Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English

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Once a year, in the November issue, RTE publishes a selected bibliography of recent research in the teaching of English and related fields. The listing is selective; we make no attempt to include all research that appeared in the period under review. In addition to abstracted studies, beginning with this issue, titles of other related research are also included.

Bilingual/Second Language Learning


Examines the extent to which unequal social relations between minority and majority languages (and their speakers) are reproduced and represented through everyday practices, and the ways in which middle school ESL students are limited in their ability to practice and learn English. “Legitimate” and “illegitimate” forms of talk are identified through a year-long ethnographic study of a classroom, with both teachers and students communicating an implicit classroom ideological separation between talk and work.


Explores the relationship between first- and second-language reading strategies and affective factors through case studies of four adult immigrant Spanish-speaking women considered academically underprepared for college. Participants’ beliefs about reading and mental processes occurring during reading are examined through think-aloud protocols and interviews; comprehension is assessed through retelling and discrete-point measures, and both beliefs and comprehension are examined in relation to reading strategies. Finds that affective factors are critical in reading, and that those bilingual individuals who view their home language as a resource see reading as a process of meaning construction and employ particular strategies when confronted with texts in either language.

Addresses the often-ignored heterogeneity of immigrant learners, particularly those at the middle school level who may bring various language, literacy, and schooling experiences with them into the school setting. Explores the particular characteristics of middle school structure and the lack of preparation by teachers to meet the needs of English language learners of this age. Discusses best instructional practices.


Analyzes 45 elementary Mexican bilingual (Spanish and Náhuat) children’s editing and correction strategies and metalinguistic awareness to determine developmental tendencies across the elementary grades.

**Other Related Research:**


**Classroom Discussion/Interaction**


Contributes to debates about boys’ relative under-achievement in comparison with that of girls by examining the processes of learning through talk-related activities. Finds that in small discussion groups in language arts classrooms, girls tend to use linguistic styles to build relationships with others around shared topics. Boys employ linguistic styles that define their hetero-sexual masculinity and, in some cases, resist cooperative interactions.


Analyzes fifth grade students’ perspectives on discussion groups. Finds that these students did understand factors influencing the success of discussions, particularly with regards to gender
and student domination. Suggests the value of considering student perceptions of discussion experiences.


Explores the relationship between the teacher’s role and 3rd grade students’ participation within literature discussion groups. Students experience difficulty shifting from teacher-led to student-led discussion formats. The teacher assumes an important role in scaffolding students’ difficulties within the discussions.


Examines conversations among teachers, students, and peers during the reading of literary and nonfiction texts. Focuses on the instructional scaffolding used by teachers and peers to help learners develop more complex understandings and use strategies independently to comprehend and share new knowledge. Finds that scaffolding fosters complex conceptual understandings and promotes a repertoire of strategies that are interspersed when needed during instructional conversations. Supports the need to consider the values and beliefs of teachers and the needs of learners when making scaffolding decisions.


Employs “event-history analysis” to chart sequential relationships between discourse moves and dialogic interactions in 200 8th- and 9th-grade English and social studies classrooms. Finds that the use of authentic teacher questions, uptake, and student questions invite high levels of student discussion participation.

Other Related Research:


**Discourse Analysis**


Applies discourse analysis and the concept of *habitus* to a high school literature teacher’s “orienting discourses” related to student response in an advanced college-prep English class. The college-prep students’ notions of what it means to “do English” (practices of critical analysis or language use based on their family’s cultural capital) are seen as consistent with the teacher’s “orienting discourses” and tied to academic achievement.


Applies critical discourse analysis to uses of language in literacy events in terms of genre (ways of interacting), discourse (ways of representing), and style (ways of being) to two years of ethnographic data of an African-American mother and daughter (a special education student) as they attempted to negotiate the boundaries between home, community, and school. Reveals ideological tensions between the discourses of mothering and the discourses of schooling/special education by which the mother and daughter begin to define themselves and their sense of agency. Suggests that while critical discourse analysis reveals operations of power and language, it cannot account for all of the contradictory subjectivities and paradoxes associated with the relationships between home and school literacies.

**Other Related Research:**


Literacy


Analyzes urban African American preschool and kindergarten children’s narratives in terms of tensions between text and performance, finding that well-formulated narratives may not necessarily be engaging. Argues that narratives in school are evaluated more in terms of text, thereby diminishing recognition of the social value of narrative performance.


