"We've been wastin' a whole million watchin' her doin' her shoes" : Situated practice within a pedagogy of multiliteracies

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“We’ve been wastin’ a whole million watchin’ her doin’ her shoes” Situated Practice within a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

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Abstract
Communication in society today is characterised by rapidly changing and emergent forms of meaning-making in a context of increased cultural and linguistic diversity. The need to teach these new literacy practices referred to as multiliteracies, is now embedded within systemic policies in Australia. This research paper is a response to these imperatives, releasing key findings of a critical ethnographic study concerning interactions between pedagogy and access to multiliteracies among culturally and linguistically diverse learners. A salient finding was that situated practice was enacted as an isolated stage rather than occurring concurrently with overt instruction. This had significant connections to some learners’ inability to access new, multimodal, and digitally-mediated designs of meaning. More importantly, culturally and linguistically non-students who were not of the dominant culture were least served by the separation of overt instruction and situated practice. The article concludes with the recommendation that multimodal meaning-making requires an instructional model that involves both practice and instruction.

Ted [1], an Indigenous Australian, Darles, a Sudanese refugee, and Julie, an Anglo-Australian, talk as they make clothes for the plasticine characters in their claymation movie (See Figure 1.0).

Ted: Darles is still doing the…
Julie & Ted [in unison]: Shoes!
Julie: She's started a new sandal-type fashion [smiles].
Ted: We've been wastin' a whole million watchin' her doin' her shoes.

Figure 1.0 Students Report on the Design of Movie Characters

The beginnings of the twenty-first century are marked by dramatic shifts in the global communication environment, and by the increasing plurality and multicultural nature of Australian society. No longer are classrooms in the West comprised mostly of Anglo-Saxon, monolingual users of English who are being prepared for a predominantly monocultural workplace. The clientele of schools is drawn from an increasing diversity of ethnic, community, and social class cultures with a diversity of texts, interests, and group identities. Students today will enter a labour market that is fast becoming globalised, in which they will have to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences, and a profusion of networked and multimedia communications channels across a broadening range of meaning-making systems (Kalantzis & Cope 2000, New London Group 2000).

These changes in the current global and national context have given rise to the term 'multiliteracies', coined by the New London Group (1996). Multiliteracies is the substantive focus of the research reported here, and addresses two key arguments. The first concerns the multiplicity of communications channels and media tied to the expansion of mass media, multimedia, and the Internet. The societal context today is characterised by an increasing array of communications channels and multi-modal, semiotic systems in society. Previous understandings of literacy that are associated exclusively with print are now inadequate. Successful participation in society involves textual practices such as interpreting environmental print, critiquing advertising, conducting Internet relay chats, using directories and maps, website construction, conducting internet transactions, using spreadsheets and databases, interpreting body language, and oral debating. Literacy pedagogy must account for the increase of emergent text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies, which draw upon multiple modes of communication (Kalantzis, Cope & Fehring 2002).

The second is the increasing importance of cultural and linguistic diversity as a consequence of migration and globally marketed services (New London Group 1996). While society is becoming more globally connected, diversity within local contexts is also increasing. English is becoming a world language, yet it is breaking into multiple

and increasingly differentiated Englishes, marked by accent, dialect or subcultural differences tied to membership in professional, recreational, sporting, or peer groups. Participation in community life now requires that we interact effectively using communication patterns that cross cultural and national boundaries (Lo Bianco 2000, New London Group 2000). These two key concepts of multiliteracies are related because the proliferation of texts is partially attributed to the diversity of cultures and subcultures (New London Group 2000).

