"I never used to read." Patterns of talk in regulative and instructional discourse: a systemic functional approach to analysing a literacy difficulty.

A Case Study with S.

Submitted by:
D. Faye Mackey
Dip. K.T.C. Adelaide
B. Ed. (Special Education) Torrens College of Advanced Education, Adelaide
M. Ed. St. (Cognitive Psychology) University of South Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Arts
Discipline of Linguistics
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Adelaide
October, 2006.
Abstract

This study explores the issues relating to literate practice for an individual who has a literacy difficulty. The process of negotiating meaning is articulated from the perspective of English as a second language. However, S (the participant in this study) was an ESL student for whom a more complex picture became evident when, at the completion of her formal schooling, she was diagnosed with severe dyslexia. This had implications for her development in literacy which were vital to becoming a qualified practitioner in her chosen career of hairdressing.

S participated in a mentor/tutor relationship to support her engagement with text. This was in direct response to her immediate need to access theoretical information which formed a coursework component of her workplace training program. The reading and understanding of text materials was necessary in order to complete the written assignments which were part of the course requirement.

The study makes an analysis of literate practice from a systemic functional perspective with particular reference to literacy difficulties. The engagement is talk about and talk around texts in relation to reading specific texts is explored as the means of negotiating meaning. The analysis of the transcripts from instructional dialogue and other interactions reveal characteristics and patterns of language behaviour which have implications for teaching practice in regard to accessing written texts.

It is evident that mediation is pivotal to the development of understanding. The features of the specific texts are pivotal in making meaningful connections and the features of conversation are the mediating practices of negotiating meaning. The abstract nature of written texts signal a necessity to identify and explicate the grammatical features which are realised in both verbal and written text constructions and are implicated in making meaning.

D.F. Mackey  Master of Arts by Research / Adelaide University / Department of Linguistics / October 2006
# Chapter I Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

## 1.2 Aims and Questions

### 1.2.1 Analysing the construction of linguistic and social knowledge

### 1.2.2 Instructional conversations in reading

### 1.2.2.1 What problems are encountered by S in her engagement of the texts of the apprentice training curriculum?

### 1.2.2.2 What are the features of the teacher-meditated talk supporting the engagement and comprehension of texts?

### 1.2.2.3 What is the nature of the language and teaching practices?

## 1.3 Rationale

### 1.3.1 Political issues

### 1.3.2 Educational issues

### 1.3.3 Literacy as a social practice

## 1.4 Defining Literacy

### 1.4.1 Problematising literacy vs a literacy curriculum problem

### 1.4.2 Role of context

## 1.5 Justification for the Study

### 1.5.1 Informing personal practice

## 1.6 Research Approach

### 1.6.1 Individual case study

### 1.6.2 Collection of data

## 1.7 Framework for Data Analysis

## 1.8 Organisation of the Report

## 1.9 Limitations of the Study

# Chapter II Context of Study

## 2.1 Overview

## 2.2 Background

### 2.2.1 Political / economic vs educational / social agendas

### 2.2.2 Social context

## 2.3 The Role of Literacy

### 2.3.1 Mediating literate practices

### 2.3.2 Educational practice and teacher – student interaction

### 2.3.3 School assessment of language

### 2.3.4 Remediation to accommodation

## 2.4 Summary

# Chapter III Psychological Perspectives on Literacy Practices

## 3.1 Overview

## 3.2 Perspective of language and Learning

## 3.3 Cognitive Approaches to Learning

### 3.3.1 Interface of Psychological and Social Theory

### 3.3.2 Pedagogic discourse

## 3.4 Educational Issues

### 3.4.1 Developmental asynchrony

---

D.F. Mackey  Master of Arts by Research / Adelaide University / Department of Linguistics / October 2006
3.4.2 The reading/literacy debate
3.4.3 Qualitative and quantitative assessment

3.5 Summary

Chapter IV Social Perspectives on Literacy

4.1 Overview

4.2 Social Language Theory
4.2.1 The use(s) of language
4.2.2 What signifies complex literate functions?

4.3 Language and Literacy
4.3.1 The social context of language
4.3.2 The social context of literacy
4.3.3 Reading, writing and comprehension in a school context
4.3.4 Language and communicative power
4.3.5 Teaching and educational practice

4.4 Language in Context
4.4.1 Language meta-functions
4.4.2 Language as a social practice
4.4.3 Language as a social process
4.4.4 Language as a social product
4.4.5 Grammatical appraisal
4.4.6 Grammatical abstractness and metaphor

4.5 Summary

Chapter V Methodology

5.1 Overview

5.2 Research Approach
Questions addressed by the research
5.2.1 What problems are encountered by S in her engagement of the texts of the apprentice training curriculum?
5.2.2 What are the features of the teacher-mediated engagement with the texts and the talk supporting the meaning making?
5.2.3 What are the implications for teaching and supporting learners in the negotiation of curriculum texts?

5.3 Research Procedure
5.3.1 The setting
5.3.2 The student
5.3.3 The mentor
5.3.4 Data collection
5.3.5 Analysis of data
5.3.6 The schedule

Chapter VI Data Analysis and Interpretation

6.1 Overview

6.2 Interpersonal Function
6.2.1 Interpersonal analysis of language resources

D.F. Mackey Master of Arts by Research / Adelaide University / Department of Linguistics / October 2006
6.2.2. Interpersonal analysis of grammatical features

6.3. Experiential / Ideological Function
6.3.1. Experiential analysis of language resources
6.3.2. Experiential analysis of grammatical features

6.4. Textual Function
6.4.1. Textual analysis of language resources
6.4.2. Textual analysis of grammatical features

6.5. Specific Difficulties
6.5.1. In imparting new information
6.5.1.1. Analysis of language resources
6.5.1.2. Analysis of grammatical features
6.5.2. Extending into new experiential domains
6.5.2.1. Analysis of language resources
6.5.2.2. Analysis of grammatical features
6.5.3. Developing logical-semantic relations
6.5.3.1. Analysis of language resources
6.5.3.2. Analysis of grammatical features
6.5.4. Learning abstract terms
6.5.4.1. Analysis of language resources
6.5.4.2. Analysis of grammatical features
6.5.5. Moving through the ‘magic gateway’ of abstractness
6.5.5.1. Analysis of language resources

6.6. Summary

Chapter VII Discussion and Conclusion
7.1. Overview
7.2. A Specific Approach to a Literacy Need
7.2.1. The complementarity of SFL teaching / learning discourse
7.3. Contexts of Analysis
7.3.1. Cultural context
7.3.2. Situational context
7.4. Social Semiotics and Cognitive Function
7.4.1. Language as action
7.4.2. Language as reflection
7.5. Approaching the Teaching of Literacy – Findings of the Study
7.5.1. What problems are encountered by S in her engagement of the texts of the apprentice training curriculum?
7.5.2. What are the features of the teacher-mediated talk supporting the engagement and comprehension of texts?
7.5.3. What is the nature of language and teaching practices?
7.6 Conclusion

References

B.F. Mackey  Master of Arts by Research / Adelaide University / Department of Linguistics / October 2006
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendices</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Definitions of Literacy</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Transcript from conversation with S about recent reading experiences.</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Transcript from conversation with S about early reading experiences.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Transcript of reading and dialogue - Hair Analysis</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Transcript of reading and dialogue - Pre-treatment Analysis of Scalp</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Appraisal System - exploring explicit or implied meanings</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Information from school reports</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Psycho-educational Report</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>TAFE Learning Unit 5.5</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>