Investigates differences in the ways in which 1st grade students with varying levels of classroom peer-status and classroom reading-status experience intended collaborative literacy events throughout one academic year. Finds that children within the same collaborative literacy event have different experiences, with successful participation often determined by status in the group and the nature and quality of the relationships between the participants. Asserts the importance of attending to the personal histories of individuals when conceptualizing social context.


Documents an intervention study in which teachers develop academic tasks for 3rd-grade students that challenge learners by requiring them to write, collaborate with peers, and work on activities over several days. Finds that students’ goal orientations (task mastery vs. ego-social or work-avoidant) vary depending on the extent to which teachers use challenging tasks. Asserts that students express a strong preference for high-challenging tasks and believe that they can achieve success with these tasks. Observes that test scores increase in classrooms where students have more opportunities to complete challenging tasks; the greatest gains occur for the lowest achievers.


Tracks the development of a rural working-class female’s literacy practices over a five-year period from her senior year through four years of college. In high school, this student posed as middle class by appropriating middle-class literacy practices, but continually struggles during college because she has difficulty linking these practices to the dominant discourses operating in her college courses. She also lacks the resources, support systems, and access to faculty afforded to middle-class students. Her high school and college coursework rarely incorporate the issues of class difference shaping her experience, creating a sense of alienation from academic work. Suggests the need for instruction that directly addresses portrayals of class difference in texts as a means of helping working-class students examine the often-implicit relationship between class and power.


Seeks to add to understanding of literacy as it relates to African Americans, with a focus on African American female literacies. Argues that mother-tongue literacy is central to literacy education. Defines African American female literacies, demonstrates how Black females lin-
guistically navigate and convey their unique understanding of themselves to others, and sketches challenges and new directions for African American literacy education.


Analyzes Los Angeles Latino charter high school students’ uses of dropout narratives to project their identities and to define stances towards threats, violence, mistreatment, or boredom at school. By foregrounding aspects of the setting as leading to their reactions, the students define a causal relationship between the negative school contexts and their actions in ways that portray these actions in a positive light, as necessary or justifiable responses to violent, threatening situations. The results suggest the value of teacher attention to student narratives, which often portray student difficulties and complexities.


Explores the interactions and dialogic responsiveness between teachers and second and third grade students during literacy instruction. Focuses on how teachers attend to the cognitive, cultural, motivational, emotional, and physical needs of learners in a holistic and interactive manner, and how these teachers set up classrooms that are supportive of students’ literacy development. Asserts the importance of a teacher’s understandings of what is important for students’ literacy learning, and the need for teachers to respond to individual learners’ contributions and participation styles.


Analyzes tellers’ uses of “interactional positioning” through narrative techniques to portray themselves as certain kinds of persons or “dialogic selves” within particular settings or events. Tellers voice various discourses to position themselves in relationships to others’ uses of language and institutional discourses. Provides specific methods of sociolinguistic analysis for embedding narratives within larger social practices.

Other Related Research:


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Literary Response


Analyzes two 5th graders’ and a teacher’s responses to multicultural literature across four different contexts that vary according to group (small versus large) and text selection (student versus teacher). While the student-directed discussion is productive, students also struggle, suggesting the value of teacher support to help students grapple with difficult topics of cultural difference.


Analyzes changes in 123 8th grade students’ responses to multicultural literature reflected in students’ writing and pre-post survey data related to their interpretations and attitudes. Although the students are engaged in reading the texts, they do not increase their understanding of people from minority cultures, or grow in self-understanding, as measured by a series of attitude scales.


Analyzes one teacher’s use of a range of strategies designed to induct 5th/6th graders into the discourses of a literary community. These include “apprenticeship strategies” (providing background information about literature), “tour-guiding” (aligning responses with a culture of literary appreciation), “lifting the level” (extending response in terms of larger issues), “spotlighting” (teacher modeling of language analysis), “setting it up” (insuring shared interpretations), “unpacking and lowering the level” (providing additional assistance), “solidarity strategies”
(which position participants as members of a shared community), and “support/empathy before teaching” (empathizing with student difficulties, valuing student topics, and expressing affection for students).


Investigates how school language practices such as reading are situated in the lives of poor and working-class girls. Focuses on the imaginative responses of two girls to horror stories, and on the relation of those fictional hauntings to the high-poverty landscapes of their lives. Attempts to convey the material, cultural and emotional complexities of reading for poor or working-class girls.


Formulates and demonstrates the uses of “literary anthropology” based on hermeneutic inquiry to examine the contexts and experiences shaping literary identifications, interpretations, and revisions of interpretations. Describes the influence of autobiographical experiences, historical events, and geographic contexts shaping responses to the novel *Fugitive Pieces*.