An essential concept of multiliteracies is design, which draws attention to how learners are both inheritors of patterns and conventions for making meaning, and active designers of new meanings. Kress (2003, p.36-37), of the New London Group, argues that the new world of communication requires a theory of meaning that emphasises the concept of design over concepts such as "acquisition", "competence" or "critique". Associated with design is a new metalanguage or multimodal grammar, which overcomes the inadequacy of monolingual English grammar that restricted literacy learning to page-bound, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of the English language. The new metalanguage begins with six design elements in the meaning making process: Linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal patterns of meaning which combine one or more of the other five modes (New London Group 1996, 2000). The new framework grafts multimodal and culturally diverse literacies onto existing theoretical foundations of language learning to incorporate a broader range of modes than linguistics alone (For more on the metalanguage that relates verbal and visual meanings, see Unsworth 2001).
An indispensable contribution to the findings reported here is a pedagogy of multiliteracies, which has four components – situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. These are not intended to constitute a linear hierarchy, but rather, may occur simultaneously, randomly or be "related in complex ways…each of them repeatedly revisited at different levels" (New London Group 2000, p.32).

Situated practice involves building on the lifeworld experiences of students that situate meaning making in real world contexts. Overt instruction is used to guide students to use an explicit metalanguage of design. Critical framing encourages students to interpret the social context and purpose of designs of meaning, and transformed practice occurs when students transform existing meanings to design new meanings (New London Group 1996).

This paper reflects upon a teacher's enactment of a multiliteracies pedagogy, with a particular focus on situated practice. Research in cognitive science, social cognition, and sociocultural approaches to language and literacy has demonstrated that the

human mind is not a processor of decontextualised facts. Rather, knowledge is largely situated in sociocultural settings and heavily contextualised in specific domains and practices (Cazden 1988, Lave & Wenger 1991, Rogoff & Lave 1990, Wertsch 1985).

These ideas have been expressed through a number of theories such as situated learning advocated by Lave and Wenger (1991), and situated literacies by theorists such as Street (1995) Heath (1999) and Gee (1992). Within the field of language learning, situated practice sits in the progressive tradition of Dewey, associated with whole language and process writing approaches (Dewey 1966, Kalantzis & Cope 2000).

Tied to the concept of situated practice are Communities of Learning by Gee (2000b), a member of the New London Group. This concept draws upon Lave's theory of socially situated cognition, in which learning is judged by changing participation in changing practices (Lave 1988, Lave & Wenger 1991). Lave centres his work on a contrast between apprenticeships which celebrate experiential, flexible and situated knowledge and the routine work of individual assembly lines (Lave 1996).

Lave's perspective is exemplified in classrooms designed by Brown and Campione (1994). These classrooms called Communities of Practice use a variety of strategies to make learning shared, collaborative, and distributed. The most noteworthy characteristic of Browne and Campione's classrooms is the emphasis on guided participation or joint construction of learning within a zone (Brown & Campione 1994). Here, they borrow Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the 'zone of proximal development' which denotes the difference in the level of social and cognitive attainments between a child working alone and a child working collaboratively with the guidance of an adult (Vygotsky 1962). Capable peers or powerful artefacts such as books, technology and other media can also scaffold and extend students' existing levels of comprehension (Brown et al. 1993). Novices internalise the understandings of experts through scaffolded, joint activity with people and technologies that function as structuring guides, rather than relying on the classroom teacher (Gee 2000b). When combined with reflection and conscious critique of the tacit goals and values operating within these practices, powerful learning can occur.

The most important principle of the New London Group's situated practice is that it requires learners to recognise and act on patterns of data and experiences that vary within different contexts, and which require demonstration rather than explanation alone. This is because requisite patterns are often heavily tied and adjusted to context, too subtle and complex to be usefully described or explicated (New London Group 2000).

Therefore, the classroom analysed here will be compared to the ideals for a Community of Learning – one that provides the students with opportunities for collaborative designing of texts that are sufficiently scaffolded by experts such as peers, adults, or computer software and books. This collaboration should lead to the transformation of meaning-making resources, and more importantly, lead to change within the students.

More recently, Kalantzis and Cope (2005) of the New London Group have extended the multiliteracies pedagogy through the Learning by Design framework to draw attention to the following knowledge processes of learners:

1. Experiencing: a) experiencing the known, and b) experiencing the new
2. Conceptualising: a) naming concepts, and b) theorising
3. Analysing: a) functions, and b) interests
4. Applying: a) appropriately, and b) creatively

These four knowledge processes and their subcategories provide a useful framework for analysing learning that occurs when a multiliteracies pedagogy is implemented. The focus of this paper is situated practice and the corresponding knowledge processes of "experiencing the known and the new".

