Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English

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Discourse Analysis/Cultural Difference


Conducts an ethnographic analysis of 12th grade working- and middle-class females’ identity performances mediated by discourses of gender, race, and class, as well as differences in cultural capital. Finds that working-class participants employ gender identity markers related to appearance to establish themselves as members of a female peer culture, to distinguish themselves from the preps, and to challenge their marginalization in the school. Finds that the categories for defining differences between groups are largely constituted by race; students lacked a discourse of class for interrogating their marginal status and for defining commonalities between working-class practices across racial groups in opposition to the middle-class school culture, leading them to rely on essentialist discourses of race or gender to explain differences in their peers’ social practices.


Compares the influence of different teaching practices and gendered discourses on elementary students’ learning. In a classroom taught by a male teacher, generating original, distinct ideas was highly valued, reflecting discourses of individualism, expertise, and competition, and creating a context in which competitive male students were privileged while “nice” students were disadvantaged, and students in mixed-gender groups had difficulty engaging in collaborative group work. In a classroom taught by a female teacher in which a discourse of collaboration and tolerance for others was valued and modeled through the teacher’s use of facilitative talk, both female and male students often succeeded, although concerns were expressed that girls were not acquiring self-assertion practices.


Analyzes the ways in which school-reform discourses constituted by “fast capitalism” position three second-language learners and their families enrolled in a California elementary school.
Finds that reform discourses of reading and writing accountability undermine these students’ attempts to acquire literacy practices given their second-language learner needs.


Conducts a meta-analysis of composition theory and research. Identifies six discourses for use in analyzing different approaches to teaching writing: “skills” (explicit teaching of phonics/accuracy), “creativity” (fostering creative expression through content and style), “creative self-expression” (implicit teaching of language experience), “process” (mental and practical processes), “genre” (explicit teaching of text-types), “social practices” (fostering purposeful, contextual communication), and “sociopolitical” (constructed practice involving contestation/change and critical awareness of how discourses and genres operate). Notes contradictions between and among these discourses; suggests that comprehensive writing instruction includes methods from all the discourses.


Discusses the methodological need to focus on silences evident in a study of White teachers’ group discussions of multicultural education, in the form of not responding to certain pre-assigned questions, reluctance to discuss White privilege, not self-disclosing specific details, and hesitating or pausing given apprehension about offending others. Argues that such silences imply meanings that can be included in empirical analyses.


Analyzes the relationships between 30 Latino 7th and 8th students’ funds of knowledge and discourses operating in home, an urban Detroit neighborhood community, and peer worlds as taken up or excluded from their work in their middle-school science classrooms. Identifies instances in which instruction can exploit these students’ funds of knowledge to create learning in “third space” contexts among school and home, community, and peer worlds.


Analyzes the discourses of masculinities employed by northeastern British adolescent males. With few employment opportunities and a loss of traditional workplace socialization, these males turn to active participation in soccer fan clubs involving physical, ritual display of team support. Finds that these males closely identify with their local community site or family, and that their rejection of work that requires them to move to another community reflects their need for symbolic stability to counteract the instability of a shifting, global economy.


Analyzes preservice literacy teachers’ weekly pen-pal interactions with first-grade students. Finds that half of the teachers adopted a discourse of adult authority through initiating and controlling topics, posing multiple questions, and formulating brief responses to student writing. The other half adopted a discourse of shared authority through facilitating and elaborating on
children’s topic initiations and limiting the number of questions, resulting in more student topic initiation and more frequent and elaborated responses than was the case with students positioned by a discourse of adult authority.


Conducts a critical discourse analysis of the official statements formulated by the administration of Miami University, Ohio, in response to issues of diversity, racism, and standards on campus. Finds that the President uses first-person pronouns to equate himself with the University community and to frame that community as exclusive. A discourse of “diversity” is employed to mask lack of access and to equate a perceived decline in standards with student protests regarding lack of access.

**Other Related Research:**


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Literacy


Analyzes children’s print uses in low SES homes and at school. Finds 65 genres employed in homes and 55 genres employed in school. Details implications concerning the need to integrate home and school use of genres.


