Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English

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Twice a year, in the May and November issues, RTE publishes a selected bibliography of recent research in the teaching of English and related fields. Most of the studies appeared during the six-month period preceding the compilation of the bibliography (July through December 2001 for the present bibliography), but some studies that appeared earlier are occasionally included. The listing is selective; we make no attempt to include all research and research-related articles that appeared in the period under review. Comments on the bibliography and suggestions about items for inclusion may be directed to the bibliography editors. We encourage you to send your suggestions to djbrown@ucok.edu, cathxx@deakin.edu.au, kalman@data.net.mx, stinsona@uwvwax.uww.edu, or melissa.whiting@usm.edu. You may also submit comments or recommend publications through the Annotated Bibliography page of RTE’s World Wide Web site at http://www.ncte.org/rte/.

Bilingual/Foreign Language Education


Investigates the identification of cultural, linguistic, and educational adjustments of eight adult female Hispanic students in an ESL program in the Bronx. Uses the constant-comparison method to analyze and identify themes in the data, which included the participants’ written work, interview data, field notes, and audiotapes of classes. Finds that several factors played key roles in the
women's academic success: the participants’ informal English-language environments such as stores and their children’s schools; their teacher’s understanding in times of academic difficulty; and their family environment, particularly the child/mother relationships and the influence of being in an ESL class on their linguistic, cultural, and educational attitudes toward the United States and toward learning. Argues that adult ESL programs should explore how to make literacy training more sensitive and accessible to immigrant families and offers several suggestions such as providing child care and employment counseling.


Investigates the incidental attention that teachers and L2-learners pay to form in the context of meaning-based instruction (focus on form). Uses transcripts of teacher and student contact in 12 hours of meaning-focused instruction to discover incidents of focus on form as opposed to corrected feedback (reactive focus on form). Finds that there were as many preemptive focus on form episodes as reactive focus on form episodes and that most were initiated by students rather than the teacher. Argues that preemptive focus on form deserves more attention from classroom researchers than has been previously given.

Discourse Processes


Examines the effects of two different instructional frames for recitation, traditional recitations and collaborative reasoning, on discourse patterns in fourth-grade literature discussions. Uses quantitative analyses on features of discourse including turn-taking, teacher questions, and cognitive processes manifested in students' talk. Finds that the teachers and students were generally successful at implementing the new instructional frame and that the collaborative reasoning discussions produced greater engagement and more extensive use of several higher level cognitive processes. Argues for an increased use of collaborative reasoning in fourth-grade reading lessons.


Investigates discussions in a low-achieving 9th-grade English class in a largely Hispanic Midwestern inner-city high school. Uses grounded theory and conversation analysis to analyze a variety of data collected during an 18-week period: videotapes of class discussions and one-on-one tutoring sessions with six focal students from the class, field notes of 51 class observations, and entrance and exit interviews with the teacher and the six focal students. Finds that the teacher, in her efforts to create a dialogic classroom, used three key strategies: developing an ethos of involvement and respect, using scaffolding and specific ways of phrasing questions, and acknowledging and making space for the students' interpersonal relationships. Argues that dialogic discourse can occur when teachers link and enable links between academic objectives and student concerns.


Examines the representation of literacy among participants in an education project in classes d'accueil. Uses qualitative methodology to analyze interview transcripts. Finds that participants have constructed a representation of literacy made up of two different discourses: an academic discourse that tends to see literacy as an individual ability developed in school and a social discourse that associates literacy with social phenomena that go beyond the academic context. Concludes with a consideration of the contextual factors that are linked to the processes that have led the participants to associate themselves strategically with the social discourse on literacy.
Examine how meaning is negotiated in two different types of interactions between native speakers (NSs) and nonnative speakers (NNSs) through a relatively unstructured conversation and a two-way information task. Uses qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the three recorded NS-NNS dyads. Finds that conversational interaction has the potential to offer substantial learning opportunities at multiple levels of interaction and that the participants stated that they found the conversational activity to be more challenging than the information-gap activity. Calls for a closer examination of conversational interactions as a means of providing a more challenging language practice.