Experiencing the known involves drawing on familiar lifeworld experiences, prior knowledge, community background, personal interests, and cultural resources of learners. Examples include sharing personal narratives, brainstorming what students already know about a topic, or bringing texts from home for use at school (Kalantzis & Cope 2005).

Experiencing the new is immersion in unfamiliar, real, or simulated domains of experiences, communities, situations, and texts. For example, when learning about applications of electricity, students design a cyclone shelter to simulate the experience of having no electricity. In order for learners to make intuitive links with prior knowledge, there must be some elements of familiarity in new experiences. Therefore, learning needs to be scaffolded by the teacher, peers, computers, or books so that the new aspects of an experience can extend learners' existing knowledge (Kalantzis & Cope 2005).

Description of the Study

The study from which the data in this paper were derived used an adaptation of Carspecken's (1996, 2001) critical ethnography to investigate students' access to

multiliteracies when the multiliteracies pedagogy of the New London Group was enacted. Data collection tools included continuous audio-visual recording, audio recording, field notes, cultural artefacts such as student work samples, and photographs.

The research site was a Year 6 classroom (students aged 11-12 years) in a suburban state school in Queensland, Australia. The teacher had received professional development in multiliteracies through the Learning by Design project coordinated by original members of the New London Group – Kalantzis and Cope (2005, p.179). The teacher had specialist knowledge and expertise in new, digitally-mediated textual practices, and had gained eight years of experience teaching literacy in culturally and linguistically diverse teaching contexts, including distance education in rural Queensland, and teaching in inner city London. She was a catalyst for extending multiliteracies by sharing her unit plans and ideas within other schools, a Hearing Impaired Unit, and at an educational conference in Canberra. The teacher's participation in the research was supported by the school principal who commented:

> She has special skills in multiliteracies and will often share with other teachers through professional dialogue. She conducted a brilliant unit of claymation work with her grade two class. This has now encouraged other teachers in the school to have a go.

The teacher was also aware of the need to negotiate cultural and linguistic diversity among the students and their parents. For example, she used a Sudanese translator to regularly conference with the Sudanese parents of her ESL students about their progress.

Seven ethnicities were represented in the classroom cohort, including Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Tongan, Thai, Maori, and African-Sudanese students. Aspects of diversity included ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, dialects of English, monolingualism, multilingualism, English as Second Language (ESL), literacy achievement, and home computer ownership. Richer data providing more points of comparison could be obtained from a diverse student cohort than one comprised exclusively of the dominant culture.

The class was streamed by school administration on the basis of results in the standardised Queensland Year Five Test in Aspects of Literacy and Numeracy (Queensland Studies Authority 2002). The class comprised twenty-three lowest-ability students – eight females and fifteen males, of whom eight had achieved average literacy levels in the standardised testing. The teacher stated that the streaming arrangement had created a very difficult and diverse class to manage. The eight

average-literacy ability students were grouped together, while the remaining fifteen low-ability students were divided into male or mixed gender groups.

Aim of the Lessons

The aim of the eighteen week lesson sequence was to enable learners to collaboratively design a claymation movie – an animation process in which static clay figurines are manipulated and digitally filmed to produce a sequence of images of lifelike movement. The process occurs by shooting a single frame, moving the object slightly, and then taking another photograph. When the film runs continuously, it appears that the objects move automatically. Famous claymation productions include 'Wallace and Gromit' and 'Chicken Run'. The teacher aimed to apply a pedagogy of multiliteracies throughout this learning process, and stated that she wanted to give attention to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the learners and the textual practices in which students were engaged (New London Group 1996). The teacher also stated that the movies would have real, cultural purposes because they would be presented to parents in the community and to the students' "buddies" in the preparatory school (ages 4-5). She wanted the movie themes to arise from the students' own interests to allow the students to design original, hybrid texts (New London Group 2000).
The movie making technique involved planning a storyboard, sculpting plasticine characters, designing miniature, three-dimensional movie sets, filming using a digital camera, and combining music or recorded script. After filming, the students digitally edited the movies with teacher assistance using Clip Movie software. The movies were presented using Quick Time Pro software and a data projector (See Appendix A). The students were aiming to effectively communicate an educational message to their 'buddies' in the preparatory year level (age 4?-5). The movies were also presented at a school event for the parent community.