Analyzes survey data on 355 teachers from 45 states on their spelling instruction. Finds that most employ traditional basal spelling instruction; some are aware of research on developmental differences in spelling knowledge, and some employ more innovative practices, but most lack an understanding on how to teach spelling.

Analyzes the influence of teachers’ skill-based framing of literacy shaped by the British National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching the Literacy Hour in terms of reading, writing and spelling skills on the exclusion and marginalization of students with special needs during the literacy-hour instructional period.


Analyzes preschool children’s parents’ instructional activities. Finds that the majority of parents report teaching letter names (71%) and sounds (65%); fewer parents report teaching printing letters (45%), writing words (29%), reading words (26%), or reading stories (26%). Only instruction in teaching of alphabet knowledge and writing words had a statistically significant effect on children’s literacy test performance.


Based on self-efficacy theory and Csikszentmihalyi’s work on optimal experience, suggests that boys pursue activities outside of school, including literacy activities, in which they feel competent. Authors conclude that literacy activities in school exacerbate gender differences in literacy performance and that boys often reject school-based literacy activities because they do not feel competent in them.

Other Related Research:
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**Literary Response**


Content analysis of 4,255 fictional texts published between 1992 and 2001 for middle-grade students found that only one-sixth of these texts contained at least one protagonist of color as contrasted with the fact that one-third of children in the 2000 U. S. census are children of color.


Analyzes the influence of participatory discussion approaches in 64 secondary classrooms on students’ literacy performance. Finds that the level and quality of participation in discussion significantly predicts students’ literacy performance for both high- and low-achieving students.


Analyzes interview data from 33 girls regarding their engagement with different types of literature. Finds that girls do not necessarily identify with female characters similar to themselves, but base their preferences for genre novels (mystery, fantasy, Gothic, and science fiction) on ways in which they are engaged by suspenseful participation in and visual representations of fictional worlds. Finds that the experience with shifting perspectives and voices in these alternative text worlds leads them to recognize their own reality as only one version of reality. Challenges promoting texts through assumed similarity of characters and reader.


Analyzes urban African-American preschool and kindergarten children’s uses of narrative as text and narratives as performance. Finds that narrative text production may not be associated with narrative performance and may be evaluated in limited ways, marginalizing the uses of oral narrative performance as central to construction of identities and social relationships.


Examines the effects of using a variety of writing assignments in literature education on 9th graders’ literary understanding and their orientation toward literature and writing. Compares this writing-oriented approach to a “traditional” approach in which writing is limited to writing summaries and compositions on literature. Finds that the writing-oriented group perceived
writing as more useful and improved more in their interpretation of a literary text than the traditional group. No difference was found in text comprehension or orientation toward literature.


Describes an intergenerational reading/writing-about-text program. Argues that the emotional connections between 23 eighth-grade language arts students and their elderly reading partners allowed the students to explore the books they read together in an increasingly sophisticated and profound manner. Explores the interweaving of emotion and cognition in response to literature.


Compares first-year college students’ use of a think-and-feel aloud (TFA) with think-aloud only (TA) response to two poems. The TFA group identified more poetic devices, reported higher interest, showed greater sensitivity to the images and tone of the poems, and made more elaborate comments than did the TA group. Concludes that explicit attention to feelings may lead to deeper, more complex responses to poetry.


Tracks students from grades 7 to 11 in 23 Dutch schools in their development of literary response as measured by the Literary Response Questionnaire (Miall & Kuiken, 1995), a measure of students’ predominate response stance: leisure escape, story-driven reading, empathy, imagery vividness, insight, concern with author, and rejecting literary values. Finds a decrease in all seven areas from grades 7 to 11, although less so for females, students with high leisure-time reading and larger vocabularies, and students from more culturally sophisticated homes. Instruction that focuses on experiencing texts reduces the decline. Structural analysis was only beneficial from grade 10 onwards and had negative effects under grade 10 in terms of increase in rejecting literary values.

*Other Related Research:*


CAUGHLAN, S. (2003). Exploring the gap between espoused and enacted cultural models of literature discussions. In C. M. Fairbanks, J. Worthy, B. Maloch, J. V. Hoffman, & D. L Schallert (Eds.), *52nd Yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 150-161.). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.