Investigates the nature of book discussions about expository and narrative texts in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms. Uses audiotapes and transcriptions of teacher-led discussions to analyze the talk patterns that took place between the students and teachers. Finds that teachers dominated all discussions through the types of questions asked and their consistent initiation and control of the topics and that student initiations tended to occur most frequently when they were provided with text-connected writing opportunities. Argues for a more student-centered approach in book discussions.

Literacy


Investigates factors that significantly impact on the development and implementation of improved literacy education in the middle years of schooling (years 5-9) and ways to maximize the effectiveness of literacy education in mainstream classroom practice. Uses case study approaches with 12 schools representing the range and diversity of school contexts and communities found in the Australian state of Victoria, auditing current practice and achievements in literacy and involving teachers as co-researchers in developing strategies and approaches to improve literacy in their schools. Finds that literacy-focused teaching, or teaching that focuses explicitly on language and literacy demands and expectations of the curriculum, has significant impact on student literacy outcomes when situated within the context of effective learning for students in the middle years. Concludes that literacy development can best be fostered through professional development for teachers in literacy education, whole school structural support, and a recognition of key factors in the pedagogical context for middle years, including the need for student engagement and empowerment; a focus on the identified needs, interests, and concerns of students; an emphasis on challenging, self-directed, and co-constructed learning; and a recognition of the importance of identity and community for young adolescents.


Reports on STELLA, Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy in Australia, a national project funded by the Australian Research Council on professional standards for English/literacy teachers in Primary (Elementary) and Secondary schools. Uses teacher conversations from workshops and teacher panels together with written narratives to identify values and knowledge that unite the profession, exploring ways in which these intersect with the specific situations in which they teach and the communities in which they work. Finds that the teacher conversations reflect contextual complexities so that excellent teaching is not simply an expression of an individual teacher’s knowledge and craft but
that it also reflects, and at times transcends, the situations in which it occurs, including the networks of professional support and dialogue that are available to teachers. Concludes that the project needs to produce a sophisticated view of the relationship between specific instances of excellence and large collective dimensions that take account of schools and other institutional settings.


Presents diverse studies concerned with the way spelling is learned by Brazilian children in both official and private schools, focusing on the nature or source of each spelling mistake, in order to understand and describe the development of reading and writing of these students. Outlines the need of teaching orthography not by memorizing rules but reflecting about them. Finds that students first make complex cognitive explorations around how to spell a word and then they discover and learn an orthographic rule. Concludes that it is important for teachers to take into account the fact that the complex process of learning rules has its roots in the historical development of every language.


Gathers a series of contributions to adult education in general, and specifically the literacy education of young people and adults, in multicultural societies in Africa and Latin America. Includes several presentations of respective countries made within the framework of the 5th International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), in the context of the symposium Adult Education in Intercultural Bilingual Education (UNESCO-GTZ). Assumes that the social reality is coming into the center of attention of the democratization process of educational systems, giving way to the evolution of different life views, learning, and communication. Concludes by outlining the importance of the diversity of indigenous peoples and their need to participate in the designing and administration of the educational services of the entire countries.


Considers that equality of opportunities should be the main concern of educational policy in Latin America for the next decade. Analyzes the inequality in education as a phenomenon developed in two phases: the first one, from 1950 to 1980, where the growth of the access to elemental education was the basic aim; and the second one, from 1990 to the present, where emphasis was on the creation of compensatory programs in order to improve the quality of those schools that specifically serve impoverished people. Proposes five educational policies oriented toward providing equal opportunities to disadvantaged students: (1) consolidate the ongoing compensatory programs in order to improve their quality; (2) promote mobility from one level of the education system to the next, encouraging lower income people to pursue a higher education; (3) improve the social integration of schools; (4) encourage policies that take into account the current diversity of the educational institutions; and (5) recover the political dimension of policy statements on equality.


Examines literacy from three viewpoints (defined by the author as "discursive genres" from Bakhtin's perspective) based on the central premise that writing results from an interaction of three conditions: (a) the function that the author gives to the text; (b) the specific reader whom the writer takes into account while writing; and (c) the conditions under which the text is produced. Presents three different texts according to their specific functions, objectives, and reader groups: Literacy as a Verb Genre (informative and critical texts); Literacy as a Didactic Text Genre (those
texts whose goal is to prepare teachers and students as well as promote their reflection and learning processes); Literacy as an Essay Genre (analytical and argumentative texts oriented toward exploring the evaluation literacy programs). Contributes to a better understanding of the complexity of the author-text-reader relationship and its consequences in the production of different discursive genres and practices.