Findings of the Study Concerning Situated Practice

The first claymation lesson involved one hour of direct instruction in which the teacher summarised the steps involved in claymation movie designing. She showed the students examples of claymation movies created by other students, using a data projector and screen. The students were required to listen and watch, and occasionally the teacher would ask a question. A short transcript from three hundred lines of teacher dialogue is shown here to illustrate the form of instruction (See Figure 2.0).

So, script writing – I have to approve the script. It has to be sensible. Remember our buddies are going to be seeing them. We have that book launch, and all of our guests are going to see them as well.

Now, then you have to make your characters. You get plasticine, pipe cleaners, googly eyes, those little wooden people, you can use puppets, you can use paper, and you can use whatever you like – egg cartons, whatever you like to make the characters.

You also have to design your sets and paint them or maybe glue stuff to them. Some children last year got sand out of the sand pit and glued the sand to the bottom to make it look like a path. It was fantastic! They got real leaves out of the garden, and attached it to big plasticine, um brown trunks to make trees. You can see them when I show you the movies – really fantastic ideas!

The production part of it - when your group is ready, means you're going to be filming it with a digital camera. Then you need to decide which person's going to be the photographer. OK? So you have to work out who's going to be what.

When you film it, you're going to have a tripod and your little set. Can you see that the set is really quite small? The set is about the size of a piece of cardboard. See this book - that's about the size of your set and you'll have a piece of cardboard flat on the ground and a piece of cardboard sitting up. That's about as big as it gets. So

Figure 2.0 Transcript from Lesson One of Claymation Movie Making

This lesson was followed by fifteen lessons involving a total of eighteen hours of situated practice for students to collaboratively design storyboards, construct three-dimensional characters and movie sets, film the movies, record the scripts, add background music, and digitally edit the final movies. The teacher also conducted five lessons enacting overt instruction focusing on the linguistic design elements of story writing, and four lessons applying critical framing to the analysis of commercially produced picture books and claymation movies. The principal scaffolding provided from the teacher during the situated practice lessons was ten minutes of direct instruction at the beginning of each lesson. The lessons that predominantly drew upon situated practice always began with a short lesson introduction, informed the students of what work was to be completed in the time provided, and were focused on organising the students and materials. An example of a typical lesson introduction is provided in the following transcript (See Figure 3.0).

Today, you have time to start working on your set. I don't want you to start working on your characters yet, so you're not actually making any of your characters. I want you to start working on your set. That means your group should have two pieces of cardboard. You should be able to get your cardboard, and you need to start deciding what your set is going to look like. Now, it should already be decided, because you've already designed it on a piece of paper. So what you're doing now is simply making it. I do not want to see anybody just sitting around wasting time. You have two weeks to have this claymation finished. Your sets, your props and your characters have to be completely finished by next week. All right?

Figure 3.0 Example of a Lesson Introduction

Following each lesson introduction, the students received minimal scaffolding from the teacher who divided her attention between the groups, ensuring that all groups were on task. It was anticipated that students could recall the necessary information from the first lesson, and acquire the necessary claymation movie making skills subconsciously, naturally and functionally by a process of trial and error within their collaborative groups. The students could also visit a permanent display table at the back of the room where various cultural products such as a Big Book about claymation designing could be perused for ideas.

Several short transcripts have been selected to show the degree of learning that occurred among each of the six groups in various stages of movie designing. In the first example, a group of girls of Anglo-Australian, Maori and Tongan backgrounds were designing clothing for their claymation characters, requiring three-dimensional configurations of meaning using visual and spatial modes. The girls modelled the characters according to their personal image, including their unique cultural features such as eye colour, hair colour and style (See Figure 4.0).

