



Essay review

Secondary school literacy: What research reveals for classroom practice, Leslie S. Rush, A. Jonathan Eakle, Allen Berger (Eds.), NCTE, Urbana, Illinois, USA (2007). 323 pp., \$38.95, ISBN: 978-0-8141-4293-6

This book draws upon a careful and intriguing collection of theoretical knowledge and research findings in 13 chapters apart from a foreword by Elizabeth Noll, an introduction by the editors and an epilogue by A. Jonathan Eakle in order to contribute to literacy classroom practice in secondary schools. In their efforts in achieving best practices, several authors of literacy put an emphasis on sociohistorical meaning of literacy itself towards a new perspective of multiliteracies.

Chapter one, “The Nature of Literacies,” by Donna E. Alvermann and Cheryl A. McLean foregrounds a new meaning of literacy with its development throughout history. The authors discuss the significant challenge derived from the fact that people value differently and conclude that this new valuing opportunity for evaluating adolescents as learners provides us with a better understanding of the word. It could also help teachers reconsider the marginalized “illiterate” and language in its social context.

Chapter two, “New Literacy Learning Strategies for New Times,” by Robert J. Tierney underscores the need for raising teachers as social members of literacy education who, in the new world of multiliteracies, could prepare to be meaning-makers. According to Tierney, the meaning of being literate is “being able to participate in one’s world rather than just being an observer of it” (p. 22). Thus, he posits that new strategies are required in the new literacies era emphasizing inquiry-oriented learning through which learners could master agency as a collaborator, designer, and communicator.

Chapter three, “What is New about the New Literacies of Online Reading Comprehension,” by Donald J. Leu, Lisa Zawilinski, Jill Castek, Manju Banerjee, Brian C. Housand, Yingjie Liu, and Maureen O’Neil underpins the need for research in information and communication technologies. The authors suggest that online reading comprehension should be scrutinized in detail. Owing to the lack of research, they fail to recommend how to teach the new literacies of online reading comprehension.

In chapter four, “Assessment of Adolescent Reading Proficiencies,” Richard L. Allington and Danielle V. Dennis criticize the formal assessment techniques and propose new informative tools such as a longitudinal record of student learning and think-alouds for the measurement of reading proficiency. They give a descriptive account of standardized norm-referenced reading assessments used in classrooms and claim that these standardized tests “cannot provide reliable information on the appropriateness of different texts for different students” (p. 80). Also, they question the validity of those tools emphasizing that even high-stakes reading tests measure basic reading proficiency. Therefore, they conclude that with new literacy demands arising in the changing society, new tools must be adapted by reading teachers in order to meet those

demands and more money should not be wasted on formal assessment tools.

Chapter five, “Understanding Reading Comprehension in Secondary Schools through the Lens of the Four Resources Model,” by Terry Underwood, Monica S. Yoo and P. David Pearson elaborate on the four resources model of reading, which was introduced by Freebody and Luke in 1990. In their work, the authors question the test standards in California and Massachusetts, standardized tests, and the anthologies used in language arts instruction.

Chapter six, “I Want to Learn to Read Before I Graduate: How Sociocultural Research on Adolescents’ Literacy Struggles Can Shape Classroom Practice,” by Kathleen A. Hinchman examines adolescent literacy with a sociocultural perspective in an attempt to provide teachers with some guidelines for a new understanding of teaching practice. Hinchman advises teachers to consider the social contexts in which students interact with other people, the identity formation of students, and the importance of time, passions and interests. That is how a teacher can bring the struggling students inside from the margin.

In chapter seven, “Literacy, Identity, and the Changing Social Spaces of Teaching and Learning,” Kevin M. Leander and Jessica C. Zacher underline the significant relation of identity, which is socially constructed, to the classroom practice. Drawing upon research in literacy education, they discuss the unstable context-dependant identities which have certain impact on student interaction and have some implications for practitioners and institutions. They make readers aware of instruction in the *third space* – contact zone of cultures and identities – where student talk and teacher talk meet and “identities of students and teachers can be constructed as hybrids” (p. 142).

In chapter eight, “Legitimacy, Recognition, and Access to Language Learners at the Secondary School Level,” Robert T. Jiménez and Brad L. Teague review research related to English Language Learners (ELLs) to have some implications and, furthermore, they recommend that educators, students, and parents develop a well-established collaboration. Authors underscore the linguistic and content needs of the ELLs and suggest that teachers of literacy consider the findings from research.

