Academic Literacies and the 'New Orders': implications for research and practice

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Academic Literacies and the 'New Orders': implications for research and practice

- Models of Student Writing (Lea & Street)
- Current Critiques and Developments
    - EAP and Communicative competence (Hyland; Leung; Lillis)
    - Ethnography of Communication /Social Practices (Hymes; Bloome; Street)
    - Theory/ Practice (Lillis; Ganobcsik-Williams; Mitchell; FALL)
    - MultiModality (Kress; Pahl & Rowsell)
- Applications eg ALD King's eg Ivanic
- The 'New Orders'

MODELS OF STUDENT WRITING IN HE

a. STUDY SKILLS:

assumptions: **student writing as technical skill and instrumental 'atomised skills; surface language, grammar, spelling; pathology;**

critique: **autonomous model; reductionist**

courses: **College Composition; Remedial classes**

aims: **fix it';** **remediate; 'basics'**

*sources***: behavioural psychology; training**

b. ACADEMIC SOCIALISATION:

assumptions: **student writing as transparent medium of representation; focus on student orientation to learning and interpretation of learning task e.g. 'deep' and 'surface' learning**

critique; **assumes one 'culture', doesn't focus on institutional practices, change or power; misses rhetorical features of writing**

courses: **Writing Support; Study Skills**

aims: **inculcating students into new 'culture';**

sources: **social psychology; anthropology; constructivism**

c. ACADEMIC LITERACIES:

assumptions: **literacies as social practices; at level of epistemology and identities; institutions as sites of / constituted in discourses and power; variety of communicative repertoire e.g. genres, fields, disciplines; writing as rhetorical activity embedded in different disciplines/ discourse communities; student writing as constitutive and contested**

courses: **writing taught within disciplines as well as generic courses on language/ writing awareness.**

 aims: **facilitate reflexivity/ language awareness eg re switching in linguistic practices, social meanings and identities, disciplinary comparisons**

sources: **'New Literacy Studies'; Critical Discourse Analysis; Systemic Linguistics; Cultural Anthropology; History of Education**

GENRE/ MODE SWITCHING

THOUGHTS/ IDEAS   free flowing; not sentences

↓

TALK/ DISCUSSION   some explicitness; interlocutor
↓   Language mode - Speech patterns

NOTES   some structure, headings, lay out
                          use of visual as well as language 'mode'

↓

OVERHEAD   Key terms, single words;
↓   Lay out, semiosis

WRITTEN TEXT   joined up sentences; coherence/
                          Cohesion; if academic then formal
                          conventions; editing and revision

QUESTION: How do genres/ modes vary across disciplines/ subjects/ fields?

GENRE: type of text eg formal/ informal eg notes/ letters/ academic essay

MODE: 'a regularised organised set of resources for meaning-making'
        Eg image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, writing

DISCIPLINE: field of study, academic subject
        Eg geography, chemistry; Business Studies; Area Studies

SWITCHING/ TRANSFORMATION: changing meanings and representations
from one mode (eg speech) into another mode (eg writing); often involves just a
different 'mix' of both modes eg writing/ layout

ALD Course 'Academic Literacies' sessions

Week 1 – show o'h on genre/ mode switching and talk it through; students get into small groups to discuss how to represent their experiences in their applications to university etc eg UCAS personal statement; students take notes from group discussions for their statement; one or two put their account on o'h and present it to the plenary; each writes up their account and tutors take it in to give feedback next week.

The principle is to start from where the students are at, getting them doing things tho' within a framework and then we can recap on the skills and knowledge required for different parts eg note taking, eg writing short statement eg presenting from an ohp. Also this gets them used to a way of working with us – their input as central, group discussions, presentations to plenary; our inputs range from lecture style presentation on the o'h to one-to-one feedback on writing. If we ask them to write at home and bring it in to class, they tend not to do it, so we get them to do writing in the class itself (the previous group when asked about the course, named writing in class as something they would like more of)

Week 2 – In this second session we are beginning to go back over what the students did in the first session, dwelling more closely on different aspects of the process – but within an overall framework that makes sense of the parts rather than starting with atomised skills or 'correctness'. We start with individual sessions between tutors and students to give feedback on their writing from last time; then a plenary session to bring out general principles from writing; followed by further detail and handouts on 'note taking' and 'advice on ohp' and on 'drafting'.

The 'drafting' point came out from the previous group's feedback: a number of students said they expected us to correct their English and help them to get 'standard'. We were anxious that such correction might reinforce the negative image of 'deficit' that the course is trying to challenge, so we wanted to focus first on their production and their confidence. One strategy for ensuring that we fulfil these aims whilst students do get help with standard (ie a too liberal approach can leave them disadvantaged) is to adopt Peter Elbow's notion of 'drafting' – here the pressure for standard is delayed whilst students write and speak in whatever way they find comfortable and then, when a final performance is required that will be subject to outside assessment, they are helped to edit their work (as academics do) to meet the particular requirements of that task. In this case, we can focus on the issues associated with note taking, presentations, writing, as all at 'draft' level and then in later sessions go back over them with a view to final product eg in time for the UCAS form, the interview etc.

Academic Literacies and the 'New Orders'

	New Work Order	*New Epistemological Order*	*New Communicative Order*
Study Skills >writing as surface language correctness	hierarchy and discipline; policing language	atomised units of knowledge transmitted and tested; Quality Control, performativity	include as units non linguistic skills and modes - visual, gestural etc new policing of modes
Academic Socialisation > writing as conduit	multiple discourses in multi-disciplinary teams; privilege exchange value	learn new knowledge in old ways - elitist institutions - or in new marketised ways - wider access, knowledge in use	learn / become socialised into new modes eg 'rhetorics of science classroom';
Academic Literacies > writing as contested	flattened hierarchy, team work, new language skills; privilege use value	critical reflexivity on language and knowledge as processes/ resources; academics as 'practical epistemologists'	critical reflexivity on uses of language and non linguistic modes in representing /taking hold of knowledge;

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