Examines correlations between failure rates in school subjects, including English, in the final year of schooling and geographical locations in Melbourne, Australia and reasons for the persistence of inequalities in attainment for students in working class, high migrant density areas, particularly among boys. Uses Bourdieu's cultural analysis of curriculum together with demographic analysis of examination results over fifty years; population; and employment figures and school enrollments in private, state, and diocesan schools. Finds that focusing on the cognitive and cultural demands of school subjects such as English gives only part of the answer to the question of why social inequalities persist despite social progress. Concludes that better progress might be made if a cycle of professional activity were established in which the problems of low achievement were made more open, and that in addition to teaching, curriculum design and assessment should also be open to question in the search to establish greater equity.

Professional Development


Examines the collaborative discourse practices of the Red River Writing Project Teacher Research Group (RRWPTRG) and the processes by which this group of classroom teachers developed into a discourse community of teacher researchers. Uses participant-observer methodology and several stages of categorizing and coding to analyze a variety of data including transcribed audiotapes, videotapes, and fieldnotes taken during the teacher research group meetings; meeting agendas; written reflections of the meetings; proposals for individual members' projects; and presentation proposals and texts. Finds that members' involvement in prior settings shaped RRWPTRG's development into a discourse community and influenced the patterns of communication that facilitated the group's work together and that the linguistic choices favored by RRWPTRG members reflected the relational framework of the group; their attitudes toward group identity; and their cultural norms, values, and priorities. Argues that the study provides contextualized direction for future research and raises additional questions concerning the establishment and maintenance of productive learning contexts for teachers.


Investigates the needs and experiences of English teachers who are also graduate English Education students in Southeast Georgia in order to see how the graduate program at Georgia Southern University could be more supportive of English teachers in rural areas. Uses a case study of one English graduate student, and a recursive process for analyzing data that included observation notes, classroom transcripts, and interview transcripts. Finds that the student's growth as a teacher occurred in three ways: (1) in modifying her planning toward a more consistent integration of theory and practice and recognizing that not all ideas and research findings speak directly to her immediate context, (2) in developing a more articulate voice in advocating for her own pedagogical beliefs and students' needs, and (3) in being proactive in securing resources and seeking professional networks of support. Argues that graduate teacher education programs should encourage teacher action research as a promising means for helping rural educators document successful curricular innovations in relation to their contextual concerns.

Annotated Bibliography 535
Reading


Brings together several presentations made in the framework of the Conference of Reading Studies attended by professors, postgraduate students, and national and foreign researchers at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Presents a variety of themes such as community ways of reading (e.g., Italian immigrants ones), analysis of the historical relationships between reading and school, and tensions between literary and scholarly reading. Notes the significant role that teachers play in reading activity and its promotion and consequently gives importance to their training specifically in a reflexive way. Argues for a deeper study and understanding of reading from historical, literary, pedagogical, and sociological perspectives in Latin America in order to improve the theoretical debates about this field.


Examines middle school students’ opinions about the classroom practices that motivate them to read. Uses surveys with 1,765 sixth-grade students in 23 diverse schools and a smaller population for follow-up interviews to analyze types of engagements with reading. Finds that students valued (1) independent reading and teachers’ reading out loud, (2) personal reasons for reading, and (3) quality and diversity of reading materials. Argues for a wider range of materials to be used in middle school language arts/reading classrooms and for the place and purpose of independent reading.


Investigates the effects of inferential questioning and the timing of such questioning on narrative comprehension by 4th-7th grade, 10th grade, and college students. Uses statistical analysis to measure the effects of during-reading and after-reading questions on reading comprehension to determine if and how effects differ across grades and to identify the source of questioning effects. Finds that questioning, particularly during reading, interfered with youngest students’ recall both of the text information in general and of information specifically targeted by the questions and that questioning facilitated college students’ memory but only when questioning occurred during reading. Concludes that as reading and language skills become more proficient and automatic, inferential questioning increasingly directs readers’ attention during reading to the information targeted by the questions and that inferential questioning challenges the processing capacities of younger or less skilled readers and hence may interfere with comprehension.

Teaching and Learning of Literature


Explores ways in which adults discussed the same book—Sandra Cisneros’s House on Mango Street—in a traditional English Department masters-level literature seminar and in a masters-level English Education course designed to function as a book club. Uses a coding scheme that identifies the knowledge sources, kinds of reasoning, and student and teacher roles in discussion to analyze one 90-minute audio-recording of each group’s discussion. Finds that talk in the book club setting was more personal, more collaborative, less teacher-directed, and less text-driven than in the traditional seminar classroom. Argues that the differences represent tensions between the theoretical orientations and pedagogical practices of university departments of English and English education.

Presents articles that explore the characteristics of the diverse aids, genres, and readings used in educational practices from different disciplines such as education, literary theory, fine arts, communication, psychology, sociology, and library science. Addresses the issue of reading within a variety of contexts that include different types of texts such as books, magazines, newspapers, and those available on television and computer. Emphasizes the current challenges faced by educational practitioners in elementary schools and the role that reading literature plays in development. Concludes that reading literature is an important means for learning cultural symbolic productions, which is usually restricted to more advantaged students.


Examines how ethnic folk tales and contemporary short stories, along with strategically constructed questions, affect the reading enjoyment and comprehension of ethnically diverse students (African American, Latino, and Pacific Islanders) in a northern California middle school classroom. Uses statistical tests to analyze students' responses to questions designed to test students' comprehension of six stories (three African or African American folktales and three contemporary African American short stories), to test their analytical skills, and to find out how much they enjoyed the stories. Finds that students rated all the stories high in enjoyment and discusses in detail students' ability to comprehend and critically analyze two of the stories. Argues that culturally relevant stories increase "at risk" students' enjoyment and motivation and that adequate scaffolding of questions, weak readers are capable of demonstrating critical thought.


Examines the teaching of set texts in English in years 7-10. Uses interviews with 15 teachers and 51 students in relation to 28 classes across school contexts ranging from high fee-paying private schools to state schools in working-class areas. Finds that novels remain the dominant form of text taught in English, but that while there are broad similarities among schools in terms of text choice and approach, there are equally important differences, with social class and cultural/ethnic background affecting the way teachers teach. The research also finds that the pattern of students' lack of enthusiasm for reading books cut across class barriers. Concludes that alternative approaches to text study, including the reduction of the shared text to one per year, greater use of other text types ranging from poetry to computer-based texts, greater student choice, and strategies encouraging more active reading such as drama or drawing would increase students' engagement and the effectiveness of text teaching in secondary schools.


Examines how a teacher and students (one Asian, three White, and 11 African American) in a 9th grade English class adopted political and ethical positions in literature discussions. Uses a sociocultural approach and Bakhtin's concept of voice to analyze the discussions of Julius Caesar. Finds that classroom discourse is multifunctional: Speakers simultaneously describe the subject matter and also use speech to position themselves with respect to others and with respect to salient political and ethical issues. Argues that the political positioning does not happen instead of productive conversation but that it is interconnected with it and that teachers might use political positioning as a pedagogical tool.
Teaching and Learning of Writing


Examines how an anti-nuclear test activist during the Cold War asserted an alternative understanding of information against centralized governmental definitions of information in order to foster public opposition to government policy. Uses an enthymematic analysis—i.e., an analysis of syllogisms that include an implicit premise—of the newsletter of the Greater St. Louis Citizens' Committee for Nuclear Information and its successor journals. Finds that these publications provided information undergirded by assumptions regarding threats to everyday life, orientation toward threat-reducing action, large interested institutions that limit access to relevant information, science as an independent and objective source of information, and the responsibilities of a citizen to be informed. Concludes that information is neither disembodied nor neutral but rhetorical and requires an understanding of the relations, actions, and texts within which it is formed and deployed.