Chapter nine, “Literacy Development of African American Adolescent Males,” by Alfred W. Tatum is a review of literacy studies on African Americans, especially focusing on male students. He starts with some descriptive statistics which dishearten the reader and states that this situation brings about the urgent need to reconsider the literacy education for African American males in the US. If literacy research considers the contexts in which African American males are raised, the out-of-school as well as in-school literacies, and the public policy and its influence on the image of African American adolescent male, then a fruitful literacy instruction for them could be initiated.

Chapter ten, “From Contexts to Contextualizing and Recontextualizing: The Work of Teaching,” by James S. Damico, Gerald

Campano and Jerome C. Harste emphasizes the significance of cultural, situational, and linguistic contexts in literacy instruction and offers some guidelines with the help of which secondary school teachers could recontextualize their work. They recommend that educators should value students for who they are, open new spaces for topics of social importance, broaden the meaning of being literate, have their students' voices heard, empower their identities, and introduce multiliteracies in the classroom.

In chapter eleven, "Adopting Reader and Writer Stances in Understanding and Producing Texts," Richard Beach and David G. O'Brien explore the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. Authors define reading and writing as shared processes which can be developed with similar strategies and note that owing to the linguistic and cognitive strategy model, reading and writing are perceived to be "sets of technical skills and strategies to be learned in structured, routine approaches that do not engage students" (p. 237). This chapter, therefore, proposes a shift from strategies to purposeful reading and writing activities in social and cultural contexts through which students can master new ways of thinking and experiencing the world.

Chapter twelve, "Using Scaffolding in Teaching Core Language," by Jeannine D. Richison, Anita Hernández and Marcia Carter focuses on constructivist scaffolding. The authors believe that teachers could incorporate scaffolding into their literacy instruction with ELLs and propose seven scaffolding activities: modelling, bridging, schema building, contextualization, metacognitive development, text representation and verbal scaffolding.

In chapter thirteen, "Federal and State Literacy Mandates for Secondary Schools: Responding to Unintended Consequences," Jill Lewis and Gary Moorman present a historical perspective for literacy instruction and policymaking relationship in the US. They state that education stakeholders should come together in an open dialogue to critically discuss if present policymaking initiatives could solve the unintended problems of previous federal legislation. They also recommend that concerned citizens attend this proposed meeting to have a say in legislative and regulatory processes.

Secondary School Literacy: What Research Reveals for Classroom Practice combines preeminent scholars of the field with doctoral students and teachers of literacy to contribute as authors of the chapters. This diversity of authors contributes to the multivoicedness issue that sociocultural theory aims to achieve. The book provides access into the authentic atmosphere of literacy instruction and bases its discussion on research in the United States. Despite its local focus, the implications could be taken into consideration for various settings where multiliteracies are experienced and negotiated. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners all over the world should be able to make an efficient use of the practices introduced in the carefully written chapters.

For the beginners in multiliteracies, the first chapter, "The Nature of Literacies," the second chapter, "New Literacy Learning Strategies for New Times," and the seventh chapter, "Literacy, Identity, and the Changing Social Spaces of Teaching and Learning" are invaluable sources of information to understand the sociocultural

traces of the notion of multiliteracies. Chapters six and ten propose clear roles for literacy teachers in secondary education. The recontextualization of the learning–teaching environment for democratic instruction is essential for zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and inquiry-based learning, which puts the teacher in the roles of co-inquirer, co-explorer, and co-learner (Beach & Myers, 2001).

It is the reviewer's opinion that the issue of inquiry-based instruction should have been scrutinized to a deeper extent in the book. That is, the book could have been backed up with inquiry strategies instead of constructivist scaffolding by the teacher. Furthermore, a chapter could have been devoted to literacy teacher education as literacy teacher roles are changing with the changing literacy needs of students. For Wenger (1998), learning is a matter of identity formation and it is essential to engage students in meaningful and authentic practices. Likewise, Gee (1996) introduces Discourse as "ways of being in the world" or as an "identity kit" that comes with appropriate ways of talking, doing, clothing, writing, etc. in a certain context (p. 127). Discourse is the key to claiming membership to a social community and, therefore, to learning (Gee, 1996, 2004). A literacy teacher should be a master of Discourses of their political geography in apprenticing their students (Gee, 2004). This need calls for more attention to significance of multiliteracies in literacy teacher education.

All in all, this reviewer recommends *Secondary School Literacy: What Research Reveals for Classroom Practice* to teachers of literacy, researchers, students studying literacy instruction, and policymakers for its comprehensive and well-documented implications relying on most recent research findings. It is also a good source for those who would like to understand the notions of practice-based or inquiry-based learning and go beyond a constructivist view of learning. The classroom descriptions the book provides help readers visualize what is going on in different settings and transfer this invaluable knowledge for learning and teaching into their own contexts.

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