**Reading**


Evaluates a program for 3rd graders in which reading instruction is integrated into social studies. The program involves an open learning situation; children formulate a problem themselves, collect and read information to work out the problem, and present the results of their study. Reading strategies are explained and demonstrated by the teacher. Finds that the program has beneficial effects on children’s knowledge and use of reading strategies and on their reading motivation, but not on their reading comprehension.


Reports results of a study of 947 two- to five-year-old children assessed using a range of phonemic sensitivity measures. Finds that children generally master first word-level skills, next syllable-level skills, next onset/rime-level skills, and finally phoneme-level skills. Finds also that children generally can blend phonological information before they can elide it, with the exception of phonemes. Supports a developmental perspective on acquisition of phonological sensitivity.


Describes results of longitudinal multicase study of the literacy instruction and learning of 13
children enrolled in a low-SES, high-minority, high ELL school from kindergarten through second grade. Finds that although achievement was not a linear trajectory, 10 of 13 children were at or above grade level by the end of second grade. Shows that students who are behind in kindergarten can later achieve at grade level. Finds that teachers made few connections to home language and lacked strategies for working with ELL students.


Investigates the values and beliefs of low-income parents from diverse ethnic groups in relation to helping their children on school work. Examines the relationships between ethnicity, the child’s grade level, the subject matter, parents’ perceptions of their children’s achievement, and teacher encouragement. Finds that parents from diverse ethnic backgrounds consistently believe it is their responsibility to facilitate their children’s success in school. Suggests that greater efforts on the part of educators may be required to support parent involvement in specific subject areas such as math and as grade levels increase.


Examines 90 Finnish children’s reading performances and their developmental trajectories during the first and the second grade. Identifies different groups through cluster analysis, using the categories of “competent,” “technical,” and “poor” readers. Group membership in the competent and technical reader groups was relatively stable across time, but less so in the poor reader group. Seven reading paths were identified of which three were comparatively regressive. Discusses the specific Finnish language factors that could contribute to the progressive paths of poor readers.


Examines the effects of inference training on the reading comprehension of 6- to 9-year old skilled and less-skilled comprehenders. Students learned to look for clue words, to generate questions and to predict the content of hidden sentences in narrative texts. A control group received standard comprehension exercises. Finds that inference training was the most effective for both the skilled and less skilled group.


Examines the growth of word knowledge in kindergarten and first grade readers, attempting to delineate the relationship between concept of word in text (facility in finger-point reading) and phoneme awareness. Uses path analysis to outline the sequence of skill development within a model of emergent reading that extends from alphabet knowledge through contextual reading ability. Suggests that the concept of word in text may be a bridge between an early phonemic awareness skill, beginning consonant awareness, and later-developing skill in phoneme segmentation.

Examines the effect of online versus traditional paper text presentation on undergraduate students’ knowledge and beliefs. Online-presented persuasive texts were more difficult to understand, less interesting, and the authors less credible. The medium of presentation had minimal effects on the level of persuasion. Suggests that poor readers will encounter difficulties with online texts, especially when these texts are multi-linear.


Examines the relation between metacognition, motivation, and reading in Grades 7 and 8 in Germany. Shows that reading self-concept and metacognition differ between good and weak readers, metacognition being the best predictor for reading performance. Results proved to be stable over time, as the functional relations between these concepts are established in the early years. Discusses the importance of starting early, even before primary school, with explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies and the use of these strategies in various contexts.


Describes results of a controlled experimental study in which the experimental group of schools used running records to inform literacy instruction while the control group engaged in action research. With prior achievement and collective teacher efficacy as covariates, participation in the running records treatment had a significant effect on student achievement, supporting the use of systematic formative assessment procedures in improving literacy instruction and learning.


Investigates everyday reading of expository texts in higher education, and the changes in reading strategies over time. Finds that law students use memorization and organization strategies to process information, while monitoring and elaboration are used to construct linkages external to the text. Over time students use less text-internal and more text-external sources (e.g., self-made notes).