These girls experienced difficulty overcoming the spatial design constraints imposed by tailoring garments to fit a small, three-dimensional wooden figure. They transferred their ability to draw two-dimensional forms to a new context, which required three-dimensional designing of characters. The girls recognised the inadequacy of their clothing designs to communicate their message effectively, but were unable to devise a solution. Over the course of several days, they engaged in multiple, collaborative transformations of the characters using plasticine, paper, fabric, tape, sewing pins, adhesive gum, string and other materials. Finally, when time became short, they received scaffolding from the teacher to show them how to join the materials together. The girls spent approximately three hours collaboratively pursuing design constraints rather than possibilities, which was unable to lead to mastery in practice without explicit scaffolding from an expert. Applying the Learning by Design model, for the girls to be able to "experience the new" they needed guided participation during situated practice to make links to their prior experiences ("experiencing the known") (Kalantzis & Cope 2005).

Shani: I'm *trying* to make a shirt [cutting a shirt shape as a poncho from green fabric. Emphasises 'trying' as if she is unsure that she will achieve her purpose]

Raleigh: It's really hard because you can't really…because when you put something on there, it's either too small or too big.

Researcher: Who is the shirt for?

Shani: That…that! [Points to the tiny, wooden figure]

[Malee is also experimenting with different design solutions. She is attaching plasticine to the wooden character whose torso is a rectangular prism. Malee uses the plasticine to adhere the two-dimensional, T-shirt shaped panels (front and back – no sides) leaving large gaps where the side seams cannot be joined].

[Days later]

Researcher: What happened to the green jumper that you made? [Observing that the claymation character was dressed last week].

Teneille: Mrs. Fulton said that the clothes didn't look real because they looked like rags…Things that are just stuck on.

Figure 4.0 Girls Designing Clothes for Claymation Characters

Similarly, the group mentioned at the outset of this paper experienced difficulty designing clothing for their movie characters without explicit guidance from the teacher. Ted, Darles, Joshua, and Julie were still designing clothes on the day that they were scheduled to film. It was the excessive time that Darles spent modelling shoes for the only character in their movie that caused Ted to remark, "We've been wastin' a whole million watchin' her doin' her shoes."

Jack, Nick, Mark, and Matthew were a group of middle class, Anglo-Australian males from the average-ability group. These boys spent two hour-long lessons designing and redesigning their plasticine figures for their transformation of the sun-safe television slogan "Slip, Slop, Slap" (See Figure 5.0).

Jack: This is the main character [flat plasticine like a gingerbread man]
Adult: How are you going to make him stand up?
Jack: Like, when we film we're going to hold…like, string above him.
Adult: He won't wobble around, will he?
Jack: I don't know – he might. We'll test him.
Twenty Minutes Later
Adult: How is he going to stand up?
Jack: Tie string around his arms to hold him up…
Mark: And the legs.
Jack: Yeah, so…
Adult: But is it going to be able to stand up, though?
Jack: Yeah because he's got feet too. [Jack bends the feet to press against the floor. It falls as he releases it]
Researcher: It might stand better if you've got a three-dimensional object.
Jack: That's what we're trying to make it look like.

Researcher: What are you boys doing now?
Jack: I'm tying the string [fishing line] on so that you can hold it up.
Mark: Yeah, he's got to tie it really straight [as if string can become rigid].

Figure 5.0 Designing Characters for "Slip, Slop, Slap"

The focus of the interaction above is the boys' inability to realise the design possibilities of three-dimensional spatial and visual design of characters, and their reliance on their prior experiences with two-dimensional representation in the absence of scaffolding. They were unable to predict the design constraints of suspending characters by string, which is a flexible rather than rigid medium. Again, the boys needed guidance to make links between "experiencing the known" and "experiencing the new" to realise the spatial and visual design possibilities (Kalantzis & Cope 2005). Later, the teacher commented that, 'They still don't get the "This-has-to-stand-up-and-that-has-to-be-there."' It was apparent in the final movie on CD ROM that the visual and spatial elements were limited by two-rather than three-dimensional representations. Dialogue between a more expert teacher and a less expert learner was required to enable the boys to reflect on the dialogue and reformulate their plasticine figures (Vygotsky 1987).