To illustrate the analytical concepts of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, genre systems, and recontextualization, examines three theoretical assumptions: that genre systems play an intermediate role between institutional structural properties and individual communicative action, that a central means for identifying texts in a genre system is their intertextual activity, and that the concept of genre systems enables the analyst to foreground the discursively salient components of human activity systems. Illustrates these assumptions in an analysis of one psychotherapist's session notes and rhetorical recontextualization. Finds that psychiatric patients can come to be viewed as the sum of their presenting symptoms when a document such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. is used to classify a disorder. Argues that genre systems, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity are useful tools for understanding complex, historically mediated text/context relationships.


Explores the understandings, performances, and perceptions young writers have about writing. Uses a descriptive case study method conducted in three first-grade classrooms to focus on four aspects of writing centering on the students' beliefs about quality writing, their capabilities in evaluating what they considered to be quality peer writing, and the amount of teacher influence on their perceptions about writing. Finds that what most students articulated about writing revolved around the writing process, conventions for writing, and appearance and spelling. Concludes that young writers are capable of understanding and using complex aspects of the writing process often associated with more experienced writers.


Examines the role of texts in the everyday life of complex organizations. Uses screen-capture technology combined with her data files, notes recorded during the session concerning offline activities, and a postsession retrospective viewing and notemaking to study her own 97-minute session of work at her computer. Identifies a range of ubiquitous, private, and layered texts that she produced or that served to mediate her work. Argues that notions of textuality are in a process of change due to the social transformation mediated by information technology.


Investigates six ways in which writers explicitly seek to acknowledge the presence of readers in
their discourse. Analyzes 240 published research articles from eight disciplines and interviews with insider informants, using categories within five major areas—questions, inclusive language, directives, references to shared knowledge, and asides to the reader—to code the articles. Finds that the authors of the articles had two main rhetorical purposes in appealing to readers: an interpersonal purpose that acknowledged the need to meet readers' expectations of inclusion and a rhetorical purpose of positioning the audience by anticipating and addressing potential objections and alternative interpretations. Argues for the importance of reader engagement in academic argumentation and for attention to the ways in which the discoursal preferences of disciplinary communities rhetorically construct readers.


Studies the toxicity inherent in the manufacturing processes that make print available for mass consumption. Uses historical records to identify the demand for print in various regions of the U.S. Finds that demand for print in the North and West has increased paper production and thus mill pollution in the South, thereby weakening the social institutions that promote and value literacy practices. Argues that globalization of the print industry will likely perpetuate these patterns of uneven and unjust literacy development.


Investigates undergraduate academic literacy as a multimodal achievement game. Uses retrospective interviews and textual analyses to identify the ways in which operations on course content constituted moves in a game. Finds that students' goal in the academic game was to find, move, and display content in order to achieve high points on assessment, with more successful students (1) being more aware of their role as players than less successful students and (2) having more nuanced and planned versions of successful operations that began with expected performances on assessments and moved backward toward the sources. Argues that the New London Group's notion of multiliteracies might serve as an appropriate vehicle for combining consciousness-raising through overt instruction with forms of immersion and critical analysis to encourage more sincere approaches to academic work.


Investigates factors that motivate adolescents' participation in school writing and influence their desire to become skilled writers. Uses semistructured interviews with 19 students (eight boys and 11 girls of varying achievement levels) who were interviewed once each year during fifth, sixth, and tenth grades. Finds that the students' individual goals and personal life issues were a major force that interacted with teacher criteria and guidelines to influence how students responded to school writing assignments and that the low achieving students whose writing motivation had declined from earlier years did not now believe their ideas were respected, instead believing that their teachers were interested only in their texts' organization and grammar. Concludes with some suggestions for teaching writing based on the interviews and existing writing research, for example, that teachers and students analyze students' writing together in individual conferences.


Investigates the production and reception of a corpus of documentary exchanges in which condominium owners voiced their opposition to renovations proposed by their board of directors. Analyzed the condominium owners' texts as instruments of social action written with the intent to resist, subvert, and obstruct; and conducted interviews with a sample of text authors and other stakeholders. Finds that social, intellectual, and political processes led to a multiplicity of readings that were transformed through social interaction. Concludes that the transformational capability of
acts of writing and reading by both cultural insiders and outsiders makes the finality of any reading an illusion.