Analyzes the reading assessments of individual students who failed a typical fourth-grade state reading test. Finds patterns of how students perform in relation to word identification, meaning and fluency. Outlines six distinct profiles for students who failed the test (e.g., “slow word callers”) and provides a case-study example for each. Suggests the importance of going beyond large-scale test results to identify and provide instruction to meet individual student’s needs.

Other Related Research


**Second Language Learning**


Reviews data from seventeen studies examining accommodation strategies for English learners in content-area assessments. Describes dilemmas in accommodations: who should be eligible to receive accommodation, how the modified assessment score should be reported, whether the test remains a valid measure, and how feasible the accommodation is to implement. Accommodation approaches studied include extra time, published or customized dictionaries, oral administration, and others. Finds that one of the most promising test accommodations is modifying the language (but not the content) of test items for students.


Reports on a vocabulary intervention study that combined direct word instruction with word-learning strategy instruction in nine fifth-grade classrooms across the U.S. Examines growth in word knowledge and reading comprehension abilities of English learners (ELLs) and English-only (EO). Finds that a challenging curriculum that teaches academic vocabulary, promotes awareness of multiple word meanings, and models word-learning strategies such as using contextual information, morphology and cognates, significantly improves the performance of both ELL and EO fifth graders as compared to a control group.


Documents the relationship of a phonological awareness intervention to growth in oral English proficiency, as compared to a story-reading treatment for Spanish speakers in kindergarten. Finds changes in phonological awareness variables to be the only significant predictors of change in oral English proficiency. Recommends a balanced reading instructional program for Spanish speaking kindergarteners that includes not only story reading, but also phonological awareness activities to enhance oral language development.


Examines the language and literacy practices of four classrooms in two Mexican schools over a period of approximately six months. Through observations, interviews, and the review of docu-
ments and publicly displayed texts, seeks to understand how school practices contribute to a literacy habitus for educators and students. Finds that considerable freedom exists for spoken language in the Mexican classrooms, while written language is highly controlled and valued on the basis of its correctness of form. Reading occupies a middle ground with a high degree of control on oral reading only. Contrasts the standards for conventional writing in school with the eclectic forms of the publicly displayed writing in the surrounding community. Recommends re-theorizing reading practices within specific historical and social contexts with an understanding of power structures within the community.

Other Related Research:

Teacher Education/Professional Development
Contrasts the professional discourses shaping 3 language researchers’ and 3 language teachers’ responses to researcher- and teacher-oriented journal articles. Finds that researchers focus on issues of research validity while teachers focus on clarity, personal style, and applicability to teaching.


Tracks four elementary education preservice teachers during their initial training program and student teaching to their teaching two years later. Finds that the theoretical perspectives initially acquired in their programs strongly influence their curriculum and instruction choices and whether they perceive themselves as change agents. Posits the importance of examining theoretical issues related to literacy instruction during preservice programs.


Analyzes 15 teachers’ application of methods acquired in two teacher-research courses to study of and changes made in school systems. Finds that while mandated testing, prescribed reading approaches, and teaching schedule limited the extent to which they could engage in innovation and reflection associated with teacher-research projects, teachers changed in their perceptions of themselves and their relationships with students, parents, and colleagues.

Other Related Research:


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Technology/Media


Analyzes media audiences’ active construction of media texts related to gender, class, and race identity construction. Finds that largely female participates on one fan chat site establish a gendered construction of a virtual community that served the need for shared relationships. Finds that whites and Native American adults’ construction of a script for a hypothetical television show indicates that Whites created stories that reflected their own mainstream White cul-
tural experiences, while Native Americans’ scripts highlighted the experience of being an outsider as well as portraying Native American characters in heroic roles.


Explores the nature of genre as response via the genre of content-based riddles, a genre chosen by students within an online forum, the e-pal project. Education graduate students and the author exchanged e-mail letters with 3rd graders over a period of two academic years. Discusses riddling as a counterscript genre, presenting excerpts from a four-month segment of the project.