**Other Related Research:**


Reading


Reports the results of an independent study attempting to replicate the findings of the National Reading Panel. Finds that programs using systematic phonics instruction outperform those with less systematic phonics with $d=.24$, substantially smaller than the NRP finding of $d=.41$. Also finds effect sizes for individual tutoring ($d=.40$) and systematic language activities ($d=.29$) and indicates that systematic phonics instruction combined with these may triple the value of phonics alone. Suggests that the NRP analysis was incomplete and that their work may be interpreted in ways that will result in misdirection of policy, curriculum, and instruction.


Analyzes 8th, 10th, and 12th grade National Educational Longitudinal Survey data to determine effects of quantity of assignments, coherence of instruction, student voice in curricular and pedagogical issues, and the content of instruction on reading, writing, and understanding of literature. After controlling for prior achievement, quantity and coherence have no effect; while voice related to “show that you really understand the material” has a positive effect on reading. Content has the most substantial impact on achievement growth; emphasis on analytical writing has a strong effect on reading achievement; literature study has smaller effects; and grammar has consistently negative effects. These results may explain relationships between students’ track position and reading achievement.


Explores performance of masculinities within classroom literature circles. Focuses on the experiences of a small group of working-class African American 5th grade boys in selecting and discussing books in the classroom. Finds that the boys’ reading practices both shape and are shaped by ways they define themselves in relation to feminity and to other boys in the class. Demonstrates the need for safe spaces in which boys can adopt different discourses of masculinity and notes underlying power relationships affecting the process of student choice of books.

Reports the leisure/recreational reading practices of a group of Australian teenage “reluctant readers” who are academically successful. After eliminating the typical causal factors of reading disability and social disadvantage, the study reveals that some boys identified as reluctant readers in academic settings are capable readers when practices are situated in personally relevant goals. Highlights the mediating role of parents, particularly parents’ privileging of print-based reading and the adolescents’ resistance of these practices in favor of non-privileged forms such as magazines and electronic forms. Questions the notion of reading reluctance as a single, deficit-oriented construct in light of socio-cultural theories of language.


Describes the development and validation of the Narrative Comprehension of Picture Books task, an assessment of young children’s comprehension of wordless picture books. The task is designed to assess narrative comprehension independent of decoding ability. Results of three studies of K-2 students indicate that this assessment is developmentally appropriate for 5- to 8-year-old children, is valid, and yields reliable and quantifiable data through standard procedures that are generalizable across picture books. Suggests that teachers may adapt procedures from the test for classroom diagnosis.

**Other Related Research:**


Technology/Media Uses


Analyzes two middle school females’ productions of “fanfictions” based on their exposure to Japanese animation and comics—writing constructed primarily for peers and online audiences, as opposed to teachers. Analysis of writing reflects uses of visual, linguistic, and audio design features; intertextual links to gender discourses; and hybrid uses of multiple genres. Suggests the value of such writing in the classroom as a means of establishing adolescents as capable producers of texts.


Analyzes 22 middle school students’ uses of technology tools to acquire certain habits of mind in an inquiry-based project linking science and literature based on studying the environment of a neighborhood. Finds that while technology is a useful tool, it does not replace learning direct observational skills in studying a neighborhood. Notes the need to consider science and literature as separate ways of learning and thinking.


Reports findings of the project in Great Britain, Children, Young People, and the Changing Media Environment (first reported as a London School of Economics [LSE] report http://psych.lse.ac.uk/young_people), and some of the earlier material from Livingstone and
Livingstone’s and Bovill’s studies of children and the media. A study of leisure time and media use by children and the perspectives of their parents, it draws on a national survey of 6- to 17-year-olds, combined with wide-ranging qualitative interviews with children at home and at school. Focuses on the notion of media environment within a framework of late modernity to mediate between child-centered and media-centered approaches. Examines how changing media parallel changing notions of childhood and a definition of children as actors in their households rather than objects of media effects. Indicates that interactive computer technologies are becoming part of the infrastructure of the home, although new media have not displaced children’s current leisure activities and the use of media is a highly individualized matter. Concludes that the home is changing as a result of media and that the media-rich home is replacing street culture in children’s experiences, while the bedroom-media culture is replacing shared family spaces. Poses crucial questions concerning how literacies are changing and how teachers might respond in teaching critical literacy skills.

Other Related Research:
CAMMACK, D. A. (2002). Literacy, technology, and a room of her own: Analyzing adolescent girls’ online conversations from historical and technological literacy perspectives. In D. L. Schallert et al. (Eds.), 51st Yearbook of the National Reading Conference (pp. 129-141). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.