Examines the processes of myth building and counter myth building—i.e., a critical stance that interrogates competing myths and encourages new ones—at the feminist organization GirlZone and on RadioGirl, the weekly radio program it cosponsors. As a participant observer, collected 22 months of field notes from organizers' meetings, weekly workshops for girls, and public activities; analyzed textual artifacts by GirlZone organizers and participants; conducted interviews with organizers, girls, and weekly workshop facilitators; and solicited organizers' feedback on the research. Finds that valuing and engaging the tensions within and between various myths proved more productive than seeking to overcome them. Argues that building counter myths enabled the program organizers to identify viable if troubled resources in their work toward social change.


Tests a model for assessing critical thinking in the writing of L2 learners to determine whether content familiarity plays a role in critical thinking. Analyzed writing samples from 45 Japanese undergraduate university students from three English Writing classrooms, with each student providing responses to two essays on familiar and unfamiliar topics, using criteria for assessing critical thinking taken from L1 and L2 writing textbooks and additional criteria from Toulmin’s model of argument. Finds that the quality of critical thinking depended on the topic content, with a familiar topic generating better critical thinking. Argues that different assumptions between L1 and L2 cultures may lead to misinterpretations of the critical thinking ability of L2 learners.

Technology and Literacy


Reports on a year's investigation of a project designed to help low-income Latino parents acquire familiarity with computers and computer-related technologies as tools for learning and communication in collaboration with their children. Uses statistical tests to analyze pre- and post-assessment measures of computer awareness, computer basics, basic word processing skills, and multimedia and telecommunications familiarity and sociocultural theory to analyze qualitative data on parents' and children's interactions. Finds the 18 parents made significant gains in every area of assessment and that people learning together acquire knowledge of what to learn as well as how to learn through their interactions. Argues that the project has been successful thus far because of the blending of support for parents’ learning of computer skills with sense-making literacy activities involving their children.


Explores 13 K-12 teachers' reports of how the Internet influenced literacy and literacy instruction in their classroom. Uses constant-comparative data analysis that included e-mail interviews, participants' reflective journals, web pages, online articles, and lesson plans to discover how the teachers viewed the Internet's influence on reading as an extension of traditional literacy skills. Finds that elementary teachers noticed an increase in their students' motivation to write when their work was published on the Internet for a greater audience, although secondary teachers did not see such increased motivation. Argues that teacher technology preparation and literacy research need to address these issues more closely.

Investigates the experiences of ten public school teachers whose classes spent two months in a high tech facility (Ameritech Classroom of the Future) made available to them at Kent State University's College of Education. Uses a survey given to the 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade teachers and interviews with teachers after their experiences in the Ameritech Classroom. Finds the teachers reported that the availability of technology altered class dynamics in several ways, including the way material was presented to the students, the way learning activities could be better individualized for each student, and the way students worked more extensively in teams. Concludes with questions about whether the technology-rich classroom is cost-effective in spite of its effectiveness during one semester.

Awards Announced for Excellence in Technical and Scientific Writing

The Committee on Technical and Scientific Communication of NCTE has announced the winners of its Awards for Excellence in Technical and Scientific Writing. The awards were presented during the CCCC Annual Convention in Chicago, March 21–23, 2002. Book judges were Kathryn Raign and Dan Riordan; article judges were Susan Harkness Regli and Isabelle Thompson. Brenda Sims, University of North Texas, served as coordinator of the awards selection committee.


The deadline for entries for the 2002 awards competition, which is open to works published from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001, is June 1, 2002. Letters of acknowledgement will be sent to individuals submitting nominations. Submissions should be sent with four copies of the article or book and specifically entered into one of the above categories. Any work originally written in a language other than English must be submitted in translation. Each submission may be nominated in only one category. Individuals submitting nominations are encouraged to consult with authors about the category most appropriate for their work. Submissions should include author's name, telephone number, mailing address, and e-mail address.

The NCTE Committee on Technical and Scientific Communication encourages nominations for the awards. Self-nominations are permitted. Send nominations and entries to: NCTE 2001 Technical and Scientific Award, c/o NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096, Attention: Laura Johnston.

Annotated Bibliography