Analyzes levels of engagement through discussions of literature on e-mail, bulletin boards, and MOOs, as well as 8th grade and University students’ reflections on transcripts generated by the MOO discussion site. Students recognized the successful aspects of the discussions, as well as ways to improve their discussions through improved listening and question-asking.


Uses meta-analysis of word-processing effects on students’ writing quality/revision. Finds that word-processing had a positive effect on the quantity of student writing (more so for middle and high school students than for elementary age students), and a small positive effect on writing quality; students using word processing made more revision than students using pencil/pen.


Examines the effects of year-long media-literacy instruction involving critical analysis of purposes, techniques, values, potential interpretations, and omissions in literary and media texts on 293 11th grade students' reading comprehension, writing, and critical-analysis skills in seven English classes, compared to a random sample of 89 students from a nearby control school with equivalent demographics. Compared to the control group, students in the media-literacy treatment group had higher reading comprehension scores; wrote longer paragraphs; were better able to identify construction techniques, point of view, and omitted information; and infer message purpose and target audiences. There was no difference in holistic writing quality.


Analyzes the longitudinal relationship between children’s viewing of TV-violence viewing at ages 6 to 10 in the 1970s and 450 male and female adult aggressive behavior about 15 years later. Childhood identification with aggressive TV characters and perceived realism of TV violence predicted later aggression, even when variables such as the effects of socioeconomic status, intellectual ability, and parenting factors are controlled.
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Analyzes the impact of Internet use on student learning over a five-year period. Finds augmentation of student autonomy through increased access to resources, enhanced sense of student motivation and knowledge relative to teacher knowledge, improved small-group work, less adversarial teacher-student relationships, and teacher recognition of student expertise in Internet use.

Other Related Research:


**Writing**


Compares middle-school students who completed self-assessment rubrics in both experimental and control groups on their revision of two essays; students in the experimental group received two 40-minute instructional sessions in the application of the rubrics. The lack of treatment effects suggests the need for more extensive instruction in applying rubrics for self-assessing.

Reports meta-analysis of 48 school-based writing-to-learn programs. Notes that since the 1970s, writing has been touted as a means to enhance learning, for several reasons: because writing is a form of learning, because it approximates human speech, and because it supports learning strategies. The research on writing's effects, however, is ambiguous. Meta-analysis shows that writing can have a small, positive impact on conventional measures of academic achievement, with two factors predicting enhanced effects (use of metacognitive prompts and increased treatment length) and two factors predicting reduced effects (implementation in grades 6-8 and longer writing assignments).


Compares teacher correction of errors versus marking of errors for student self-correction versus describing error type on L2 college students’ revision accuracy, fluency, quality, attitude, and time required. Finds that both teacher correction and simple underlining of errors are superior to describing the type of error, even with underlining, for reducing long-term error. Teacher correction results in the most accurate revisions and is preferred by students for its efficiency, but students indicate that they learn more from self-correction based on teacher underlining of errors, which also requires less teacher time.


Compares 57 graduate ESL students’ writing ability performance on a traditional timed-essay placement test with their performance on a process-oriented workshop-based essay. Workshop essays were significantly superior in idea elaboration and organization, raising questions about the validity of timed essays, although the study was limited by not using a counter-balanced design.


The Writing Assessment Program compares college freshmen and juniors’ holistic writing assessment scores and ratings of the level of critical thinking using the *Washington State University Guide to Rating Critical Thinking*. Assessments were based on students’ identification of a problem or issue; establishment of a clear perspective; recognition of alternative perspectives; contextualizing issues; and analysis of evidence, assumptions, and implications. Finds no significant relationship between writing assessment and critical thinking scores. One explanation of this finding is that writing assignments, particularly timed writing assessments, do not necessarily involve critical thinking.


Argues against accounts of literacy development that associate school success with a narrow range of social and textual experiences. Explores the nature of a shared childhood and the “textual toys” it entails by describing the literacy learning of small group of African American first-
graders. Revises developmental theories of writing to value incorporation of intertextual links to popular culture texts related to establishing social agency in the classroom.