Writing
Determines the validity and reliability of a four-point scoring guide in assessing first-year college students’ critical thinking skills, finding significant correlations with a test of critical thinking skills and high inter-rater reliability between trained scorers. Also finds significant improvements in students’ critical thinking in a writing course focusing on critical thinking.
 Applies a Bakhtinian dialogic model of language to analyze the uses of foregrounding and backgrounding of perspectives and rhetorical strategies in one “early secondary” student’s ar-
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This student employs “double dialogue” references to both immediate teacher/peer audiences as well as previous past voices and experiences. Finds that decisions about foregrounding and backgrounding entail both awareness of immediate interactional relationships (the application of an interactionalist model) and social conventions (the application of a social constructivist model), suggesting the need for an alternative, dialogic model that transcends the limitations of both models.


Examines the narratives of 27 Puerto Rican and Mexican students, written 1st in 8th grade and then again as juniors in high school. Finds the narratives rich in critiques of educational experiences, as well as significant for insights into high drop-out rates of Latino children, the reasons behind students’ academic decisions, and interventions needed to change negative schooling processes and outcomes.


Summarizes data on the lack of writing instruction in secondary schools. Seeks to intervene in the broader societal conversation on literacy and writing by making the case for teaching writing effectively in ways that are persuasive to decision makers, administrators, and the general public. Examines myths and realities surrounding the teaching of writing in schools. Offers recommendations for developing effective writing programs, as regards pedagogy, professional development, and assessment.


Analyzes the uses of drama activities around creation of toy stories in a 1st-grade classroom. Finds that dramatic play around toys mediates developing of storylines, shifting from imagination to reflection of social context, coauthoring of texts, adopting of characters’ perspectives, representing objects and events in real time, adopting author perspectives, employing different sign systems, and anticipating familiar audience response.


Analyzes the “self-positionings” of two Norwegian high school students and their teacher as they adopt different stances within discourse roles in self-selected writing over a 2-year period. Each participant adopts a range of different positionings depending on their perceptions of self and reciprocity with others, their notions of and attitudes towards genres and shared knowledge expertise, the extent to which the writing is school writing, and shifting perspectives of what counts in a particular situation. Suggests the value of teachers’ awareness of their students’ self-positionings within the ecological context of a classroom world.


Compares four engineering and four writing teachers’ think-aloud responses to three students’ writings on technical and non-technical topics. While the engineering teachers’ technical expertise engenders engagement with topics and evaluations of the validity of ideas in students’
writing, these teachers are more ambivalent about evaluating rhetorical strategies. They are also not influenced by lack of expertise in their evaluation of writing, while the writing teachers are influenced by lack of expertise. Suggests the value of joint professional development training in both engineering and writing instruction.


Analyzes twelve tutorials in a university writing center with six native and six non-native speakers of English. Successful tutorials are characterized by instances of conversational turn structure, tutor mitigation of directives, simultaneous laughter, affiliative overlaps, small talk, and tutor helpfulness. Suggests the need to include communication strategies in tutor training.

Other Related Research:


Professional Development


Documents professional and personal changes over a three-year period in five teachers through their participation in a media education and production project. Demonstrates that in acquiring knowledge of media codes and conventions and using that knowledge to construct media texts, these teachers adopt critical stances and new social practices involved in their production projects. Suggests the value of moving beyond simply critique to active production of media texts.


Applies narrative analysis to portray the tensions inherent in one African American teacher’s practices in a highly diverse urban Toronto elementary school. Argues that narrative inquiry is essential to studying multiculturalism as a way of understanding multiple, diverse cultural perspectives and tensions. Deconstructs her own narrative expectations of the idealized “Ms. Multiculturalism” teacher role—as sensitive, caring, community-involved, based on observa-
tions of the teacher that challenged these expectations and suggested the complex relationships and tensions between researcher and teacher and between theory and practice.


Addresses the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice in preservice teacher education by redefining theory in terms of Vygotsky’s notion of concepts and practice in terms of goal-driven, culturally constituted activity mediated by tools. Based on observation and interview analysis of one elementary and two English programs, identifies the problem of inconsistent uses of concepts such as constructivism within and between university and school settings given their different goals and cultures. Students in programs who experience inconsistent, fragmented uses of concepts are ill equipped to develop well-defined beliefs about teaching. Cites examples of teachers having to revise and accommodate to traditional school curriculums.

Other Related Research:


