RaPAL

Conference 2013 Plus

JOURNAL

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

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RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

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· Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
· Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
· Emphasise the importance of social context in literacy
· Encourage collaborative and reflective research
· Believe in democratic practices in adult literacy
· Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
· Publish a journal three times a year

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Contents

Editorial

In this edition of the journal we report on another successful joint conference with the University and Colleges Union (UCU) and National Institute for Adults Continuing Education (NIACE), that took place in October 2013, as well as a mix of articles and reviews from other contributors.

The theme for the October 2013 conference was *Adult English and maths in families, communities and workplace.* We begin with two articles from keynote speakers. **Karen Evans** reports on her research on the interplay between formal and informal learning in the workplace illustrating her findings with examples from case studies across a number of industries. **Jim Crowther** evaluates the Scottish model where social practice theory continues to underpin adult literacies community provision despite the international trend to narrow the focus to one of functional skills for work.

We then move on to a selection of articles written by workshop leaders. The first three of these provide practical ideas for working with learners. **Tara Furlong's** article provides an overview of the impact of technological change on social interaction and the implications of this for literacy practices. She goes on to offer suggestions of ways in which multimedia and multimodality can be explored and used in the teaching and learning of literacy. **Freda Davis** introduces us to *Buddenbuk* cards, her kinaesthetic linguistic grammar game which supports the development of sentence structure for entry level literacy and ESOL learners. Gail Lydon introduces problem-solving strategies to develop English and maths for learners in Functional Skills classes. The fourth and final article from the conference provides an account and reflection on recent changes to terminology from literacy (or literacies) and numeracy to English and maths in policy documents and practice in England. Sarah Freeman Sallie Condy and Tara Furlong debate how this change impacts on the nature of literacy and numeracy provision.

Our other contributors focus on reading, assessment and the use of poetry in reflection. **Irene Schwab** interviews **Sam Duncan** about her recent work on reading circles. **Victoria Mann** writes about the benefits of using presentations as an assessment tool for learners with dyslexia and **Jane Spea**re reports on her research on the value of educationally themed poetry in supporting professional practice reflection for trainee teachers.

We finish this edition of the journal with two reviews. First, Mary Hamilton's recent publication *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* and second, Jill Sinclair Bell's *New Language, New Literacy.*

Rethinking the workplace as a learning space: Reflecting on what research tells us works in the workplace

Karen Evans

Karen Evans is Professor of Education and Lifelong Learning at the Institute of Education, University of London, previously Head of the School of Lifelong Education and International Development. She has carried out a series of national and international collaborative research studies of learning in and through the workplace, as a leading researcher in the Economic and Social Research Council Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES).

Research into the ways in which adults access learning opportunities for literacy and numeracy development through the workplace has already yielded important lessons for practice. We know, for example, that persistence and incremental learning bring results over time (Reder and Bynner, 2008). While courses do not necessarily have to be long and continuous, there does need to be support for employees progressively to build capabilities through the bite-sized learning activities at work that are favoured by employers. This includes opportunities and support for practising new capabilities both in their everyday work and also outside working hours. Through our ongoing research, we already know the potential of collaborative pedagogies for bridging between functional and situated knowledge and skills (Taylor, Evans and Abasi, 2007). We know that workplace cultures and practices impact on adult learning and that there is a need for teacher sensitivity to workplace roles outside programmes (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird and Unwin, 2006). Decisively, we know that employees' new capabilities have to be used if they are to develop further, and that this challenges employers to think about the job content of those adults they send on programmes.

The shifts from Skills for Life to Functional Skills present particular challenges for workplaces. As Judith Swift (2012), of Unionlearn, recently noted in an *Adults Learning* supplement on functional skills, adults at work will need more time to develop the broad-based skills of English and Maths than that which employers may have been used to with Skills for Life programmes. We know that without sufficient workplace support to meet challenges, confidence declines and with it the motivation to learn. Workplace learning is about much more than delivery of courses.

Thinking about the workplace as a learning space is important because it brings into view key influences on learning that are often overlooked. These include:

- The immediate setting of day to day work activities *(*micro-system)
- Concurrent settings e.g. courses accessed through workplace, home and family *(*meso-system)
- Institutional policies, procedures and cultures that influence a person's work setting *(*exo-system*)*
- Overarching institutional and labour market factors/cultural values *(*macro-system*).*

Focusing on work as a learning space brings into view the importance of the interplay between the formal and the informal opportunities that adults have for learning at work. Informal learning includes reflection on practice, learning by observing others, participating in collective activities, seeking out information independently and practising without supervision. Too often we concentrate on either the formal or informal dimensions of learning with only cursory attention to the ways in which they inter-connect. Formal programme participation can be a catalyst for informal learning. As one manager observed, 'It was like employees were re-awakened to their own learning capabilities as a result of the programme, and this provided a different viewpoint about their own workplace and their jobs.'

The notion of the learning space also assumes greater importance as we have come to recognise that virtual

learning changes the boundaries of the learning space. Felstead and Jewson (2012) observe that the recent developments in information technology have resulted in workers becoming increasingly detached from personal cubes of space. The use of devices such as computers, laptops, mobile phones and net books has contributed to the development of the virtual learning space where learning might not be associated with a specific site or time. The virtual learning environment provides a degree of flexibility for the learner, enabling him or her to learn at convenient times and places. As Pachler et al (2011) stress, mobile learning is not simply about delivering content to mobile devices but, instead, about the processes of coming to know and being able to operate successfully in and across ever-changing contexts and learning spaces.

Some factors that increase formal-informal learning interplay include trigger events, such as critical incidents in the workplace, safety concerns or a drive towards greater employee participation. Attitudes towards lifelong learning modelled by the company or the Trade Union play an important part. These can go beyond functional concerns to emphasise curiosity, creativity and imagination. Inner recognition amongst employees of the personal and work benefits of learning reflects multiple sources of motivation. Informal learning through day to day activities is often spurred on by a need for challenge and variety in the everyday work routine rather than the expectation of direct monetary benefits. There is often a triangular relationship between human agency and the motivation to be active in learning; the confidence of knowing that you can and the quality of opportunities in the workplace (Evans, 2009; Taylor and Evans, 2009; Evans and Waite, 2009, 2010 and Wolf and Evans, 2011).

An example is provided by one food processing company that provided formalised courses of instruction within the company structure but also accorded official space to opportunities for informal learning through activities such as observation of other employees and sharing of ideas in huddles. The increasing *textualisation* of the work environment has made employees who struggle with poor literacy and numeracy more prone to miss out on formal training opportunities and increases the significance of informal learning for these particular employees. The learning centre represented an important site for the inter-weaving of formal and informal learning opportunities. It is noticeable that the popularity of the learning centre rests partly on it not being too closely associated with classroom-based instruction. The allocation of spaces for informal self-directed learning and the availability of laptops, which in turn facilitated independent information-searching, have been important components of the learning centre.

What worked well?
- Virtual learning accessed through Learning Centre has developed into supported self-directed learning;
- Informal learning fed into "huddles" reviewing work practices and development opportunities.

What could have worked better?
- Integration of employees with the lowest skills into group activities

In another example, a local authority formally allocated more experienced colleagues to guide recently appointed caretakers. Caretakers acquired job-specific skills and knowledge through a combination of formal and informal learning. Whilst the allocation process is formal, the mentoring process is largely unstructured and informal. The increasing use of report-writing amongst caretakers has underlined the significance of literacy skills and has highlighted a skills deficiency in this area amongst some employees. While some employees made a point of practising writing skills independently, most caretakers employed various strategies for getting by. In the specific area of literacy, informal learning did not allow for major skills gaps to be addressed. Reliance on supervisors to fill in forms, for example, reduced opportunities for informal coaching and therefore left unaddressed the underlying skills deficiencies. The courses did help some employees improve their literacy skills and facilitated their progression within the workplace. Yet the most

significant outcome, highlighted by employees, the tutor and the manager, was an increased confidence on the part of employees to embark on further learning.

What worked well?
- Formal English courses increased the confidence of the employees, which led the company to expand their course provision. The courses also encouraged some employees to experience higher level roles that entailed more hand-on learning.

What could have worked better?
- The supervisors could have been more actively involved
- Mentoring and coaching support needed to be more systematic, to better utilise the missed opportunities for learning in everyday work activities.

These examples have also shown that care should be taken not to confuse strategies for getting by at work with informal learning. Supervisors taking pre-emptive or circumventing action over tasks involving literacy skills can create a vicious circle of employees' over-reliance on others, for example their reliance on supervisors to fill in forms. This misses the opportunities for practice and coaching support and reinforces underlying skills deficiencies instead of helping to solve them.

At an engineering company, in a third example, the employees' motivation for engaging in the trade union-initiated course was underpinned by a high value placed on learning for its own sake, and its relevance for other aspects of their lives. Grass-roots initiatives on the part of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), with the wider support of the company and local college, led to the development of workplace English and maths courses. Though the company has undergone major organisational change in embracing new technology and implementing more rigorous surveillance procedures which entail increased forms of documentation, it was noticeable that the vast majority of learners had coped adequately with their existing literacy and numeracy skills. The employees performed numeracy skills such as calculating averages and working with diameters without having formally acquired these skills on a course. Informal learning processes had equipped all the learners, except one employee who struggled with the metric system, with the necessary skills to undertake their work. The course was regarded as a means of benchmarking the formal level, or classroom level of their skills which had been developed through informal learning in the workplace.

In a fourth and final example, the levelling out of management structures within a defence establishment has increased the significance of both formal and informal learning opportunities. The successful IT and English courses at this organization were tailored to the priorities of delegation of responsibility in the organization. In this case, English and Maths courses responded to major structural changes in the company involving the delegation of responsibility to lower-level employees and were being utilised to address a perceived training imbalance amongst the different strata of the workforce. As part of taking on more responsibility, employees were encouraged to commit themselves to training opportunities through the appraisal system, and employee involvement in formalised training had the potential to generate benefits in terms of promotion and pay. The levelling out of management structures also had major implications for informal learning. The expectation that employees should 'take on more' and 'show initiative' meant that employees were frequently given greater scope for learning about new duties through on-the-job experience at work.

The experience of providers and organisations in developing workplace English and Maths is extending our existing frameworks for understanding informal learning and the scope for adults to seek out learning activities at and through work. While self-directed learning is held by many adult educators to define adult learning, it has also been described as hard to achieve within the workplace context as the constraints are

often considerable. Carré (2013) has recently written that self-direction is largely confined to those in professional and managerial roles. For employees at the lower end of the earnings distribution, we know from workplace research that there is little scope for self-direction at the beginning of a learning opportunity, but active learning can increase with encouragement and support and often extends beyond the workplace.

What adults make of the spaces they have for learning is significant, as cases analysed in detail have shown. What is needed is a more complex notion of self-direction in workplace learning, one that pays more attention to the relationships-oriented nature of much workplace learning and the work environments, contexts and opportunities that are either conducive to learning or impediments to it (see Waite et al 2012 and Evans and Waite 2013).

Research is indicating the connection of newly acquired confidence with informal learning opportunities. Latest evidence from research in several Canadian provinces is showing that adult English and Maths learners develop the readiness and social resources for further learning (Taylor et al, 2013). Canadian and British researchers are now working collaboratively to understand better how social capital co-evolves with human capital to develop more confident use of the learning spaces at work and beyond. This depends crucially on the support provided by supervisor and co-worker relationships. Management of the learning space at work involves training managers and learning representatives, working with providers, analysing, "upstreaming" from the learner, and understanding the dynamics of the workplace and its influences on learning engagement.

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Keeping the practice open: Adult literacies in Scotland[1]

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One impact of international regimes for measuring adult literacy has been to shape and mould practice to a narrow human resource agenda, particularly amongst member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001; Tett, 2013). Functional skills for work have, in this context, dominated policy and practice and there have been a number of critical accounts of this trend (e.g. Hamilton and Barton, 2000). In Scotland a similar process is underway, but the pace of change is slower; there is resistance and there are distinctive contextual features which keep the possibilities for practice open to a wider range of interests and influences. This article aims to explain how this has come about and why. I will argue that two developments in particular are important: the location of adult literacies in community based educational provision and the conceptualisation of adult literacy as social practice. For the time being, at least, the agency of the adult literacy practitioner is still central to the development of creative and critical practice in the forging of a literacies curriculum for individual and collective autonomy in increasingly difficult circumstances. The wider interest in this experience, for those outside Scotland, is in the fact that policy and practice continue to enable a commitment to promoting social justice.

Traditions in adult literacy: the Scottish context

Hamilton (1996) argues that adult literacy, like adult education generally, has been shaped by competing traditions of purpose and practice and this helps to explain why so many different motivations, interests and alliances can be mobilised under the banner of improving adult literacy for different and conflicting ends. She identifies traditions of adult literacy as remedial activity (still powerful even if the vocabulary is used less frequently); the tradition of welfare activity with its missionary purpose to bring enlightenment to the disadvantaged; the tradition of economic activity with its emphasis on morally and economically productive citizens helping themselves (clearly the dominant emphasis in adult literacy policy more generally in the UK and beyond); and the emancipatory tradition with its emphasis on a reciprocal relationship between literacy, action and social justice. This latter tradition has often had stronger ideological and rhetorical appeal in the UK than its presence in practice might suggest is warranted. Nevertheless, the balance between these traditions has shifted over time and their interconnections can be as important as their differences.

In Scotland local authority Community Education Services (CES) (formed in 1975 and now renamed Community Learning and Development) have been, along with the voluntary sector, the main providers of adult literacy classes. Further education (FE) colleges also offer classes but to a lesser extent than in the community sector. This arrangement was almost changed in the re-organisation of FE colleges in 1992, when the pendulum of meagre resourcing for adult literacy swung in the direction of formal education. After intensive lobbying by the CES, the decision to maintain the community links of adult literacy work was successful, with approximately 80% of funds retained for this sector. However, a simple distinction between these areas of educational provision can be misleading, particularly as the mantra for partnership working accelerated in the 1990s (see Campbell, 2011).

Historically, the formation of the Scottish version of community education in 1975 brought together youth work, community development and adult education as "committed allies" in a single service. Adult literacy

1. This article is based on an input to the 2013 NIACE, RaPAL and UCU Conference Adult English and Maths in Families, Communities and Workplace. The title of the presentation was simply 'Community'.

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practice was, over time, integrated into area-based teams of community educators with their specialist focus. These structural changes were important, as was the philosophy behind the service of community education. The Alexander Report (*Adult Education: The Challenge of Change*, 1975) also embraced a democratic imperative that valued and supported dissent, difference and diversity in a plural liberal society.

The report stated that:

> Individual freedom to question the value of established practices and institutions and to propose new forms is part of our democratic heritage. To maintain this freedom, resources should not be put at the disposal only of those who conform but ought reasonably to be made available to all for explicit educational purposes.
> (SED, 1975: 25)

Today this democratic legacy may no longer carry much weight in policy circles but it still has ideological currency amongst some educational practitioners. This connection between adult literacy and community education, and the value attached to social and political participation in the latter, steered literacy provision towards social as well as personal change in communities.

The importance of the ties with community is that the concept is intrinsically ambiguous and ambivalent. It is ambiguous in the sense that it can refer to a wide range of settings: the home, neighbourhood, work, online groups, society, and transnational networks, where people relate to and interact with others. Thus *community* can be an appealing term with connotations of place, identity and active commitment. As social animals our sense of belonging to a community is important and desirable. But belonging for some can be exclusion for others, so the relational dimension of community and the wider inequalities of power that it can embody need to be recognised:

> Is 'the community' everybody who lives in a certain area, is 'the community' a particular group conscious of itself as a grouping, or is 'the community', paradoxically, all those who have been excluded from feeling part of 'the community'? (Cain and Yuval-Davis, 1990:9)

The ambiguities of community can lead to ambivalent ends. As Raymond Williams (1983:76) noted, community can be dangerous particularly because of its tendency to be 'a warm and persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships.' It is hardly surprising that *community* is one of the most popular words in the lexicon of policy makers. On the one hand, community conjures up familiarity and, on the other, its parochialism in policy can mean addressing change at a neighbourhood level without really changing anything of wider significance that may cause local problems. Social divisions and inequalities in society can be fudged under the smokescreen of community and therefore ignored in policy "solutions". Rather than trying to pin down what community is, which is to engage in a fruitless search for its true meaning, what is far more productive is to explore how community can be interpreted in policy and practice so as to maximise its socially just possibilities. The unintended outcomes of policy may be more important than the intended ones and practitioners have a role in this process. The more practitioners are aware of their scope for agency in this respect, the better.

If we fast forward, from 1975 to 2000, the policy context for adult literacy changes qualitatively as well as quantitatively as the newly formed Scottish parliament, following the devolution referendum of 1999, instigated adult literacy policy development. This subsequently led to the adoption of a social practice model of adult literacies as well as the introduction of significant new resources for practitioners. In 2008, £65m

worth of funding was made available and since 2001 it is claimed that over 200,000 learners have been helped (See report on adult literacies here).

Literacies not literacy: the theoretical context

In policy terms, Scottish devolution created the unusual situation of a "clean slate" for adult literacy. At the same time, the need for policy could not be ignored because, like the rest of the UK, the Scottish results in the 1996 OECD sponsored International Adult Literacy surveys (IALs), painted a picture of the country lagging seriously behind the required skills levels for a *knowledge economy*. In terms of the 3-dimensional literacy ladder used in the surveys - prose reading skills, document skills to read timetables etc, and quantitative or arithmetic skills, over 5-graded levels of attainment ranging from 1 (very low level of skills) to 4 and 5 (higher literacy skills) were measured. The result was shocking. Based on a small Scottish sample of only around 700 respondents it was then claimed that around quarter of the population had serious literacy problems which were dysfunctional for a knowledge society (OECD, 2000). However, in a subsequent survey sponsored by the Scottish Government in 2007, which broadly replicated the IALs approach, this figure was scaled down to 3.6% of the population (St Clair et al, 2010).

Whatever the surveys were measuring, the result from the first one was to galvanise political and policy interest in adult literacy from the new Scottish political institution. In this context experienced practitioners helped to shape policy development as part of a national literacy task force: one result of this is the expansive view of adult literacies, published in the flagship policy document of 2001, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* (ALNIS). The definition of adult literacy it promoted is:

> The ability to read, write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners. (Scottish Executive, 2001:7)

This broad definition has to be interpreted through an emphasis on the relevance of purpose and context in how people use literacy. Rather than start from formal and abstract approaches to literacy, the stress is on the informal and vernacular character of literacies rather than these being devalued as "corrupt" or degenerate deviations of schooled literacy. To start from how people use literacies in everyday life, and the purposes they use them for, means beginning from what people know and do rather than what they cannot do or lack motivation to do. From this perspective, variation rather than standardisation in literacies is normal and the potential transfer of learning from different contexts means a broader range of activities and purposes are educationally legitimated.

The approach to a social practice model was expressed in the national Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy, which states that:

> We are using a social practices account of adult literacy and numeracy. Rather than seeing literacy and numeracy as the decontextualised, mechanical, manipulation of letters and numbers, words and figures, this view shows that literacy and numeracy are located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts (Scottish Executive, 2005:3)

The difference between schooled literacy and the social practice model is captured in the two images below:

Theoretical differences

The curriculum is represented as concentric circles on a wheel to act as a visual reminder for tutors and learners of what is available to be taught and learned in ALN and the principles that should inform them.

(Thanks to Lyn Tett for these two images. The wheel is taken from the Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy, Scottish Executive 2005)

Whereas the ladder of literacy places adult learners at the bottom of attainment, with a focus on the rungs above, the wheel represents a holistic vision of literacy purposes and contexts, with the learner at the centre of the curriculum process. The placing of adult learners' lives as at the heart of decisions about learning and its purposes brings to the fore the politics of learning and curriculum. As Biesta (2011) argues, in one sense all learning is change whereas not all change is regarded as learning. This sifting and classifying process is not neutral and nor is it necessarily beneficial. Literacy policy shaped by an economistic discourse (where the knowledge and skills worth acquiring are linked mainly to employability as judged by employers) identifies and values change of a very specific but potentially very limited kind in literacy terms. Adult learner control over what type of learning matters to them is a wedge for keeping the curriculum door open to a wide range of purposes and uses. The politics of learning and curriculum are legitimate issues to address from a social practice perspective; the schooled version of literacy assumes these in advance of engaging with adults.

So has this approach been successful? There has been only one major national evaluation of this policy, carried out by Tett (2006) and colleagues. The team undertook a large-scale survey of over 600 learners carried out over different points of time in order to evidence the impact of provision. Learners reported the following: increased self-esteem; a stronger belief in their own potential and achievements; greater independence; they were happier; they were more able to voice their opinions; they were more aware of others. Confidence was also related to *increasing skills*. For example, respondents reported that they were more able to: speak to other people confidently; use computers; read newspapers and books; fill in forms; go shopping and calculate the best value items. They also reported changes in *aspects of social capital* such as: approaching strangers for information; feeling safer in their neighbourhood; being more able to deal with conflict and stand up for themselves; being able to engage in conversations without needing an interpreter;

being more involved in their community. Despite this success, Scottish policy is changing and moving closer towards the functional ladder of literacy characterised in English adult literacy policy.

In the remainder of this text I want to examine how the change is occurring and how practitioners are managing this process and keeping literacies open. I will present two current cameos of adult literacies to illustrate their work; however, I'm not claiming these are representative of practice. Finally, I turn towards criticisms of the social practice perspective, which also needs to be explored.

The current Scottish policy context

Two relatively recent policy developments have had a major impact on adult literacies in Scotland. The first is a policy funding *Concordat* established between the Scottish Government and local authorities in 2007. In return for local authorities freezing their tax levels, the Scottish government allows them greater flexibility in how to spend their revenue by relaxing the "ring-fencing" of funding. This deal requires local authorities to target work at government defined National Performance Indicators. However, what this means is that dedicated funding of provision for adult literacy is now over whilst austerity in the public sector is reducing spending generally, and competition for what is available is fierce.

Raising adult literacy skills is acknowledged as a key goal in the setting of National Performance Indicators, but this is a mixed blessing. Although the indicator provides official recognition for adult literacy, and policy recognition can be an important argument for securing resources, the terms in which it is valued is restrictive: 'to reduce the number of working age people with severe literacy and numeracy problems.' Older adults or those outside the labour market are excluded whereas adult learners are depicted as 'a drag on Scotland's economic capacity' and a potential social problem because they risk '...the next generations capacity to engage in lifelong learning.' (Scottish Government, 2007:10). The original commitment to what was termed a "wealth model" of lifelong learning in the ALNIS policy is diminished if not dispensed with altogether.

This reframing of policy is expressed in the following contemporary definition:

> By 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners. (Scottish Government, 2011:7)

Although the original scope of literacy practice is still evident, the focus on Scotland's society and economy is now to the forefront, with the real emphasis on the economy. Nevertheless, despite these policy setbacks the commitment to a social practice approach and its location in community education provision are still highly relevant for a social justice agenda. Two cameos of current practice illuminate this claim.

Cameo 1: Football literacies

Player (2012) demonstrates the value of a social practice perspective in his work on "football literacies", which uses the generative theme of football for motivating students to develop critical awareness of the concerns and issues which pervade sport generally (racism, inequality etc) and which motivate students into using text and oral literacies to communicate.

Located in the community, the classes for the football literacies programme are based in two of the City of Edinburgh's most famous football stadiums. The project attracts a range of students but particularly young

adult males who, in many circumstances, are "hard to reach" in other forms of educational settings. The project has been going for a number of years and attracts a large group of students (20 plus is not unusual) for its meetings. Students are involved in focussed discussion as well as in undertaking reading and writing activities which are stimulated by their interest. Drawing on a Freirean perspective and the use of critical discourse analysis, the project seeks to impart critical awareness and literacies which are relevant to the lives of students. In terms of students also acquiring a narrower range of "functional" literacy skills, the project also claims success.

Cameo 2: Glamping on a budget

In the Adult Learners' awards in Edinburgh in May 2013 two employability projects were winners, both because of their successful practice in developing literacies in creative ways. "*Glamping* on a budget" (i.e. camping for "softies") was one of these projects which received an award and was funded by the *Money for Life Challenge* and Lloyds Bank, with the aim of promoting social enterprise. The project seeks to provide affordable camping to enable young people without much money to have a break, appreciate Scotland's natural environment and raise awareness of environmental issues. Whilst funding for the project is directed towards economic ends, the account the project gives of itself illustrates a rich array of learning opportunities based on the interests and aspirations of young adults: designing posters, writing blogs, developing a Facebook site to promote the project, acquiring project management skills, researching camping gear, developing creative modes of advertising and much more. This has enabled the project to marry the lives and interests of the young adults in the group, along with enabling them to acquire experience and skills in a range of literacies, whilst supporting a social and environmental commitment.

What these brief accounts illustrate is that the role of community and adherence to a social practice vision of adult literacies is still significant. In the account of football literacies, the connection between power and literacies is particularly sharp. In the camping project the focus on the collective interests of the group clearly helped focus the activities of those involved. Nevertheless, the use of social practice in Scottish policy has its critics and the potential limitations of its application have to be recognised.

Defining social practice

Whilst a social practice approach has strong rhetorical power amongst practitioners and policy makers in Scotland, what it means is less obvious, and its application can be problematic. In Barton and Hamilton (1998) the term social practice refers to the contextual and contingent nature of interactions where literacy practices play a role. In an earlier book Barton (1994) makes the point that the most significant feature of this perspective is its social nature, because a range of purposes and relationships shape the uses of literacy. Social practice deliberately values equity and diversity where different norms govern its application. However institutions tend to "fix" a particular practice of literacy as the "gold standard", which vernacular literacies fall short of.

The official meaning of social practice in Scottish policy draws on the above but differs from it in some respects. According to Education Scotland, which fosters and promotes provision, social practice involves the following characteristics:
- literacy and numeracy are complex capabilities rather than a simple set of basic skills
- learners are more likely to develop and retain knowledge, skills and understanding if they see them as relevant to their own context and everyday literacy practices
- learning should be negotiated with the learner through an individual learning plan, selecting the knowledge and skills most relevant to the individual learner's goals. To view report click here

There are clear overlaps in the above definition with the contextual and contingent nature of literacy practices. But there are criticisms to be made of the Scottish version of social practice. First, the social dimension might be downplayed in favour of an individualised view of skills attainment as depicted in the last bullet point. A learner-centred individual focus is only an element of social practice. If it involves abstracting individual skill levels from the social and cultural contexts, where literacies are used, the result might be a decontextualized functional model of literacy.

Campbell (2011) also makes the point that the approach to social practice in policy makes no reference to the literacy of power and how this might be addressed in practice. Unless social practice is embedded in groups involved in local or social action, it is hard to see how this might be achieved. Moreover, the focus on measuring attainment, which is based on "distance travelled" through individual learning plans, sits uncomfortably with a top-down approach of quality inspection, monitoring and data gathering which to be meaningful creates measures for success that are de-contextualised.

To return to Hamilton's point (1996), which I referred to at the beginning of this article, competing ideologies have influenced who stands under the banner of adult literacy and what purposes they see it serving. The social practice model may complicate this because of its commitment to diversity but this might be translated simply into a learner-centred approach. Does this mean that the ideological purposes informing the work are much the same as they were before?

Ackland (2011) also argues that the term *social practice* can operate as an "empty signifier", a term devoid of precise meaning which holds together too many disparate views. In other words, without a sophisticated understanding of what social practice might mean, it becomes a "catch all" term to accommodate everything. The strength of the social practice model is in the conceptual shift to uses of literacy because this destabilises that idea of a fixed standard. At the same time it also complicates how practitioners apply a social practice model. Compare, for instance, the pedagogical implications of literacy as stages on a ladder (relatively straightforward, fixed rules to apply, etc.) with the holistic wheel of literacy (complex patterns of literacy activities which vary according to context and purpose). As Ackland points out, training in adult literacies has made progress but is still developing. There are initial volunteer tutor training programmes (Initial Training in Adult Literacies Learning, ITALL) for volunteer tutors, a new Higher National Certificate for more experienced tutors and also more intensive 18 month, part-time training courses, studied in four blocks with a notional 300 hours of study for each block, which leads to the award of a Teaching Qualification in Adult Literacy (TQAL). However, this level of training involves a demanding commitment for sessional practitioners with only 4-5 hour tutoring contracts, and little support necessary for sustaining their commitment. In these circumstances it may well be full-time workers, not necessarily tutors, who are in a better position to benefit from training; yet, it is the tutors who are engaged with learners.

Building the curriculum to engage, motivate and expand learners' literacy practices requires experience and expertise that has to be developed in a workforce that is by no means stable. The task of providing the quality and depth of training, across the range of practitioners in Scotland, employed sessionally on temporary and fixed hour contracts, should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

The ambiguities and ambivalence of community and the commitment to a social practice perspective has been key to maintaining an open and wide curriculum for learners involved in the provision of adult literacies. The agency of practitioners is critical to this outcome and much has already been achieved in demonstrating how creative and critical literacies linked with adult learners' lives can be developed. However, the overall

picture is complicated and the type of philosophy that inspired the formation of community education provision has waned. Moreover, the strength of the social practice model is also a potential weakness; its deployment in practice requires experience and expertise, whereas the conditions of employment of practitioners are not conducive to making this realistic for many. Moreover, the economistic drive and narrowing of policy to those engaged in the labour market, threatens the extent to which the term *adult* is being compressed to those at work or seeking work. Increasingly, the community valued in policy are younger adults and a more open and genuinely lifelong version of adult literacies is threatened.

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Social networking in adult literacies learning contexts

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Introduction

The recently released results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, PIAAC (OECD, 2013a), discussed on the RaPAL blog, highlight the burgeoning importance of technology-rich environments in the utilisation and development of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in everyday lives. The international comparisons look at people's competencies in the context of the home, community involvement and economic activity.

RaPAL co-delivers with NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) workshops via its conferences and a national training module , where we seek to understand the impact that technological change is having on literacies, and how we can harness this to develop appropriate pedagogies. This article explores how society's fast evolving technologies and associated socio-cultural practices create a positive feedback loop for literacies. It discusses some recent evolutions in modern technology and social networking and how the sociocultural schools of thought argue that these might contribute to higher-order thought processes and literacy practices. It outlines practical teaching and learning applications from the workshops, including those limited to mobile access, and it expounds the relationship between multimodality and multimedia in the cross-over between the concrete and virtual worlds, and it examines in conclusion some of the challenges that lie before us in the education sector.

Where next?

Over the last decade, we have increasingly utilised mobile technology in our everyday lives. Smart mobile devices are progressing from comfortably portable phones and tablets to physical-activity supporting glasses and watches that communicate with us and keep us connected to a data-rich multimedia world. Increasingly sophisticated tablet designs are taking over from laptops and desktops, moving from the consumer into the enterprise and business sector, with a suggestion that sales volumes of 'tablets will outstrip computers within two years', according to *The Economist* (2013a). Data from market information, analysis and the intelligence

group, CCS Insight (2013), tell us that sales of smart phones have bypassed standard mobiles, with 1.86billion mobiles expected to ship in 2013.

Web interfaces and cloud storage mean we need less data installed and stored on our devices and can access our content anywhere, anytime across devices. Additionally, the motivational capabilities of apps are being utilised to educate youths in health, nutrition and household domestication (see *The Economist*, 2013b).

The table below shows the rise in device usage in the USA. In the UK, according to the OECD (2013b), only '...10.1% of the adult population (16-65 year-olds) report no prior experience with computers or lack very basic computer skills. In contrast, 35% of the adult population score at the highest levels in problem-solving in technology-rich environments...' It has been demonstrated by Bynner et al (2010) that divides exist between digital skills, basic literacy and numeracy skills and employment, significantly increasing the likelihood of social exclusion. Digital access is also shown to be linked to better education and higher status employment.

Tablet adoption table Social Media Today

Tablet and e-reader ownership
% of Americans ages 16+ who own e-book readers, tablet computers, and at least one of those devices.
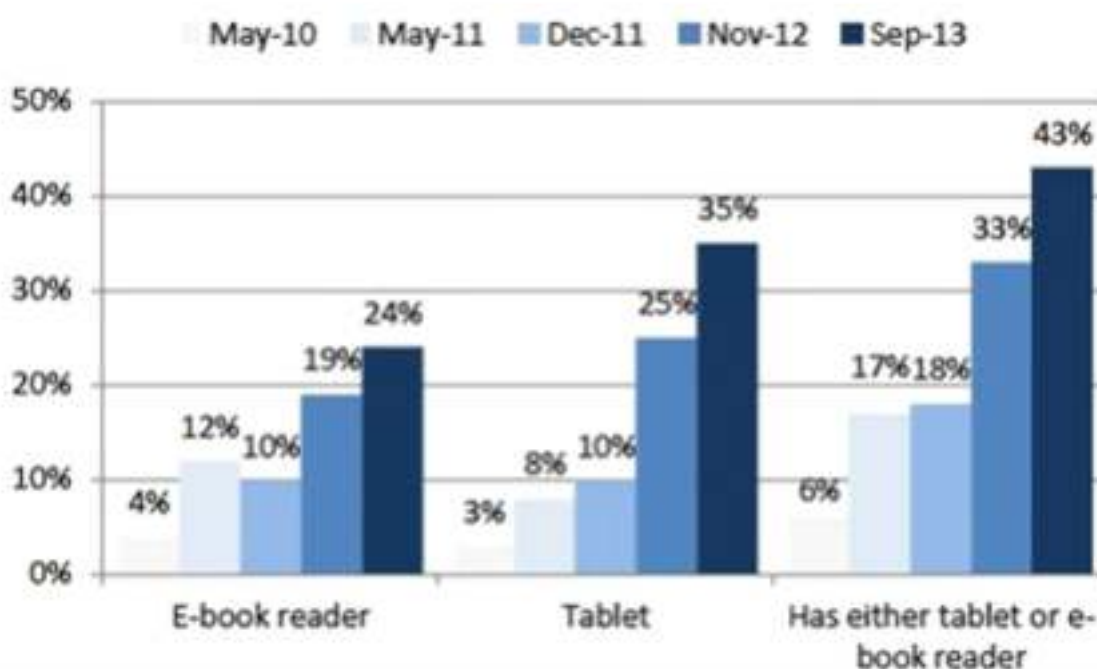
Source: Most recent findings come from Pew Research Center Internet Project Library User Survey.
July 18 - September 20, 2013. N=6,224 Americans ages 16 and older.
Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.
Margin of error is +/- 1.4 percentage points forthe total sample.

Note: The 2010 and 2011 surveys were conducted among those ages 18 and older.

Web 2.0

In terms of social interactivity and communities which integrate these devices into their daily lives, the new millennium ushered in with the live nature of Web 2.0 (in comparison with the static web page of old), online

social media and networking (such as Facebook, Twitter and live news streams), and an exponential explosion in mobile devices, currently circa seven billion, with almost 40% of the world's population now using the Internet (ITU, 2013).

Facebooks global reach in 2011

In economic terms, what this has created is:

> The largest single market place in history and you have access to almost every single person on it instantaneously... this participatory web... is fundamentally changing how we need to do business because participation in the medium is... changing behaviour and expectations for customers, employees, stakeholders, everyone...(Ross, 2008).

What does this mean for literacy teachers, learners and researchers?

Web 2.0 is intrinsically dialogic: social networks, supply to demand, ratings, reviews, comments, posts, polls, shared media, global payment and dispute resolution facilities, recruitment processes, liaison with state and professional agencies. Knowledge and cultural products are created collaboratively online through wikis, blogs, podcasts, shared cloud file-making, editing and storage of mixed media, notes, documents, brainstorm and mind-mapping facilities. The latter are inherently literate social practices now carried out in a parallel virtual world which is becoming integral to human functioning in society. Adult literacies are evolving hand-in-hand with technological change (RaPAL, 2011). As Purcell-Gates and colleagues (2004, 2000) found, adults in learning programs that focus instruction around authentic literacy practices show greater changes than those from programs which do not. As professionals in the field, this dynamic literacies environment presents us with evolutionary challenges in curriculum, content and design.

Sociocultural schools of thought

Sociocultural schools of thought (Mercer and Littleton, 2007; Warschauer, 1997) argue that structures of knowledge and meaning are co-constructed through dialogue, and that in teaching and learning we can engage language and consequent literate practice to scaffold students' participation in higher cognitive thinking processes. Modern technological developments provide us with a wide selection of interactive

multimedia options to exercise this dialogic, literate nature of learning via routes of intrinsic motivation.

Cloud storage, file and group sharing enable collaborative participation. As outlined above, a swathe of common social purposes and interactions are now enacted online and can engage almost immediate peer comparison and response. For full participation these operations or practices frequently require the expression and substantiation of opinion in response to products and the negotiation of social norms and discourses (research and note management, blogging, online reviews, co-production). They may inspire original creation, synthesis and analysis as well as performance to specifications (podcasting, brainstorming, mind-mapping, job applications). For example, in making a purchase or sale through an online retailer (such as Amazon marketplace, eBay or Gumtree), an individual may research the technical specifications and reviews of a product or service, compare options and prices, create a sales page, set-up payment facilities, analyse buyer or seller ratings, feedback on reliability, discuss a query, raise a payment dispute, and leave a review. If either party's communication is not clear, the individual will not access the information they need, make a sale or purchase, or be able to resolve an issue without passing communication back and forth until a mutually acceptable solution is established.

There is much scope for positive developmental feedback loops which utilise real social, cultural and economic interaction in this dynamic literacies environment.

Teaching, learning and assessment

There has been an explosion in technology in education. Online quizzes and assessments include initial, diagnostic, feedback, formative and summative exams. Learning platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard or Edmodo, which include discussion forums, materials and assignment upload, ratings, feedback and tracking mechanisms, are commonplace in educational institutions; and websites and apps which offer additional resources and activities are a booming market. These Web 2.0 phenomena are developing online teaching and learning communities of practice. An early provider of online learning, the Khan Academy hyperlink has been utilised to support individualised learning and shared time for problem-solving activities, where social scaffolding can take place, while setting instruction time outside of contact time. This practice is also known as "flipped classrooms" (Branch, 2012).

According to *The Economist* briefing (2013), regular, frequent, dedicated online instruction and practice in the mechanics of subject learning (combined with institutional teaching and learning practice) has led to spectacular results with disadvantaged and funding-challenged cohorts. While longitudinal results do not yet exist to demonstrate the long-term benefits of these approaches, literacy studies have shown, '...a strong positive relationship between program participation and changes in literacy and numeracy practices measures' as Reder (2009) pointed out. Sheehan-Holt & Smith (2000) and Reder (1994) have also shown that such engagement can improve proficiency in the long term.

The growth in free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), created by prestigious international universities (Future Learn) has received considerable press over the last year, as has the high drop-out rates which are attributed at least in part to the lack of the human element in MOOC institutions (Clow, 2013). Cator (2013) expresses succinctly that 'technology can augment and amplify... skills, but [...] is no substitute for experienced human decision-making and intervention in complex, dynamic, high-stakes situations' such as successful teaching and learning experiences.

As literacy practitioners, we need to work with and integrate technology further into our teaching and learning practice to develop our learners' literacies and life skills and our own capacity to respond to the demands of the sector. JISC and the London Knowledge Lab are involved in significant work in this area.

RaPAL niace Training Workshops

These demonstrate a range of generic collaborative tools and multimedia applications, including polling and feedback mechanisms, note-taking and search enabled filing, research, brainstorming and mind-mapping, document, file co-production, commentary, blogging, sales and reviews that are used in everyday life and business situations throughout society across mobile devices, laptops and PCs. The focus is on free applications that are widely accessible and a range of virtual learning platforms are explored. These applications utilise traditional literacy practices in an online format which increase their interactivity and functionality, and can be integrated into practice inside and outside the classroom.

Quizzes, Polling and Feedback
There are numerous quiz, polling, survey and feedback web applications, such as SurveyMonkey , Polldaddy, and Polleverywhere . These allow participants to respond via web browser, social media such as Twitter or Facebook, or text message to open or closed questions. The results can be expressed in graphs and charts, word clouds, PowerPoint presentations live onscreen in real time and may carry sophisticated analysis and reporting options. They can be used for rapid shared feedback during a learning session or for in-depth questionnaire analysis as part of a project.

Evernote Suite
There are many note-taking packages available. The multi-platform cloud-based Evernote Suite for example, integrates with a device's camera and audio, drawing (Skitch) and web page cataloguing (Webclipper) options, calendar and location data, file attachments and email, is fully searchable and enables sharing of individual notes or whole notebooks. The Pro version enables collaborative production and editing. Some students use this as a comprehensive multimedia study notes package; businesses use it as a platform for administration; and education providers use it as an online learning resource for courses. It can be used to store research and project documentation or catalogue live shared files for managing business.

Google Drive
The pared down and free Google Drive system enables web creation, cloud storage and collaborative real time production and editing of simply formatted word-processing, spreadsheet, presentation, form and drawing files. The files can be accessed and viewed, commented on or amended anywhere on any web-enabled device by anyone you share them with. This may include during a web-communication session where live discussion takes place around live screen-share and co-production, or via staggered time comments based discussion back and forth. There are a number of commercial packages that offer a range of options, such as Office 365 and SkyDrive. It can be used in co-production of files, or to edit and feedback on work produced.

Blogging and Reviews
There are innumerable blogging and reviews options which encourage learners to engage in literacy practices around their own interests and life choices. There is frequently interaction and feedback, and at times ratings, which encourages clear communication. Examples are eBay feedback profiles where buyers and sellers express succinctly their experience of product and participant; and reliability ratings which accumulate on profiles and influence sales decisions; or blogs where commentary stimulates discussion of item and ranking occurs where more popular posts achieve higher rankings.

The advantages of these web applications over traditional methods are their easy access and storage across devices and locations, searchability, integrated functionality and collaborative interactivity, and multimodal multimedia capacities.

Multimedia and multimodality

The terms *multimodal* and *multimedia* refer to channels with multiple avenues of meaning communication via each of the senses (multimodal) realised through a range of implements, real or virtual (multimedia). The visual can include modes such as layout, images, colour and fonts, each of which contribute elements to a composite framework of meaning in any given context: am I reading a print broadsheet, tabloid or lifestyle magazine, online news reportage or blog post? Audio may cover aspects of speech, music, or clicking, beeping and other sound effects: did my mobile device just notify me a work email came in, a personal text message or a social media update? Haptic extends to touchscreen and tilt manipulation, buttons and icons, use of stylus, texture, light, and 3D or responsive sound: am I playing a fighting or building game, getting a ball in a hole or reimaging a design?

These modes combined in technological media give us 4D cinema, video-conferencing with document share, readers where you can see and hear a realistic representation of a page turn and annotate and search, and real-time, social networking practices including interactive newspages. These aspects can be combined to create whole body, or holistic, experiences that may mirror social, economic, political or personal experience and as such can be read critically. Fowler (2012) conceptualises digital literacies for critical reading in her research on email as a social practice, drawing on the New Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2003), and literacy in action, drawing on Actor Network Theory (Brandt and Clinton, 2002). When we read a multimedia text, is the author orchestrating resources which create meaning for us, with the effect of influencing thought and action? Am I being encouraged to read a lifestyle magazine, receive an out-of-hours email or play a character in a game as an authoritative or sensual text and change behaviour? Do I agree? If I contact a buyer or seller outside an online marketplace's communication channels, do I invalidate the dispute resolution service? In new marketplaces, the detail of established social and literacy practices changes.

This has curriculum implications for our students being able to understand, evaluate and communicate meaning in multimodal texts and interactions. To what extent do our teaching, learning and assessment practices reflect the multiplicity of meaning manipulation utilised in the world of life and work outside our doors? Pahl (2012:31), for example, explores digital 'home literacies as situated, and argues[s] that the digital is part of a wider landscape of communicative practices' in her analysis of uses of Streetview in families. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), extend the idea of design in this field to manipulation of critique and ideological meaning within diverse texts and social habitats, highlighting the wider range of semiotic modes to select from when we communicate, concrete and abstract. This touches on themes in the field of discourse analysis with regard to underpinning social structures and hegemony. In increasingly heterogeneous, mobile societies, which social and textual patterns constitute the norms of these underpinning structures? There are ethical implications also to be considered as far as Web 2.0 is concerned, in relation to how we interact and transact with others.

We have long used realia such as leaflets or forms, and kinaesthetic activities to develop literate practice for real social purposes in the classroom; and assessment of limited aspects of multimodal meaning can be found in Functional Skills and ESOL examinations (such as layout or formatting, graphs and charts, intonation). The range of meaning-making and audience in multimedia social interaction appears even greater in size and flexibility. For example, should the results of statistical analysis for effective social impact be presented by graph or by animation? Luke (2000:71) warns of the implications for literacy:

> Literacy requirements have changed and will continue to change as new technologies come on the marketplace and quickly blend into our everyday private and work lives. And unless educators take a

lead in developing appropriate pedagogies for these new electronic media and forms of communication, corporate experts will be the ones to determine how people will learn, what they learn, and what constitutes literacy.

Webinar

'Technology and Innovation in Literacy' as part of NIACE's Focus on innovation and use of technology to improve adults' basic English and Maths skills - a live webinar - Monday 3 March 2014
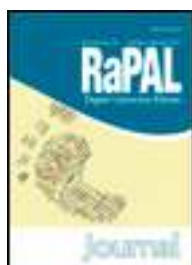
Researchers, practitioners and examiners will be required in the future to integrate these technologies into their own contexts, to explore meaning-making and develop frameworks of understanding. RaPAL hopes that recent migration to the YUDU digital publication platform for the journal will enable members to contribute to the development of the sector as we learn to utilise it fully across a diverse range of productions. It enables us to locate images, podcasts, videos, links and other interactive media within a published article; to facilitate discussion and extended sharing via the website and social media; and to integrate group reflection on teaching and learning practice. This may be as simple as sharing and discussing a lesson and accompanying interactive whiteboard PDF in Section 1 of the journal or the RaPAL Members' Area pages. Click on the journal to find out more.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges in developing the use of social networking within a multimedia learning environment. As well as overcoming technological issues, for example, connectivity and access to technology, both staff and students will need to develop their knowledge, skills and resources in both multimedia and social networking platforms.

Conclusion

On a positive note, there is a tremendous amount of interest in the area internationally: significant research and investment is taking place, and information and resources are freely available online. In essence, these new forms of communication require us to develop extended literacy skills. They build on established critical literacies such as substantiating objective opinions in an argument or review, or reflecting on commercial audience responsive promotional texts such as sales materials and flyers. We could argue that encouraging and supporting learners to participate effectively in these new literacies enriches their lives, develops their participatory capabilities and empowers them.

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Centres for further reference

Centre for Multi-modal Research at the Institute of Education, University of London Here

Lab Space at the Open University Here

Lancaster Literacy Research Centre at Lancaster University Here

London Knowledge Lab at the Institute of Education, London & Birkbeck College, London Here

An interactive method for helping learners to understand how sentences are structured

Freda Davis

Freda qualified as a teacher in 1963 and worked for some years in primary education before gaining a degree in English at Lancaster University in 1974. After volunteering in adult literacy, Freda created a grammar teaching card game and marketed it as Write-it through teacher centres in the 1970s. Publishers at the time said there was no market for literacy materials. After a mixed career in both teaching and voluntary organisations, Freda took up the game again, renamed Buddenbuk, on retirement and is exploring its value in teaching literacy and grammar skills. The push for Functional Skills in literacy brings these two areas together. Freda presented a workshop at the conference where around 15 participants had the opportunity to play the sentence-making games and discuss matters of sentence structure and grammatical words.
Freda can be contacted on freda247davis@gmail.com

Making implicit knowledge explicit

I would like to talk briefly about the requirement to look at English grammar within Functional Skills, and the challenge faced by those who need to explain it. I will give an outline of what I see as some of the key grammatical principles of English grammar, and then follow with a description of our grammar teaching game, and how it addresses these principles.

In the government document *National Literacy Strategy Grammar for Writing*, the authors say in the introduction:

> All pupils have extensive grammatical knowledge. Much of this is implicit, but they are able to generalise and improvise from this knowledge. Teaching which focuses on grammar helps to make this knowledge explicit, extend children's range and develop more confident and versatile language use.

> …the purpose of teaching grammar…is about making children aware of key grammatical principles and their effects, to increase the range of choices open to them when they write. (DfEE, 2000)

At the workshop, we began by asking what relationship people felt they had to grammar. There was a heavy silence, and then one brave participant put up her hand and admitted that probably like most people present, she was terrified by it. Others seemed to agree. This comment revealed a difficulty for literacy teachers with regard to the expectations of the DfEE.   The teaching of grammar had not been a priority in many schools, and even in many university English departments for a long time.

Another difficulty is the perceived excessive detail of grammar books and their elevated price. How do you find your way through this forest of words? There are good courses for teaching English, and useful grammars, but not everyone has the opportunity to access them.

On the other hand, if you speak English, you have, as the DfEE puts it, an implicit knowledge of the subject. How hard can it be to explain? But if we believe that students learn through experience, we need to give them opportunities to explore the language and work out how it works. This needs open-ended, discovery-style and hands-on materials which allow students to find things out for themselves.

Our approach to grammar is to convey the bare bones of it in as simple a form as possible, but by using card games, we give students an active role in discovering rules for themselves. It is necessary to use some very specific terms which may be unfamiliar, but we try to explain them in context. You could describe our approach as a *Sentence Method*. The practice of teaching the sentence as a unit goes back to George Farnham of Nebraska,

> Reading consists - first in gaining the thoughts of an author from written or printed language- second in giving oral expression to these thoughts... The first principle to be observed in teaching written language is that things are cognized as wholes... What is the whole, or what is the unit of expression?

> Thoughts… are materials of the mind out of which complex relations are constructed. The thought is the unit of thinking. It follows that the sentence is the unit of expression. We acquire knowledge of the parts of an object by first considering it as a whole. (Farnham, 1887)

Modern English grammars such as those by Scott et al (1968) and Leech and Svartik (2002), have shown how to break down the sentence into its component parts, i.e. clauses. Simple sentences contain only one clause, but complex sentences can contain several clauses. While we begin by dealing with the sentence as a whole, experience in our games of adding clauses to the sentence allows the learner to begin to understand that clauses are parts of the sentence.

Literacy teachers are aware that students who struggle with literacy difficulties are much more familiar with spoken than written discourse. In their *English Grammar for Today,* looking at the difference between written and spoken English, Leech et al (1982) state that 'spoken grammar is less complex than written grammar,' and after looking at the differences in length and complexity of the two, they go on to say:

> …but if we accept that clauses, and stand-alone non-clausal units are the operative units of spoken grammar, then the simplicity of the basic building blocks of speech is not surprising

So I would describe the game essentially as a clause-building method. The game deals with sentence structure and students still have to learn the normal rules of capitalization and punctuation. However, the game's structure is really based on building lexical words into clauses, which is the more natural unit of spoken English.

Our approach has similarities to the much more comprehensive materials introduced by the School Council Programme led by M.A.K. Halliday in the early 1970s called *Breakthrough to Literacy* which was designed as a whole-school approach and involved multiple sets of small pieces of card-carrying single words, from which children built sentences to copy. In the description of the theory behind *Breakthrough*, there is some exploration of the difference between grammatical and lexical words (ibid: 96) and the development of awareness of structure. Another comprehensive system is the *Oxford Reading Tree* (2013), which combined a series of reading books of limited vocabulary and delightful illustrations with flash cards used to copy the sentences in the books.

Besides being designed for very young children, the above methods depend upon the learner having to find every word of her/his sentence in the materials provided, which can be very frustrating. In the *Oxford Reading Tree* no distinction is made between the functions of different kinds of word in making sentences from the flash cards. Our method consists of packs of playing cards that provide the referential (or lexical) words from which the player builds his own communication. This basic game only requires two cards to form

the basis of the sentence. Players are free to add any other words that come to them in expressing their chosen meaning. The group then decides whether they have produced one complete sentence, and whether it makes sense. Teachers can experiment with their students in making their own packs of lexical words.

The games
These involve the learners in generating their own communications, speaking these aloud, and then writing them down. Some aspects of the games are explored below.

Clauses: in the course of the game students can discover the parts of a sentence, and learn how these relate to each other. Students just need the language to be able to talk about it.

Here are some of the sentences you could make with these two lexical words. The game allows you to add any words you like to create your sentence.

1. Michael was crossing the road.
2. Michael saw his friend crossing the road with a dog.
3. Michael and the dog were crossing the road.
4. Michael and his dog waited before crossing on the Zebra.

Link and bond
When we first made the game we just made cards with nouns and verbs, set in a picture clue. We tell the players they can use the word any way they like. The picture is only a context, a clue to the word. It can be used in other ways as they wish. We asked the players to take two of these cards and make up a sentence using them. As far as possible we used words that referred to things that were familiar, so there are pictures are of shops, traffic and people, for example.

We then made a set of conjunctions, words that we use to link clauses together, (linking and bonding). By putting a Link and

Bond card after the picture cards, the challenge is to complete the sentence. These are examples of conjunctions. Each time you add one, the sentence becomes incomplete and needs a new ending.
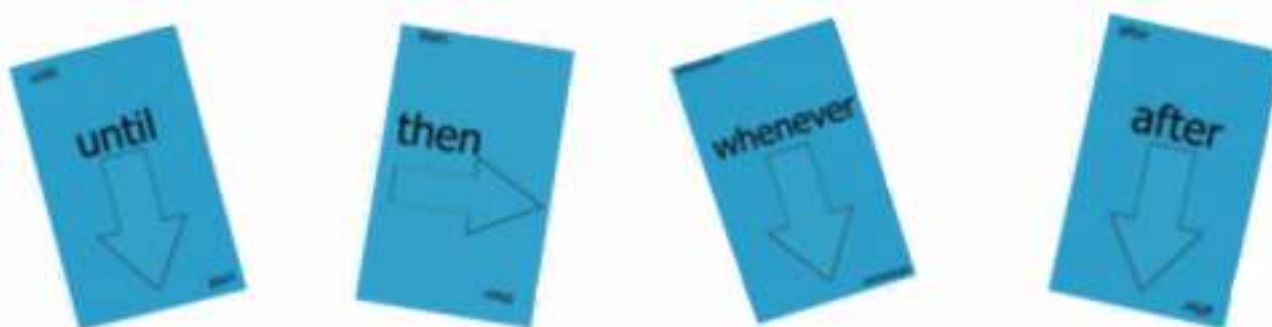

Other games have been added which highlight different aspects of sentence structure. The noun group consists of a head word, the noun, together with all the descriptive words about it. The game *Describals* offers a range of these modifying words, which need placing in the right order. The game allows players to add these and re-order until the group agrees it makes sense. These words can be categorised, as, for example, determiners: *the, an*; numerators: *last, third*; and epithets: *juicy, loud*, and other categories.

The Game *Verbits* introduces the auxiliary verbs, named because they are quite bitty words. These are a closed category of words which modify the verb to express tense such as past or future, and other aspects such as uncertainty, e.g. *might* or *could*, completeness and active or passive voice. The varieties of *have* and *be* make up many of these "verbits" but can also be main verbs.

As with the *Describals*, the challenge is to use these in a way that makes sense.
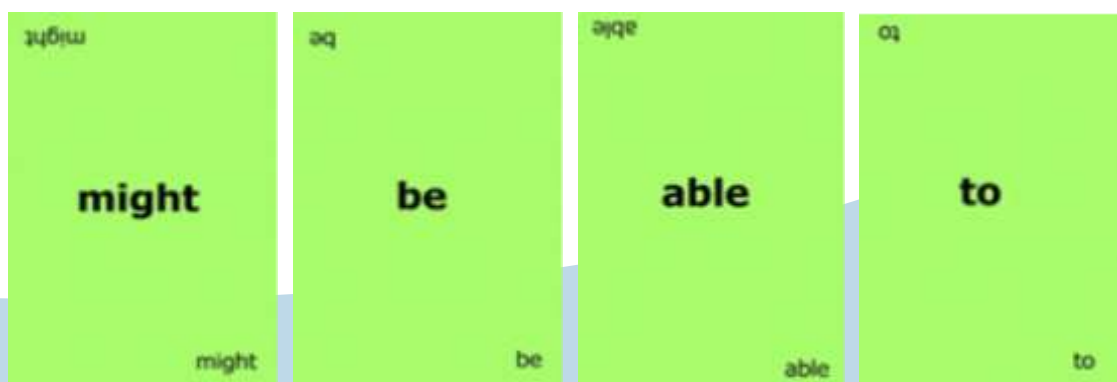
These are examples of the way that the games introduce aspects of sentence structure.

Functional skills

There is a requirement to teach Functional Skills, and for many teachers this means having to find ways to teach sentence structure, and the structure of texts. Our simple grammar of English, as indicated above, can support teachers whose subject specialism isn't English. It looks at three levels: words, sentences, and texts. We divide words into lexical and grammatical, and explore the structure of word phrases or groups. We look at the structure of sentences, which linguists call syntax. Sentences can be simple, complex or compound. That refers to whether there is one or more clauses in the sentence, and whether those clauses are linked together or bound together. We look at the way that texts are made to hold together. That is called cohesion. There are particular grammatical words, and other devices (such as elision) that connect sentences. These aspects of language form a good introduction that makes it possible to cover the basic functional skills of English. Of course, if you know more you can convey more to your students. We see our simple grammar as a jumping off point for discovering the beauty of language.

We find it useful to demonstrate these points by playing the card games, so that learners can discover for themselves how they work. We have found that both learners and teachers of adult literacy are unsure that they have any useful knowledge of grammar and they feel this is a barrier to progressing, or even to starting to explore this aspect of language. By playing our game people can discover that they know a great deal about grammar simply because they can communicate with one another. The game allows this knowledge to be revealed to themselves and to one another. This builds confidence and a desire to learn more. So even if the immediate outcome is not a formal knowledge of sentence structure, what they gain is confidence to use sentence structure in flexible ways which improves their writing skills. It also means that the tutor does not have to take on the burden of providing the sentences used in the lesson as these come from the group and belong to them.

We want learners to make explicit their implicit knowledge of the structure of language; this will help them when reading and writing. By creating their own communications, the players produce writing they can understand and read. In the course of playing these games, learners gain an understanding of clauses and linking conjunctions. At a later stage, they come to understand and use verb and noun groups and their components. This leads to an understanding of some of the principles of grammar and communication of meaning, as required by the Functional Skills standards. Therefore teachers can feel confident that they can teach these functional skills for writing and reading.

We are happy to give workshops to groups of teachers about this approach. In our workshops the participants have an opportunity to play the games with one another   and explore the way language works in a non-threatening environment, where as well as having fun, they can discuss what is happening using their own understanding and their own words.

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Incorporating problem solving into our teaching of English and maths
Gail Lydon
Gail is a teacher/tutor and teacher trainer

When I was at school, problem solving in mathematics involved textbook examples I had to first calculate, and then check against the answer at the back of the textbook. Thankfully those days have gone. Problem solving in mathematics today is about knowing how to model everyday life in numbers, choose calculations and then decide what the results tell us. It is about practical application in life, learning and work contexts.

I was delighted to run a short activity session looking at problem solving at the Annual 2013 NIACE, RaPAL and UCU conference on 2nd October 2013. My particular focus was looking at English and maths functional skills and how we might teach these using a problem-solving approach. Many learners in England are now studying Functional Skills in further education, adult and community learning, and in secure contexts. For some this is a useful qualification in its own right and for others it is a stepping-stone to the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE).

Why problem solving?
Problem solving approaches are often more engaging for the learner because they are goal-oriented, contextual, interesting, challenging and interactive.

Problem solving is an integral part of Functional Skills. This is perhaps not clear from the subject criteria of English, maths and ICT, but is clearly outlined in the Qualification Criteria which overarches all three subjects here and here.

The Qualification Criteria states that assessment must:
- provide realistic contexts, scenarios and problems
- specify tasks that are relevant to the context
- require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose
- require problem solving

Hence we must provide opportunities for our learners to learn through such scenarios and problems in a purposeful way.

Initial assessment
One of the big issues that comes up straightaway is initial assessment. How can we initially assess our learners' problem solving skills? The delegates modeled a possible way of doing this. In groups of three, one delegate acted as learner, one as tutor and one as observer. Using images of problems the "learner" was encouraged by the "tutor" to describe the problem he or she saw in the image. These images can be familiar or unfamiliar depending on the level of functional skills your learners are working towards. In this way you will stretch the learners' understanding of problems in a range of contexts. The "observer" noted the questions asked and the approaches taken by the "tutor". The room was filled with highly skilled practitioners and this resulted in a long and useful list of questions and approaches. This approach could of course be used as a group activity. Questions included:

- Can you describe the problem?
- What do you see in the picture?
- What information do you need to solve the problem?
- Do you have all the information you need to solve the problem?
- Do you have the skills to solve the problem?

What came out very clearly was that different people saw different issues in the image/picture depending on their own skills and expertise. For example an image showing an issue with trains being cancelled caused lively debate about costs, timing, inconvenience, etc. This led on to a discussion as to how problem-solving approaches can be used to support individualized learning.

Context

Where do we get ideas as to context to use with our learners? The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue, in other words problems are challenges. It is easy to overlook the obvious. In fact many of my learners are the source of my ideas for problem-solving contexts. I ask them to share where they have problems with English, maths and other contexts. This might be paying bills, organising a holiday, shopping, going to an interview or making travel arrangements.

We also look at the English and maths test papers. There are 16 awarding organisations offering functional skills so there is no shortage of papers. What contexts do they use? Will your learners find these accessible? Can your learners rewrite the question but in a different context? The proof that your learners are developing problem-solving skills is seen when they can apply a skill in a range of contexts, that is, when they transfer that skill.

As always when working with colleagues, time just flew by but not before we had a chance to share some of our favourite resources to support problem solving approaches.

Collaboration

If your learners have a broad programme of study it is useful for them to see problem-solving in all their studies. Working with your colleagues to have a problem solving approach will help them.

Problem solving games

Games are a great way to encourage the development of problem-solving skills. You may choose to use them as an opening activity to your sessions (even if you are not teaching English or maths). Many of the problem-solving games are ones we have used in the past but we sometimes forget. Remember a problem is only a problem when you can't do it – so it is the perfect learning opportunity and a chance to discuss what to do when it looks impossible. The following is an example from Nrich Maths (http://tinyurl.com/rapalspring4):

Money Measure You have ten identical open topped boxes with 10 visually identical coins in each. In nine of the boxes each of the 10 coins has a mass of 10g. In one box the 10 coins have masses of only 9g each. How can you find which box is the odd one out? You have a normal mass measurer with a single pan and a scale. With just one weighing can you identify the box with the lighter coins? What will you weigh? I am sure that many of you are now thinking: I remember that one. But your learners may not have, and it's fun.

Resources

Free resources to support:
www.great-learning.co.uk is where I upload lists of free resources. Contact me at gaillydon@me.com.

As an example, have a look at the resources here and here which were produced as part of the Key Skills Support Programme but are still very useful, and packed full of ideas.

Literacy phased out of adult education?
Sarah Freeman with the section on the Scottish perspective from Sallie Condy

Sallie works for Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector providing support to literacies projects in Glasgow and is Chair of RaPAL

Sarah is a Functional Skills English, ESOL and Dyslexia Specialist teacher in several sites in South London/Surrey

RaPAL members have concern about the recent shift in terminology for adult reading and writing classes in England, from the previous *adult literacy* to *Functional Skills English and Maths*. The October 2013 conference seemed an ideal opportunity for delegates to share their experiences and the implications.
There was a particularly interesting discussion as we discovered a very wide range of views. There were arguments both for and against phasing out the term *adult literacy*.

We asked two questions in effect:
1. Is the term *literacy* suddenly disappearing as a name for classes where students learn to become literate?
2. Is a particular learning experience also disappearing?

The debate was inconclusive. This was perhaps because it is early days to be putting forward strong viewpoints on this linguistic shift in terminology and the corresponding changes that are happening to literacy provision. It was clear that no one organisation or official body had made a conscious decision that this shift should happen. Delegates from outside England and Wales also had a different perspective.

Within Scottish adult literacy provision the expression *literacies* is applied to all types of literacy provision which provides access to the skills needed to function in our information society. This social practices approach was at the back of many of the delegates' minds as they contributed.

Personally, the discussion was a wake-up call. I realised after the workshop that I held a singular one-sided view on why it would be detrimental to lose the expression *literacy*. I came to realise that the expression *literacy* carries certain connotations for some adult learners that they might wish to avoid.

In 2007, National Research and Development Council (NRDC) published findings that drew attention to the benefits of the *Skills for Life* programme for the most educationally disadvantaged:

> *Skills for Life* was seen as a relatively temporary measure to restore life chances to adults through skills acquisition, after which, for subsequent generations, the education system would ensure that the problem no longer arose. We now know that quick solutions to such longstanding problems are unlikely to be totally effective. Education through such initiatives as 'Family literacy' and 'Literacy and numeracy hours' can achieve a lot in reducing the skills deficit for school-leavers. However, a proportion of individuals in a mass education system are always going to miss out. Furthermore, as expectations of what is needed rise, the pressure towards marginalisation grows. This means that Skills for Life (should) be seen, not as a stop-gap, but as an essential part of the education system. (Bynner, J and Parsons, S, 2007:80-81)

However, the urgency which was already gaining momentum at the end of the Labour government's tenure, to produce results in the education system which would enhance the country's economic profile, has now produced exactly the quick-results, and functional skills series of qualifications which providers find hard to combine with the longer-term, literacy input that many Entry Level learners need.

This illustrates one of the tensions that exist and is one reason why we raised questions at the National Institute of Adults Continuing Education (NIACE)/ University College Union (UCU)/ RaPAL conference. Questions such as the following were raised:

In what meaningful ways do the terms *English* and *maths* match to *literacy*, *ESOL* and *numeracy*, and in what meaningful ways do they not?

Responses to the above were typical of the kaleidoscope of views on all of the questions. Some considered the terminology irrelevant:

> · Whatever the name, it is the practices that we take part in that count
> · But it is what happens in teaching sessions, I don't think losing the name will lose the practice

Others were more concerned about the implications of the name:

> · If we don't defend literacies as a field, new practitioners will see English as a set of skills
> · Terminology is tied up with policy messages, for example, are we given and giving messages that English and maths are more valuable? Policy is driving this

Others considered that this debate detracted from more pressing issues in provision:

> · Initial assessment and appropriate referrals are more issues than what provision is called.

Both Sallie and I were drawn to the responses which examined the connotations of the terms we use.

> · We don't want to lose the *Adult* from Adult Education. Provision is becoming *school-ified*.
> · I worry about the term *English*. Whose English is it anyway? Do we all know what we mean by English? For some this is GCSE only

We reflect on this terminology again later in this article.
Others looked at the questions from the point of view of the learners:

> · Stand-alone literacy classes did not attract learners but when we called them "Get Ahead with English" or even "Functional Skills" people came.
> · For several groups of learners, *English* was the preferred term because it held no stigma, particularly in the workplace when needed for career progression.
> · Learners and employers value GCSE because they understand what it is and it is needed for progression into education and jobs. SMEs are losing confidence in changes.
> · One of the least popular terms with learners was *Basic Skills*
> · Literacy was seen as what children did and therefore not popular with adults, especially when the Literacy Hour was introduced in schools.

The Scottish perspective
Responsibility for education in Scotland is devolved to the Scottish Government, so delegates from Scotland are working within a different policy context and therefore not impacted directly by *Skills for Life* and the Functional Skills English and Maths terminology. That is not to say that tensions do not exist, as they do, for example, between learners' long-term needs and the pressure to produce quick results. However there is a strong tradition and acceptance of the use of a social practice model, which is specifically referred to in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland:

We are using a social practices account of adult literacy and numeracy (Barton, 2002). Rather than seeing literacy and numeracy as the decontextualised, mechanical manipulation of letters, words and figures this view shows that literacy and numeracy are located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts.'   (Scottish Executive, 2005)

Further, *the Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020 Strategic Guidance* (Scottish Government, 2011) includes a definition that illustrates the intention to link literacies with everyday context:

By 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.'

Interestingly, a footnote, (Ibid:7) specifically defines the word *literacies*:

The term "literacies" used throughout this document refers to the skills, knowledge and understanding required for literacy and numeracy practices, for example to read and understand a bus timetable; to complete a betting slip or to create a CV.

Adding to this Scottish Government policy context, the *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Government, 2009) provides an educational framework for children and young people aged 3-18 years and it states that literacy and numeracy are the responsibility of all, whilst English and maths are seen as specific curriculum subjects.

Inclusive but thought-provoking debate

There were voices in our discussion which expressed the fact that the continual changes of terminology were confusing:

· Terminology can circle around
· There is a lack of clarity. Could we all just be consistent in the terminology we use and its meaning?

There is probably a great deal of truth in this as it is widely acknowledged that policy simply evolves; many contemporary commentators on literacy provision and on literacies have pointed out this in the English experience. St. Clair (2010:18), for example, describes how the term *functional literacy* 'inspired by good intentions' in the end 'does not help a great deal with understanding what literacy is.' The reason for this he suggests is that 'any functional definition of literacy will tend to collapse into circularity – literacy is that which you have to do to be literate.'

Policy makers who introduce layer upon layer of new policy as governments shift their focus or are replaced by other governments are also in the process of continually reworking the language of policy, 'the way it is thought about and talked about…over time.' (Ball, S.J, 2008:201).

As a rule then, policies that shape the type of provision that can be afforded, are not creative with language. The main preoccupation for government bodies is to act, in this case, for literacy, 'enabling through funding, legislation, policy infrastructure and training provision, a particular version of reading and writing to circulate through particular populations and not others.' (Hamilton, M; 2012:92)

Sue Southwood, of NIACE wrote about the workshop topic on a RaPAL Blog:

> I find this debate really interesting. Although, we can and do adapt our language to suit our context and audience, it must be very difficult for those new to the sector to keep up! At NIACE, we are wanting to strengthen the understanding amongst adult learning stakeholders and policy makers, that 'Life Skills' are important and inter-related. These include literacy, numeracy and ESOL, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities.

As experts we have a very clear understanding of how life skills can be learned through a whole range of adult education avenues. But it can be challenging to express the necessary forging together of all these rich areas of learning to fully benefit learners. We aim to have a shared understanding through policy and funding channels but as shown from the many perspectives here, it is not a clear path.

Reflection on the changes in terminology
It is sometimes fun to upturn one's own entrenched attitudes, as is the case here. After teaching in adult literacy for 40+ years, I found myself defensive that this label should be phased out. The expression *Functional English* with its accreditation-only credentials, suggests a provision for further education crammer courses rather than community, semi-flexible, locally based adult education classes.

After the conference, happening to ask one of my interviewees during a research project what he thought of the change to English classes from literacy classes, I was surprised by his response. He had been a student in literacy classes for the most part of eleven years.   His reply was that he had never understood what was meant by literacy and now that he knew what he was studying, it was a lot more straightforward.

Hearing that alongside some of the comments from the Conference 2013 workshop, I realised that I had allowed myself to see a very one-sided point of view of the question. I realised from the workshop comment quoted above that literacy is seen as what children do, which develops in the word *literacy* a derogatory connotation. That might be why the responses to the questions had been ambivalent. Policies may change but the linguistic expressions they leave behind have a powerful effect on our perceptions of ourselves and others simply through the type of use they have and how they evolve over time.   Is it possible that the word *literacy* could become "injurious speech", as Butler (1997) calls it? The latter describes how some language used in particular public contexts can come to degrade or subordinate the person addressed (ibid: 93) and how the use of a word can come to endow it with "performative" properties (ibid: 158-161). These performative words can come to produce a set of social effects which the original naming had never intended. As being literate becomes a compulsory passport to adulthood and being worthwhile, could the association with literacy classes (as opposed to English classes) become more shameful rather than more accepted?

Conclusion
The workshop held considerable significance to RaPAL. As an organisation we have always associated ourselves with Adult Literacy.   It may be time to change our name to "Research and Practice in Adult Literacies" with our social practices origins fully explicit. At the same time how far will we be able to align ourselves academically or even *nominally* with the pedagogical principles embedded in the Functional Skills English and Maths approach for members in England and Wales?

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Teaching and learning reading - an interview with Sam Duncan
Irene Schwab

Irene Schwab is the course leader for the PGCE/Diploma Language, Literacy and Numeracy at the Institute of Education (IOE) in London. Sam Duncan is a lecturer in education, also at IOE. Sam Duncan has already written about the research process of her study of reading circles in RaPAL. 'Researching the Reading Circle Experience'. *RaPAL Journal, 72, 32-37).*

Irene interviewed Sam recently about her findings in that study and how they might make a difference to the way we approach the teaching and learning of reading.

Irene: Can you tell me about your research on reading circles?

Sam: I did some research by setting up a reading circle within an existing Entry 3 /Level 1 adult literacy class in a London college. At the beginning of the year they'd shown interest in reading longer texts. So we set up the reading circle and they decided to read a novel.

There was a lot of discussion about what people understood by a novel and what kind of thing they'd want to read. They came up with criteria like not longer than 200 pages; not too many complicated sentences; interesting, and we brought in examples, did a vote and chose a book. We also talked about how we would spend the time. They decided we'd have the last forty minutes of the lesson; that we'd rearrange the room so that it felt different from the class; that I would be involved a bit but I would try and edge out and it would be more self-run; that they would read a bit at home every week. They had a chairperson every week, a different person who volunteered to keep order, who would usually start by saying, "Tell me about what we've read," and then it would be a kind of memory gathering, partly remembering things and clarifying what happened, but also discussing or interpreting, so there'd be a discussion.

They wanted to read aloud, which is controversial, and they ended up taking turns, reading about a page each. We made it really clear that not everyone needs to read if they don't want to but in fact everyone did. And we decided to stop after a page because otherwise some people wanted to read much more. They all wanted to take turns but would support each other, so someone may get a lot of help in decoding; others were reading quite quickly but wanted a lot more help with vocabulary, with others it was more about confidence reading out loud.

Within a few weeks they were really self-running in the sense of defining vocabulary for each other and drawing on each other's strengths. The woman who was the least confident reader had worked in a hospital and so she had experience of medical vocabulary and procedures and there was some bits in there that were medical, so people went to her for that.

Irene: What were your main findings?

Sam: Well it seemed like we could describe reading as five different acts: it was an *educational* act, an act of learning words, but also learning about say, orchestras and how they work, or learning about hospitals, learning about the lives of other people. It was a *cognitive* act, they talked about remembering, about linking words and sentences, about linking sounds and words; a *communicative* act, in terms of how they related to each other and of reading with other family members; an *imaginative* act, so they were creating this fictional world; they talked about the

characters and they also described how, the more they knew of the characters as the process went on, the easier the reading got. An *affective or emotional* act, both in the sense of feeling happy or sad about their own reading, but also feeling happy or sad, or other emotions, with the characters.

Another one that I thought was important for thinking about reading was the idea of reading identity. At the initial interviews, everyone gave quite a strong sense of where they saw themselves in terms of reading. So some were saying, "I'm not a good reader because of this; good readers do this, I can't do this." And then as that developed, and what they were doing in the reading circle by supporting each other and scaffolding each other in reading the novel, they were creating a shift in those reading identities, so that then they can feel: "Okay, I am someone who can do this."

And it also made me think a lot about how we understand fiction and non-fiction, and the types of learning there[are], because they all talked about learning on different levels, and part of it was learning about certain medical conditions, or learning about how an orchestra works, so they learnt true things, or important things, from reading the novel. But there was also this sense that it's not true, so what does that mean for it to be true or not true?

Working in a group seemed to be quite empowering. There were some people in the group who wouldn't have talked together that much, and one person in the group who definitely felt that he didn't have friends and that he couldn't really communicate with people. But because they were talking about the novel, they seemed to be much closer and much more supportive. And this seemed to show me something about peer learning, and that a group of adults could really help each other, because everyone's needs are just that little bit different, and so some can support this, someone with that.

Irene: What do you think the benefits were for the learners of being part of a reading circle?

Sam: I think besides the mutual support it gave lots of differentiation in a really meaningful way, because you're doing something all together as a group, but it's broad or fluid enough for people to be doing slightly different things. So another thing I did was give everyone a notebook, so they could use it for the reading circle however they liked, and the five who used it, used it for very different things. One person was quite a strong reader; she read in other languages, but she wanted to develop her vocabulary. So she used it to record vocabulary. Another, I think I already mentioned, a young woman who was trying to remember what was going on, and she used that for those notes. Someone else was really interested in the idea of different people's interpretations and she used to record those. I didn't even say, "If you want to work on vocabulary, you could do it this way." It just happened.

Irene: So there's already a benefit for the teacher as well as a benefit for the learners. Any other benefits for the teachers?

Sam: It's something different, and once you've got into the swing a bit I think it's really important and meaningful learning for everyone, but it's also not something you need to do masses of preparation for.

Irene: I'm just thinking of the teacher's role in helping people learn.

Sam: It's satisfying because it's the kind of teaching when you're really responding. So it's very tiring at the time, but it's more satisfying because you can see people engaged. I think I learnt a lot about teaching, and a lot about reading from it, and seeing people move on, feeling more confident, reading different types of texts, how they were talking to each other, just the way they were talking about the characters at the end compared to the beginning.

Irene: Sort of developing their reading identities?

Sam: Yes definitely. The hard thing would be if you had really shaky attendance. That would be a bit of a challenge.

Irene: Yes, because then you'd have all the difficulties of trying to catch up and people missing.

Sam: Although, in *our* group, not everyone had actually read the same bit every week. But because they were talking about it, then they were all on the same page, they all knew where they were when they started reading on.

Irene: It probably also helped them realise that you don't have to read every word. To be able to read a book, actually you can skip bits and still get through it. How have you followed up this research? Have you done any more in the area?

Sam: I did a bit with the NRDC[1] this past winter, and for the *Quick Reads*[2] series. How reading for pleasure could work for emerging adult readers, and I decided to get in touch with existing reading circles who were using *Quick Reads* amongst other things and talk to them. I found two in the Greater London area, and I sat in on a session and talked to a few learners. And it was amazing, the same kind of things were coming up, and definitely what was coming up was that cycle - that kind of positive cycle of people feeling that in doing this it was altering their reading identity, or they got more confident and therefore they were doing more reading in their lives.

Irene: You've obviously followed up your first circle with other circles, and if other RaPAL members wanted to run reading circles with literacy learners, any advice that you might be able to give them?

Sam: Well if someone has a literacy class, they could think about the possibility of doing it even in the last half hour if you've got a long enough class, because the advantage of that is that it's not an extra commitment, but you can still make it feel like a quite different way of learning. I think once a week works well. So I suppose my advice would be to think through timings and what works for people.

Also in the beginning to try and set up an ethos or model a system where people feel like they can get themselves into a pattern or they're feeling supported, so they're not feeling abandoned.

So your involvement setting up a reading circle is to maybe give some ideas for getting into the swing of what you might talk about or ask about. And thinking about texts, not everyone has to really love the book, as long as everyone has something to say about it, and then all the discussion seems to be related back and forth to people's own lives. So even if someone really hates it, as long as they have something to say about it, it still works. And that discussion of lives is also a kind

1. National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy
2. Quick Reads are published books that are part of a campaign to introduce more adults to reading.

of tool of differentiation or management. So if there were people in the group who actually were [not] able to read much of it themselves but could get a sense of what's going on, then they may have lots to offer from their own experience on certain topics, and so they're still really involved in it.

And then you'll talk about the characters. Do I like this character or not, or do I like their behaviour, or could you imagine this, or imagine they did that rather than just, 'I like this,' or, 'I don't,' which I thought was a really good thing.

Irene: I had the same experience when I did reading with my group. They really got into the characters and we'd spend ages thinking about what the characters might do. It stopped them in their tracks when someone said, "You know it's only a book, it's not real life."

Sam: Yes, towards the end of the novel, one of the main characters dies and they were just horrified. And the woman who was least confident with her decoding, who saw herself as not a reader in the beginning, she said, 'Can you believe it? What he did! What he did!' I said, 'Who?' 'The writer! Can you believe he did it! Just as she was beginning to get into books and things.' You could tell how engaged they were with the characters, but then by saying, 'He killed her,' it also showed that, they knew this was a creation.

So it also showed I guess the sophistication of what we're all doing when we're reading novels; that we know it's a creation but we suspend that. And then she was linking that to how awful to die, or to be killed, just when you're beginning to understand the world of books. Which was something I hadn't thought of when I read it, I guess because I didn't have the same appreciation as she did of how nice it is to get into books if you hadn't been into them before.

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Supporting Students with Dyslexia in Giving Presentations

Victoria Mann and Yara Ali-Adib

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Introduction

Academic literacy is a specific genre, rarely encountered outside academic institutions and journals. Students embarking on further and higher education courses are required to get to grips quickly with this genre and write in an academic style, following the conventions of their institution or department. Academic literacy has been defined by Rafferty as:

> Disciplinary and professional knowledge and skills, understanding the epistemology and 'landscape' of the discipline, and what it means to think and behave as a member of that disciplinary and/or professional community of practice (2010:4)

Developing these skills is therefore more than just the acquisition of core reading and writing to encode and decode text: the students are required to respond to diverse literacy practices. Whilst academic literacy has traditionally involved writing essays, other forms of assignments are also employed, such as creating posters or writing reflective journals. Students, therefore, are required to tailor their writing in order to meet the criteria for different types of assignments (Gibbs, 2006).

The development of these skills has been well documented (see Cason, L., 2011, for example). This paper, on the other hand, considers the specific demands that new presentation-based assignments make on students with dyslexia, and considers ways that tutors can support students in developing effective presenting skills.

Rationale for diversity in assignments

This increasing diversity of task requires students to develop a range of different literacy skills. Hughes (2009) argues that this diversity provides an opportunity for students to develop multiliteracies in order to be prepared for the working environment, making the argument that the traditional essay-based assignment does not equip students for life after education. Gilbert (2012) suggests that a rationale for diversity could be that innovative assignment tasks result in more engaged and deeper learning, improving the learning outcomes of the students. She also argues that diverse activities can reduce the likelihood of plagiarism and can ensure that activities are more culturally relevant.

In terms of a definition of diversification in task, Nesi and Gardner (2006) divide diverse tasks into four themes: creative writing, empathy writing, reflective writing, and new technologies. Within these themes, presentations would appear to fall into the category of new technologies.

Specific elements of presentations

Presentations differ from most other forms of assignment in that they require both oral and written communication skills; the use of new technology can also form part of the assessment criteria. Ramsey and Davies (2001) for example, have included use of graphical displays in their suggested marking criteria, advising that aspects of the presentation such as font size, readability of diagrams and charts, and

organisation of the slides should all form part of assessment. The University of Exeter includes reference to use of visual material in the assessment criteria. The University of East Anglia also includes an assessment of the student's ability to utilise the technology with the presentation, assessing how visual aids are used and choreographed (UEA, 2012).

In terms of oral skills, students are assessed on overall delivery - interaction with the audience, clarity and audibility of voice, and appropriate level and speed of delivery. Ramsey and Davies (2001) also suggest additional assessment criteria of delivery, such as eye contact with, and appropriate response to the audience, self assurance and enthusiasm. The marking criteria of the history department of University of Sheffield also includes assessment of oral presentation skills, focussing on delivery, ability to convey difficult information, and interesting and effective responses to questions. The University of Exeter includes evidence of research and methodological approaches in the marking criteria. This is also evidenced, to some extent, in Brunel University, which assesses content and structure of presentations, as well as readability and use of visual aids. Dryden *et al* (2003) highlight a number of issues with regard to the criteria of presentations. Firstly, they question the reliability and validity of assessment, arguing that the criteria does not allow for consistency of marking, given the transient nature of presentations. They also argue that criteria such as voice are subjective, and that other skills and knowledge may be overshadowed.

Impact of dyslexia on giving presentations
The University of Nottingham has developed a teachers' guide to support students with dyslexia which has identified the following key areas of difficulty: word retrieval, organization of ideas into coherent sentences, mispronunciation of words (both familiar and unfamiliar), and the continuation of a structured argument. In relation to recall, a problem sometimes associated with dyslexic students, Haywood (2000) argued that students could often be confused when incorporating notes into a presentation, as these add to the demand on the working memory.

Supporting students to develop the necessary skills
Tutors can support students to develop presentation skills. In terms of preparation, Haywood (2000) suggests that students should avoid putting whole sentences and phrases onto note cards and instead use one or two trigger words in large print. She also suggested putting the words in different colours, to make them stand out and differentiate main points and minor points. All the main points could be in red for example. If a student is running out of time, he or she can revert to the points in red. The advantage for students is that they don't have to make the decision about what to leave out during the presentation. Cottrell (2003) suggests the postcard technique, which provides a structure to the presentation and supports the student in managing the different elements. The talk is split into sections, each with a sub-heading. The student writes one heading and prompt words on each postcard and numbers the cards in the order of points to be addressed. A similar strategy is to put the key headings onto the PowerPoint. The advantage of this is that the student is not looking from notes to slides.

In terms of oral presentation skills, students should be encouraged to practise delivery in a non-threatening environment. Jamieson and Morgan (2008) advocate the use of practising presentations with peer groups. This enables the student to get feedback on their delivery and to gain a deeper understanding about what is effective. Patri (2001) found that when specific criteria were set, students were able to accurately assess their peers' performance.

Conclusion
Different types of assignments are now a feature of further and higher education. This diversity helps students to develop skills pertinent to the workplace. The diversification of assignments does, however,

increase the demands on the students, requiring them to respond to different tasks with different assessment criteria.

Presentations can be a formidable challenge to students with dyslexia. It is clear, however, that there are strategies that can improve performance in this area. Teachers can play a role in supporting students to develop the necessary skills, cope with additional demands, and present effectively.

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Using poetry as a means to scaffold reflection on a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) training course

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Jane works as a tutor in teacher education (Lifelong Learning) at The University of Greenwich. She enjoys reading and writing poetry and is interested in supporting students with their reflective thinking. With Amanda Henshall (Research Fellow at The University of Greenwich) she undertook research to explore whether and how reading poetry might scaffold students' critical reflections on their teaching practice. Jane can be contacted on j.i.speare@greenwich.ac.uk

Introduction and rationale

This paper presents a small scale exploratory project which sought to find out if the collective experiences of reading and discussing poems that take education and teaching as their themes could scaffold trainee teachers' reflective thinking.

Students who train to be further education teachers on a full time course have approximately nine months within which they are expected to reach and demonstrate a range of standards of competency. Many of these competencies are framed and assessed as technical abilities, for example, planning lessons or writing schemes of work. However, underpinning these skills are decisions which rely on values and priorities: what kind of teaching and learning strategies should we use with our students and why? To answer these questions trainees are encouraged to become critically reflective, to asks questions about their everyday practices, to develop metacognition of their reasoning and the principle values behind it. However, research has shown that the practice of reflection brings with it significant challenges. As far back as 1980, Petty and Hogben cautioned against "impression management" whereby trainees feel obliged to second-guess what they think tutors would like to read in reflective assignments. Dennison (2010) has queried the value of written reflection itself, arguing that writing about decisions can prematurely limit scope of thought, and Atherton (2012) has argued that the concept is overburdened. He has called for more collective and oblique methods of reflection.

Methodology

The research took place between May and July 2012, at the end of a PGCE course, and consisted of three poetry group meetings where poems were read and discussed between seven volunteer PGCE students. The students were training to teach a variety of subjects, three being specifically trained as Literacy/English teachers. However, only two students were familiar with poetry or read it for pleasure. One student, Sandra, shared that she had 'no experience of reading poetry since "O" level and school. I didn't like it. I didn't understand it.'

Ground rules for the group were that there was no obligation to join in discussion and no expectations that members would write poems. Students were also reassured that this was not an "A" level class and the experience would not include close readings of the poems reliant on expertise in jargon. All that was asked for was an interest in discussion and an appreciation of differing points of view. The names of those who participated in the group were anonymised.

The six poems discussed were:
1. "Mrs Krikorian" by Sharon Olds
2. "Learning the Trees" by Howard Nemerov
3. "The Choosing" by Liz Lochhead
4. "In Mrs Tilscher's Class" by Carol Ann Duffy

5. "Afternoon in School" by DH Lawrence
6. "Hereby" by UA Fanthorpe

Poems were selected on the basis of theme. For example, in "Mrs Krikorian", questions are raised about the role of the teacher and the archetype of the teacher as hero. "The Choosing" touches on the sometimes difficult choices faced by working class girls in continuing their education. Afternoon in School explores burnout and disillusion among teachers.

Discussion in the poetry group was facilitated by the tutor and prompted by a series of open-ended questions. These were intended to be evocative rather than analytical and deliberately put questions which might foreclose discussion (e.g. about whether students liked or disliked the poem) at the end of the list (included for reference at the end of the article). Questions were scattered about the tables for students to consider or reject as they saw fit. Examples included: 'What do you see, hear or smell as you read this poem? Does this poem say anything to you?' The group discussion was recorded, transcribed and analysed for themes. Individual interviews also took place at the end of the project to investigate the impact that taking part in the research had on individuals. From this a series of tentative conclusions can be drawn about the value of poetry in supporting reflection.

Poetry as application
A search of education and health journals shows there have been many diverse uses of poetry, for example, to support critical thinking amongst managers (Hiley, 2006), explore group work (Malekoff, 2006), and support qualitative data analysis (Raingruber, 2009). It seems that its concise form lends poetry a particular sort of power: the use of figurative language, metaphor and imagery supports loose and associative thinking. Moreover poetry requires slow and careful reading and facilitates a view of lives and experiences of others. Poetry opens up "secondary worlds" (Benton, 1985). Following Reader Response Theory, reading fiction

> has the same structure as experience, to the extent that our entanglement has the effect of pushing our various criteria of orientation back into the past, thus suspending their validity for the new present (Iser, 1980:132)

In this sense a main aim of the research was to find out whether poems could provide a sufficiently distanced yet intimate space to explore the complexities of judgements made and feelings experienced during teaching experiences. Might students be able to scaffold their own experiences in relation to the themes and dilemmas expressed in the poems? The researchers hoped also to test the idea that the poetry group itself would provide a supportive space, what Holton and Thomas cited in Clarke (2001) have referred to as a "zone" of "reciprocal scaffolding." We wanted to see if students would discuss their experiences and the decisions made (or not made) during their teaching practice without judgement, and whether the interaction of the group and the activity of open discussion might lead to new ways of thinking.

Conceptualising reflection
There is a large body of literature on the concept of reflection, and since the 1990s familiarity and use of the term reflection on teaching training programmes has grown significant (Atherton, 2012).

For the purposes of this research the framework offered by Hatton and Smith (1985) was used. This describes a hierarchy of reflective types of thinking: at the lower end reflection is conceptualised as a descriptive exercise often concerned with "fixing faults". Thinking at this level seeks to identify and perhaps change behaviours but is unconcerned with critical or ethical considerations. Evidence of more sophisticated reflective thought can be seen when practitioners weigh alternative outcomes and deploy value judgements

about what constitutes "best practice". At higher ends of the "reflective ladder", expressed thoughts become critical and contextualised. This means that the most reflective thought considers decisions and actions taken, whilst taking into account ethical criteria. It can also be seen when practitioners begin to question the 'goals and practices of one's profession.' (Hatton and Smith, 1995:4)

Findings from the group discussion

Major themes that were grounded in the data (Mason, 1996) emerged from the transcribed group. These were then crossed referred to the hierarchical levels defined by Hatton and Smith. Themes included poetic form and content and personal identification which, as descriptive activities tended to suggest the lower ends of the hierarchy of reflection. An associated theme which came out of the data was that of affirmation, and students seemed to actively seek support and succour from the form and content of poems, as Diana says:

> I found it comforting and I like the rhythm of the poem too, I found that comforting.

At times the students read the poems as if they were the literal account of a person's experience rather than a crafted representation. In some ways this blocked the discussion. In covering issues of burn out and classroom management in DH Lawrence's poem, students got stuck talking about whether Lawrence was a good teacher or not. However, at other times this tendency towards naïve reading led to people making direct and impulsive identification with characters in the poems. As the comments below illustrate, whilst still discussing Lawrence's poem, a chance reference could catapult the discussion into a more ethical and professional discussion:

> That (poem) reminds me of a conversation I had with my mentor just last week…..she said it was very hard coming in and watching you because you had the enthusiasm that I used to have… (Louise)

> What comes up for me is where's his management that's coming in and telling them off? Where is the potential change? There is none, then it's funny, we had that lecture the other day from the guy who said 'save a bit of yourself for yourself' wasn't he? (noises of agreement) and it's the same message to keep that little bit in reserve…(Kerry)

Sometimes the hierarchical categories were difficult to disentangle within a single comment. As we see below, an observation by Martha conflates ethical and professional considerations with personal identification, and a somewhat literal reading of the poem "Mrs Krikorian":

> I have had a student last week telling me I was an angel and they were so glad I'd been sent to them, which was terrifying because I think I absolutely cannot let this person down now, I've got to live up to this angelic status which is obviously impossible. So I understand where she's coming from with those feelings but when you're on the other side the expectation of you is so high it's quite a lot to take, it's quite daunting. Can I live up to this?

Findings from 1:1 interviews

The students who took part in the research project were interviewed independently within a month of the last group meeting. The interviews were semi-structured. Questions were asked about the experiences of reading the poems in the group, whether any themes particularly resonated and crucially whether reading the poems had created any new thoughts for them about experiences on teaching practice or the PGCE course more generally.

Several people commented on the fact that the group was small enough to facilitate discussion and foster an environment of safety. Similarly, the importance of an explicit confidentially contract between members was mentioned. The option of asking open-ended questions to support reflection on the poems was universally seen as useful. Several people mentioned the importance of questions referring to the senses:

> I was interested in the questions about hearing and smelling things those are not normal poetry questions but they evoked feelings (Diana)

> The questions helped me to get me going; I read and skimmed through them. The questions about the senses were particularly helpful (Gulcan)

For some people taking part in the reading group, the poems evoked deep feelings about their personal experiences of education, and facilitated reflection on their current practice:

> The poems poked a stick at things I thought I had sorted…. We are here to serve the students they are not just "the learners … they are individual people with stress and individual lives (Kerry)

Similarly, Dilan made a direct connection between her work in the classroom and the poems. Commenting on the poem "Afternoon in School" she said:

> Tuesdays are totally different to Monday afternoon. Monday they are drained, you need to push them. The atmosphere is different. I saw that I said "Oh yeah, the afternoon does make a difference! It was the language in the poem that reminded me…

Diana reported that reading the poems had made her reconsider some of her teaching tactics and had affected how she taught speech-writing to students. There are clear links between the "fixing faults" end of Hatton and Smith's hierarchy in her comments:

> I tried rap with them on Wednesday and they found it funny that a fat short white middle aged woman was interested in rap and a lot wanted to participate and show their skills and those that didn't were interested. And that's exactly what I want

Interestingly, not all of the students were conscious that they had reflected (see Bill's comment below). This further raises questions of how students learn to think about reflection in a competency based PGCE where there is an emphasis on assessed reflection:

> We didn't really discuss reflection… there were not many observations on our own teaching practice or links to wider principles But the group was… invigorating. (Bill)

Conclusion and implications for future practice

The poetry used in this research was drawn from recent, established and respected Anglo- European poets. There are, however, a great range of poets and poetry to choose from and the availability of live performance of poetry online along with the central repository of the Poetry Archive (www.poetryarchive.org) offers many opportunities for teachers to tailor the styles and forms of poetry students might engage with.

As this research was small in scale, further work would be necessary to explore some of the issues raised. However, there is evidence that collectively reading and discussing poetry in a small group setting can offer students fresh insights into their experiences of teaching.

Some insights mapped directly to the framework of reflection as defined by Hatton and Smith; more generally, there is clear evidence that poetry can offer an imaginative scaffold through which students can reconsider events from their personal biographies. From this point of view, poetry reading seems to offer one model of Atherton's "oblique and collective" approach to reflective thinking (see above).

The experience of being in the group was equally valued by those who would describe themselves as "indifferent" or even "hostile" to poetry as those who enjoyed reading for pleasure. It is a measure of this that all of the students who took part in the research had kept their copies of the poems in a safe place (perhaps to be used) for future reference. One or two were actively thinking about how to incorporate the experience of poetry reading into their teaching:

> I've wondered about how to use it …maybe to extend knowledge of extreme adjectives – I mean – what would you put in place of that word and what would the meaning be if you did? (Kerry)

Prompt questions used in discussion to support poetry reading
- Do any pictures come into your head?
- Do you hear or smell anything?
- Do any words or phrases leap out for you?
- As you read what feelings does the poem evoke (if any)?
- Do you have any moments of confusion- if so when?
- Do you want to ask any questions about the content or form?
- Does the poem say anything to you?
- Do you like the poem, dislike it, feel indifferent?
- Does the poem evoke any thoughts about your experience as a teacher?

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Online resources from the conference

To find presentations and other resources from the 2013 joint conference with UCU and NIACE follow this link. Here you will find presentations from the three speakers, J.D. Carpentieri, Karen Evans and Jim Crowther. Carpentieri also contributed an article on *Developments in European literacy policy: putting greater focus on the family* in the previous RaPAL journal on family learning (Vol 81, winter 2014).

There are also presentations and resources available from the workshops:

Using social networking to develop literacies
Claire Collins and Tara Furlong

An interactive method for helping learners understand how sentences are structured
Freda Davis

National Numeracy Challenge Pilot – increasing confidence; improving skills
Sarah Gibb

Learning maths online: everyday maths, everyday finance, helping children with maths
Beth Kelly

'Literacy' phased out of Adult Education?
Sarah Freeman, Sallie Condy and Tara Furlong

Putting the fun into functional: incorporating problem solving into our teaching of maths
Gail Lydon

Reading online: what teachers can learn from adult literacy learners
Irene Schwab

Exploring how Community Open Online Learning Courses (COOCs) can empower learners to become teachers
Peter Shukie

Reviews

Review of *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* by Mary Hamilton

Author: Mary Hamilton
Title: Literacy and the Politics of Representation
Cost: £26.99 paperback
178Pages
ISBN: 978041568616-7 (print)

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Reviewed by Tara Furlong

Tara has worked in both the private and public sectors, mainly in the field of education, for twenty years, in the UK and abroad. She has an ongoing interest in the relationship between contextualized, multimodal learning and abstracted learning, and its mirror in social and literate practice and language across life spheres. Tara is engaged in postgraduate studies in education with the IoE.

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Mary Hamilton condenses a lifetime's research and experience to date into an analysis of how representation through word, image, number and metaphor interacts with sociopolitical formations and change, 'since they (metaphors in this case) are used to represent aspects of reality in the particular [and] they can act in persuasive discourse to coerce, to legitimise and to rationalise arguments" (47). As she comments in the preface (p.xiii), 'I arrived early in my professional life at the view that truth is made, not found, but it has taken me a long time to figure out how this works.'

The first part of the book consists of three chapters concentrating on different ways of representing literacy (as described above, through numbers, images and autobiographical accounts). The second part shows how these resources are used in policy documents, in media reports and in student writing. The work outlines theoretical modelling for researchers and political actors, giving detailed examples and applications. While the author addresses broad themes of literacy, her methods are translatable to other fields of social enquiry, such as inclusion.

This book combines frameworks and tools from Literacy Studies (texts situated in social practice, Actor Network Theory (social 'trajectories of power and how agency is exerted within them') (13) and the theory of Social Semiotics (social practice and critical discourse analysis) to examine the diversity of often conflicting constructed public narratives and shared "social imaginaries" of textually mediated communication. Text in governance is compared with that of students' personal accounts or "testimonies". Overt treatment of literacy in the news media is contrasted with its incidental representation within other news stories, as these contrasting narratives construct a contested understanding of literacy in society. Hamilton analyses how combinations of different narrative types and modes, such as autobiographical account with image and perhaps statistics, can create influential texts as part of larger societal discourses and power play.

In addressing these complex themes, we are led to explore the role of literacy in governance, public space, democracy and equitable society, as 'literacy... is increasingly naturalised as a central feature of the emerging global order' (3). We are shown how metaphor works in words, images and numbers. We are shown how statistics develop through the agencies of the state, and through defining groups, and we are shown their role in inclusion and exclusion. We are shown how policy is reflected in literacy education and in the news, and how student publishing disrupts dominant narratives in return. Our attention is drawn to the rapidly changing mediums through which literacy is projected especially at this time of digital technology revolution. For those

new to critical discourse analysis, the book also gives a fascinating and comprehensive overview of the tools of the trade.

Hamilton's final chapter draws attention to how many powerful factors play a part in how contemporary society perceives literacy. Governance of adult literacy education is key among her concerns. However, underlying all these threads of thought is Hamilton's own, long, solid and expertly argued set of theories that establish that 'discourse constructs, as well as reflects, social life.' Hamilton describes (135) how through recent research she has realised that, 'The use of personal testimony in combination with statistics and metaphorical images is especially powerful for literacy advocacy in contemporary society…' Thus she endorses (139), in terms of literacies, the delineation of the local literacy learner's disposition in the globalised framework - a framework which, through the ease of modern day communication, can increasingly control the governance of literacy education and, in turn, explore 'wider questions about governance in contemporary societies.'

Review of *New Language, New Literacy* by Jill Sinclair Bell
Author: Jill Sinclair Bell
Title: *New Language, New Literacy*
Cost: Non UK
196 Pages
ISBN: 978088751124-0

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Reviewed by Olivene Aldridge-Tucker

Olivene is an ESOL and literacy specialist and has worked at Doncaster College for the last twelve years as a course leader for ESOL and for the last three years as an associate lecturer for the University of Sheffield/English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC).
She can be contacted via email at olivenea@hotmail.com.

The primary aim of this book by Jill Sinclair Bell is to give support to both new and experienced teachers of English language learners, which she has termed "ELLs", who need help learning the basics of reading and writing. It is useful in particular for practitioners of ESOL and literacy in the areas of assessment, the teaching of reading and writing and the development of programmes to incorporate all needs. The suggestions she makes are mainly student-centred.

In the introduction Sinclair Bell explains how we are being faced by challenging situations, such as a mixture of learners with different abilities and skills in the same class, and using commercialised teaching resources. The book is clearly organised into three main sections: understanding literacy and literacy learners, deciding what and how to teach, and developing a successful and coherent programme. The author starts each chapter with a brief introduction, and she sets questions for the practitioner to reflect on when reading. The book ends with practical activities and ideas that can be used to enhance topics and teaching resources.

Understanding literacy and literacy learners
In this first section the author asks the reader to consider the learner's histories, such as whether or not learners are literate in their own language, and the effects that those experiences will have on their current learning. With these views in mind, Bell then discusses different learner profiles, giving as examples learners with a non-literate profile, a semiliterate profile, a functionally literate profile and a non-Roman script profile. The author incorporates a case study in which she demonstrates each profile and offers suggestions with regard to teaching. In the second chapter theoretical understandings are explored, such as the differences

between adult and children as learners.

Overall, there are very good suggestions with regard to the identification of different types of learners, and the different categories are set out in a clear and precise way. However, the book does fail to make suggestions for situations in which a learner may fall into more than one profile category.

Deciding what and how to teach

This second section is divided into five chapters. It discusses different types of materials and methodologies used in classes that are mixed with learners who are literate in their first language but not in English, together with native speakers who need basic skills. The author asks (47) the reader to think about the content he or she should be teaching and to consider what skill to focus on, and once these are determined, to think of the topics to be covered. To the novice practitioner, this is very good advice.

The chapter also gives a very good account of how to adapt and use "basic parameters" to cater for such needs as building vocabulary knowledge for oral work (47). Following on from teaching resources, teaching reading is carefully explored and the author discusses the approaches to reading and states that 'it's not just about teaching them to read from the alphabet or phonetically, but … [about] teach[ing] them through what they already know.' Reading and writing do not have to begin with one syllable words such as *cat* or *dog;* they can begin by using everyday materials such as street signs or notices on the side of a bus (50). Of course, this depends on the type of learner and may not work for everyone.

In next chapter, teaching writing is examined in a similar way. Different approaches to teaching learners who are not literate in writing are discussed. These include recognition of symbols to lead up to writing words, sentences and writing for audience (108). This is again useful for the ESOL literacy practitioner. The final chapter in this section is dedicated to challenging teaching situations, such as different levels and abilities and special needs. It helps to give solutions as to how to plan and develop a course to cater for different needs in one setting.

Developing a successful and coherent program

In the final section, which covers the last three chapters, the author sets out to describe and give advice on how to plan courses, and how to include learning styles and write lesson plans that will cater for learners' needs within a student-centred ethos. The author gives (180) the reader very useful suggestions and ideas on activities that can be used to enhance different topics taught in an ELL classroom, such as matching signs with their instructions

As an experienced ESOL teacher, I have found this book invigorating and interesting as it covers all aspects of teaching English to English language learners, with some new ways of looking at assessments and teaching ideas to learners of mixed abilities. The book is also very useful for all ESOL and Literacy teachers in FE colleges and mainstream schools as it is carefully structured for easy use when planning a course and has very useful suggestions for writing lesson plans.

WRITING GUIDELINES

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. Our journal is now produced online and so we welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, images or video that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Ireland. Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

Guidelines for contributors
All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable, avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case, please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics. We aim to have three different kinds of articles in the journal plus a reviews section; these are slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustration and graphics for any of the sections and now have the facility to embed audio and video files into the journal. The journal has a different theme for each edition but we welcome general contributions too.

Below you will see more details about the different themes and topics:

1. Ideas for teaching
This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

2. Developing Research and Practice
This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 - 2,000 words long including references.

3. Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives
This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 4,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- relate to the practices of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- link to research by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies
- provide critical informed analysis of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning
- write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings. The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

Reviews
Reviews and reports of books, articles and materials (including online materials) should be between 50 to 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2 to 3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based on your experience of using the book, article or materials in your role as practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

Submitting your work
1. If you are responding to a call for articles via the RaPAL email list or directly by an editor you will have been given the email address of the editor(s) for submitting your work, together with a deadline date and the theme of the journal.
2. If you are submitting a piece of work that you would like RaPAL to consider for publication that has not been written as a result of a call for articles, please send it to journal@rapal.org.uk in the first instance. The journal coordinator will then let you know what the next steps will be.
3. All contributions should have the name of the author(s), a title and contact email address and telephone number. You should also include a short 2 to 3 line biography. Sections, sub-sections and any images should be clearly indicated or labelled (further guidance on image size is on the website www.rapal.org.uk.
4. All referencing should follow the Harvard system.
5. Articles should be word processed in a sans serif font, double-spaced with clearly numbered pages.
6. The article should be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk

What happens next?
1. Editors are appointed for each edition of the journal. They review all contributions and will offer feedback, constructive comment and suggestions for developing the piece as appropriate.
2. Articles submitted for the third category 'Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives' will be peer-reviewed by an experienced academic, research or practitioner in the field in addition to being edited.
3. The editor(s) will let you know whether your article has been accepted and will send you a final copy before publication.

If you have any questions, please contact the journal coordinator by emailing journal@rapal.org.uk

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