Summarizes research on response to L2 students’ writing. Finds that teachers need to prioritize their comments by appraising aspects of the text that need more work and by determining the student’s phase of writing development. Comments requesting specific changes, that ask for information, or address grammar and mechanics may be easier for students to approach than questions that challenge ideas or arguments. Written comments that ask students to add details/examples, improve coherence, or edit may facilitate revisions, but conference feedback may be more useful for discussing student ideas or arguments, particularly for EFL/ESL students who benefit by verbalizing their thoughts to a teacher. Students make fewer errors if they learn to find their own errors and make their own corrections rather than having their errors corrected by a teacher (see also Chandler abstract for related, alternative perspective).


Investigates children’s evaluation/selection of ideas in argumentative writing, specifically the decisions and rationales they present for whether to include counterarguments in their texts. Two (sometimes opposing) constraints seem to drive the evaluation/selection processes. First, the content constraint, whereby a writer focuses on agreement with the idea itself; second, the rhetorical constraint, defined as a writer’s perception of an idea’s value in increasing the acceptability of his or her point of view. Counterarguments are included when writers believe they are able to reply to counterarguments in ways that preserve the strength of their original viewpoints; otherwise, counterarguments are part of the selection/evaluation process, but do not become explicit in the text.


Using protocol methodology, investigates the characteristics of the wording formulation process of a group of seven African American students in freshman composition. Two “Speak Aloud and Write” transcripts per participant were analyzed for grammatical and “pronunciation-related” nonstandard feature dynamics in reference to consequences on the page, given the requirements of freshman composition. Findings indicate complex dynamics at work in the form of seven feature dynamic patterns and 19 variations, with particularly marked activity in relation to a consonant-cluster reduction feature and to specific verbal non-concord features. In addition, students who shared feature dynamics pattern characteristics generally shared literacy background characteristics.


Examines the influence of 11 teachers’ feedback on middle-school students’ draft revisions. Finds that when the quality of the early drafts is held constant, whether the students receives content or editing feedback does not predict improvement in draft quality, because many of the
revisions simply amount to adding information requested by the teacher. Those students who do improve in draft quality receive specific guidance as to how to improve their drafts.


Examines the ways in which the narrative texts written by four eighth grade students are affected by two settings: informal peer feedback and a peer response group. Four functions of peer feedback are distilled: playing with ideas, clarifying ideas, questioning plausibility, and showing emotional response. Texts are influenced at the word, sentence, and organizational levels, although many revisions cannot be directly traced to the feedback.


Drawing on Bakhtin, analyzes tensions between a unifying, standardizing, centripetal adherence to formalist models and genres versus dialogic, centrifugal exploration of alternative perspectives evident in middle-school students’ development of a written speech to be presented to a school board to argue against closing their school. Analyzes the ongoing centrifugal revisions in the students’ discussions of demographic/student survey data collected to bolster their position, as well as competing perspectives on appropriate rhetorical strategies, particularly in terms of their perceived status as middle-school students, as well as the centripetal revisions involved in organizing their position into a single position statement as mediated by adhering to genre conventions.


Analyzes how students construct their rhetorical personae in ways that that either invite or deflect teachers’ identification with perceived student identities, as well as how students infer teacher identities and attitudes through perception of teacher feedback. Suggests the need for teachers to reflect on how their construction of student identities influences their feedback.

**Other Related Research:**


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**African American Read-In Scheduled for February, Black History Month**

On Sunday and Monday, February 6 and 7, 2005, NCTE will join the NCTE Black Caucus in sponsoring the 16th national African American Read-In Chain. This year's goal is to have at least one million Americans across the nation reading works by African American writers on Sunday, February 6. Monday, February 7, is the date designated for read-ins in schools. The event is an opportunity for schools, libraries, community organizations, businesses, and interested citizens to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month by hosting and coordinating read-ins. These activities may range from bringing together family and friends to share a book to staging public readings and media presentations featuring African American writers.

For further information, go to the NCTE Web site at http://www.ncte.org/prog/readin. Contacts: Dr. Jerrie C. Scott, National Coordinator, African American Read-In, College of Education, ICL-320-C Ball Hall, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152; or Dr. Sandra E. Gibbs, NCTE Coordinator, Associate Executive Director, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.