Gee (2000a) makes a useful distinction between acquisition and learning that helps to explain what is occurring here. He defines acquisition as: '...a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, which happens naturally and functionally'. In contrast, he defined learning as '...a conscious process gained through teaching and in more formal contexts, requiring reflection and analysis' (Gee 2000, p.113-114). In this example, acquisition and learning were separated, contributing to the boys' difficulty with the new medium. Certain forms of instruction or learning were needed alongside immersion to enable students to experience new three-dimensional, visual and spatial designing of movie characters to communicate their intended message ("experiencing the new") (Kalantzis & Cope 2005).

Difficulties were similarly experienced by a group of Anglo-Australian boys from low socio-economic backgrounds who were unable to design a storyboard (See Figure 6.0).

Simon: What we should do, what we should do is just write the script first and then go back and draw all the pictures, and…
Jared: Yeah, that's a good idea but, how we gonna…but what happens if the person is too big for the new script, and we don't know how to draw it?
Warren: Well, maybe we could draw it little.
Teacher: Come on boys why has someone not got a pencil, and why are you not actually writing your script! Don't waste any more time! You already wasted one day when I wasn't here.
Jared: We should um [pause] we should um, ah your turn, Simon.
Simon: We should start writing the script.
Jared: Ok.
Simon: I'm gonna write first [softly] I'm gonna write first? [loudly]
Warren: Are you?
Jared: What? Ah hmmm. Anyone got a ruler? I need a ruler.
Simon: I'll get a ruler.
Warren: So what are we gonna do first? [No answer from Jared. Long silence as they wait for Simon to return]
Simon: Ok. I got the ruler.
Warren: What are we gonna do first?

Figure 6.0 Newsreader Group during Storyboard Designing

The boys were unable to understand the requirements of script design by the end of two hour-long lessons. The use of transmission followed by time for collaborative designing of the storyboards was not sufficient for these boys to begin work performed with available textual designs in the semiotic process. These difficulties were compounded by the lack of "expert novices" to guide, because the low ability learners had been streamed into one class. Furthermore, the teacher had grouped the three boys together based on their difficult learning behaviour so that she could work more closely with them than the remaining groups. This grouping arrangement later became unhelpful because the teacher had to attend to the needs of the other students. This resulted in a lack of peer experts to guide the learners. According to Kalantzis and Cope (New London Group 2000), scaffolding should be provided by peers as expert novices to guide learners, serving as mentors and designers of learning in the classroom as a community of practice.

It was observed throughout the duration of the lesson observations that the boys required an exceptionally high level of continual scaffolding in all aspects of claymation movie-making. They never completed the movie set design, and did not receive the opportunity to experience the later stages of claymation movie making including filming, digital editing, special effects, and audio designing of the music and voice-over (See Figure 7.0).

Teacher: *The only [whole] group that won't be doing their claymations is the "Newsreader Group" because they are nowhere near finished their set, so they are now out – out of the race. They had three sets to make. They made their character and half of one set. So they are not anywhere near being able to catch up. So they will not be able to make their claymation movie*

Figure 7.0 "Newsreader Group" unable to complete their movie set

Claymation Movies

The boys' movie was never filmed. Without the guidance of expert peers or the teacher, situated practice did not provide these economically marginalised learners with access to powerful, digital texts that are required for purposeful participation in society. There was a need for a pedagogy that combined doing and analysis, immersion in experience with explicit metalanguage for the new linguistics, visual, and spatial design elements of claymation movie-making.

Another group of diverse gender and ethnicity from the low-ability group designed an amateurish movie entitled "Crossing the Road". David, Sean and Rhonda, Anglo-Australians of low socioeconomic backgrounds, and Paweni, who is Thai, were the designers. The plot involved a mother and child crossing a road and climaxed with

The following interaction occurred on the morning the group was scheduled to film (See Figure 8.0).

