before a thinking environment can develop.

In a similar vein, those who favour Transformative practice in education, claim that positive change, such as the developing of a thinking classroom, relies on teachers viewing the possibilities of learning through a varied lens, pursuing positive approaches to reflective practice and exploring productive learner pathways (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). One varied lens advocated by Pope and Denicolo (2001) is that stemming from Personal Construct Psychology (PCP). In a PCP approach, the teacher engages as a learner thereby providing more relevance and meaning, both personal and professional, to any evaluation of the contexts for learning (pp 199-200).

Golding (2005) joins this stance, advocating as he does, a Thinking Environment for the classroom. Literacy Skills develop best when there is mutual respect and higher order thinking that values the rights of others; this in turn awakens the empathic intelligence that guides the development of the general capability, Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, 2013.)

Vygotsky (1978, p.57) believed that when we 'think' we are engaging in an 'internal dialogue' with ourselves; however we can only enable ourselves to have this internal connection if we engage in 'external dialogue' beforehand (as cited in Golding, 2005, p.15). This finding highlights, even further, the importance of developing intercultural understanding through respect and empathic thinking, if our classrooms are to be safe havens for our

students to think aloud through external dialogue.

For Pohl (2000) critical and creative thinking can scarcely succeed without the inclusion of caring thinking. Caring thinking encourages concern for values and affective thinking; it likewise supports active thinking that urges us to care about the people around us and, in so doing, we are taking important steps towards developing intercultural understanding.

It is into this arena that we venture to ask the question: What role does the Teacher play in the Classroom? According to Golding (2005) there are building steps to an empathic, thinking classroom; this is ever mindful of Golding's (2005) research that has revealed that students 'come to doubt (their) thinking abilities unless (they) are in a safe environment (pp 12-18).

In Golding's view (2005) there are some crucial steps to motivating students so that they engage in higher order thinking tasks that build on skills such as analysing, evaluating, creating and showing respect for others:

Step One: RESPECT (Golding, 2005)
- Teachers are encouraged to develop RESPECT in the classroom so that there is no favouritism and students are praised for being caring and supportive.
- Students engage in listening when another member of the group is speaking and showing interest when discussing someone else's ideas.

Step Two: 'Engage in External Dialogue before Internalising it' (Vygotsky,1978, p.57 in Golding, 2005).
- Students should provide positive comments and feedback in their groups before they begin any writing about their personal reflections in their journals.

Step Three: Encouraging Questions (Golding, 2005):
- Students should be 'encouraged to reason, compare, assess a situation and clarify intended meaning' (Golding, 2005, p.42) when they are working in their discussion groups; e.g. when *Problem Solving* students might ask the following types of questions:
  1. Why questions: e.g. I am keen to know why you thought that – Is there a reason?
  2. Clarifying a presenter's views: e.g. I can't see the difference between what you were saying and what was said on the news last night? Does that mean you agree with the Media on this point?
  3. How reliable is the Source?: e.g. Does everyone think that we can rely on the information on climate change that we have read about in today's newspaper?
  4. Clarifying one's own interpretation: e.g. I am not clear on a point you made…did you mean the team lost because the defence was weak? (the above category and questions have been adapted, based on the work of Golding, 2005)

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APPENDICES (1-4) PROVIDE VISUAL FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO TYPE TYPE TEACHING

Appendix 1:

Table 1: Genre (Categories): Non Fiction and Literary Groupings:

The **GENRES** (Categories) for
NON FICTION GENRES= written, spoken, visual, digital
=TransactionProcedureReportExposition

The PURPOSE of NON FICTION GENRES – written, spoken, visual, digital			
Transaction	**Procedure**	**Report**	**Exposition**
to communicate in digital, visual, written or spoken form	to give instructions or directions in digital, visual, written or spoken form	to convey information **objectively** in digital, visual, written or spoken form	To conveyinformation **subjectively** in digital, visual, written or spoken form

The **GENRES** (Categories) for
LITERARY GENRES= narrative and non narrative + written, spoken, visual, digital
= **ProsePoetryDrama**

The PURPOSE of LITERARY GENRES–narrative and non narrative + written, spoken, visual, digital forms		
Prose	**Poetry**	**Drama**
Narrative to narrate events Non Narrative to reflect on society and issues	Narrative to narrate events Non Narrative to reflect on society and issues	Narrative to narrate events Non Narrative to reflect on society and issues

Table 2: Examples of Text Types in each Non-Fiction Genre:

Transaction	Procedure	Report	Exposition
Written/Digital/Visual	Written/Digital/Visual	Written/Digital/Visual	Written/Digital/Visual
email, postcard	instructions, dosage on medicine bottle	information reports factual recounts	essays persuasive texts
_____	_____	_____	_____
Spoken exchanges discussion, talk back radio	Spoken Directions	Spoken weather report	Spoken tv commercials

**Table 3: Examples of Text Types in each Literary Genre:**

Prose	Poetry	Drama
Narrative	Narrative	Narrative
novel cartoon strip	nursery rhyme ballads	plays television dramas
"„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„	"„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„	"„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„„
Non Narrative	Non Narrative	Non Narrative
speeches debates current affairs cartoon	poem that makes a social comment	plays based on satire role playing

Appendix 2:
Table 4: Examples of Scaffolding for each Non Fiction Genres

	Exposition Scaffold /Structure	Procedure Scaffold/Structure:	Report Scaffold /Structure
	1) Opening paragraph to present the overall argument	1) Present the title/topic	1) Opening paragraph to introduce the topic
	2) Series of paragraphs with one important point that supports the case, in each paragraph	2) List the materials or the ingredients needed	2) Series of paragraphs dealing with one important point in each paragraph
		3) List the sequence / steps to be taken	
	3) Conclusion: paragraph that summarises the case and reiterates the presenter's viewpoint.		3) Conclusion – paragraph that summarises all the points discussed

Appendix 4:
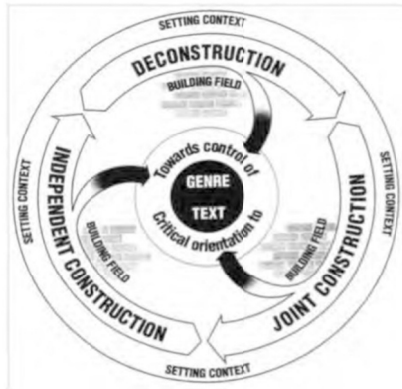
Figure 1.2: Teaching and Learning Cycle (Martin, 2009)

Appendix 3:
Exploring an Island: (using maps students work in groups to choose an island of choice)
An Example of Preliminary Planning to show TEXT TYPES to be covered in such a unit of work

Transactions	Procedures	Reports	Exposition
Cultural and situational immersion Text Types Covered Group Interaction: • Class discussion of fruits One on One interviews: • Survey class opinions - giving opinions Group question and answer session: • question time that follows the oral presentation	Cultural and situational immersion Text Types Covered Instruction: • Fruit tasting • making a fruit salad (recipe)	Cultural and situational immersion Text Types Covered Factual Recount: • Map Work identifying places • Web quest – Prepare Reports on climate, lifestyle, Geography Discussion • discussion of fruits	Cultural and situational immersion Text Types Covered Explanation: • give an oral presentation of your findings Discussion: • survey class opinions Persuasive: • Create Posters to promote New Caledonia • Present a TV commercial to promote your island