



Critical multiliteracies for 'new times'

TRLI grant holders: Susan Sandretto (PI), Jane Tilson, University of Otago

Project start date: January, 2011

Project Finish date: January, 2013

Introduction

In this project the researchers will work with teachers and intermediate students to conduct layered ethnographies in order to understand: How can teachers bridge students' in and out-of-school literacies to enhance their critical analysis of multiple types of texts in order to prepare them for a multiliterate future?

Aims

Currently education is caught in the borderlands between its industrial-age, assembly-line heritage, and the 'new times' in which cultural, economic, social and technological change occurring on a global scale affects us all. In education these changes are encroaching on the classroom in the form of digitally mediated texts that draw upon multiple modes of communication. Yet current approaches to literacy instruction frequently resemble the traditional approaches that generations of New Zealand teachers have used. These new times and resultant multiliteracies present a challenge for educators: **How do we prepare students for a rapidly changing multiliterate future?**

This project aims to work with 10 teachers and their intermediate level (year 7 & 8) students each year to explore the following research questions:

- *What are the literacy practices of students in and out-of-school?*
- *How does the range of modes and media embedded within contemporary communication landscapes shape these practices?*
- *How do students make sense of their developing multiliteracies?*
- *How do teachers use knowledge of students' in and out-of-school literacy practices to work alongside students in the classroom?*

Why is this research important?

While there is a growing body of literature on multiliteracies in Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK, this project addresses the paucity of research in New Zealand and builds upon previous TLRI research into critical literacy. It represents an opportunity to honour the findings of the Multiliteracies Working Group who called for the revision of current literacy practice and policy: "we need to expand on current practice models to take account of the need for young people to develop a range of social, creative, ethical and cultural practices to make meaning in a technology-rich and culturally diverse world".

What we plan to do

Data

The project will involve approximately 10 teachers per year and their students. The following research activities will take place:

- Each teacher will conduct an ethnography into the in and out-of-school literacy practices of one of their students.
- All of the students of each participating teacher will be involved in whole class lessons.
- Five students from each class will conduct an autoethnography into their own developing multiliterate practices.

The data sources may include: interviews, journals, field notes, videotaped teaching episodes, documents analysis (e.g. lesson plans, student work), participant observation, focus group interviews with students, videography or digital photography with elicitation interview. The specific methods will be ultimately negotiated with the participating teachers and students.

Analysis

Analysis of the data will involve interrogating the various texts (interview transcripts, videotaped teaching etc.) using sociocultural and poststructural theories in order to answer the research questions.

Our partners:

Port Chalmers School: (1 teacher per year)- Vicki Nicholson (Principal)

Tahuna Normal Intermediate School: (2 teachers per year)- Tony Hunter (Principal)

Dunedin North Intermediate School: (2 teachers per year)- Ross Leach (Principal)

St. Hilda's Collegiate School: (2 teachers per year)- Melissa Bell (Principal)

Fairfield School: (2 teachers per year)- Andy Larson (Principal)

Outram School: (1 teacher per year)- Greg Carroll (Principal)



Contact details

Dr. Susan Sandretto

College of Education
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
susan.sandretto@otago.ac.nz
Ph: +64 3479 8820
[TLRI web page](#)