> *I'm not very happy with this group because you are nowhere near organised and ready to film. You haven't made your hospital set. You hadn't made your mobile phone. And you had said, when I discussed this script with you, you had decided that you were going to put speech bubbles and hang it above their heads with the talking, and have the music in the background, and they're not organised either [said rapidly and in frustrated voice]. Can you see why I'm cranky? You were left to independently do this, and you haven't managed to do it – and there are four of you! So your claymation that you're going to film now, it's not going to be finished is it. You're going to have to drop the hospital scene out of your movie. Is that going to make sense then? Not really [pause] What a shame! I'm not very happy about it. I thought this group would have been a little bit more organised because whenever you had*

Figure 8.0 Teacher Addresses the "Crossing the Road" Group

The group was unable to gain access to visual and spatial forms of meaning making because of the need for systematic, analytic, and conscious understandings to supplement immersion. The teacher did not provide scaffolded assistance, but expected them to work "independently" during this process of acquisition. These learners required scaffolds to guide them as they confronted the risk of failure in a world of the unknown. It was evident in the final CD ROM of the group's movie that the visual, spatial, auditory, and gestural design elements did not effectively communicate the intended message. The movie did not demonstrate that these learners had reached what Kalantzis and Cope (2005) term a "collaborative level of competence"; that is, students did not become "masters of a convention or genre to the point where they become fully-fledged members of a new community of practice" (Kalantzis & Cope 2005, p.96). In the absence of guidance from an expert, they were unable to access new spatial and visual designs of meaning. Again, the distance between "experiencing the known and the new" was too great without scaffolding from the teacher (Kalantzis & Cope 2005).

The following is a positive example of learning that occurred when situated practice was enacted successfully with scaffolding by an expert. In this interaction, the teacher is guiding a group of mixed gender and ethnicity to digitally record the script to complement the moving visual design elements of their claymation movie. The Thai student, Pawini, had limited verbal English skills, having lived in Australia for less than one year, and speaking Thai at home (See Figure 9.0).

Teacher: I know English is your second language, so this is hard for you: 'Look out for cars'. Maybe you need to say: 'Look out for cars, son' [to emphasise the 's' on the end of 'car' – a sound which Pawini was omitting]. Try it again.
Pawini: Look out for cars, son!
David: Ok. Mum
Teacher: All right. That's all you're saying, and then I'm stopping the recording--
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Sean: Oh – no. I hit a child! I shouldn't have been talking on the phone.
Pawini: Oh – my son! [very dramatic]
Teacher: Very good, Pawini! Right Sean. I'm going to let you listen to yourself even though you know it was just a practice run. [Replays recording]
Teacher: Ok, let's do it one more time. See if you can get a little bit better.

Figure 9.0 Example of Situated Practice for Audio Designing of Voice-over

The teacher provided timely scaffolding of the audio and linguistic text before and after each short rehearsal. This process continued for almost an hour with the pedagogy alternating between instruction and practice. Sometimes the teacher applied critical framing by asking the students to analyse their text functionally when she replayed the recordings. She asked, 'Do you think the audience will understand that?' She asked them to evaluate the effectiveness of their text and make critical evaluations about whether competence had been reached, and decided whether more situated practice was required. The teacher was able to record over the audio text multiple times until the learners had attained a 'collaborative level of competence'; that is, producing a joint piece of work effectively with others, including those with different knowledge than themselves (Kalantzis & Cope 2005, p.95). It was observed on the final CD ROM that the most remarkable feature of the five completed movies was the effective combination of audio elements – speech and music – in a sophisticated way. Learning was scaffolded by the teacher using digital recording so that the new aspects of an experience could extend learners' existing knowledge, experiences and cultural resources ("experiencing the known and the new") (Kalantzis & Cope 2005). Through collaboration between teacher and novices, learners were able to accomplish more complex tasks than they could on their own.

Discussion of the Findings and Recommendations

A significant strength of the observed lessons was that during film making, students were part of a cultural shift. They moved from a school culture that focused predominantly on monomodal writing, to a culture of visual, spatial, gestural and audio designing of digital

movies characteristic of contemporary popular culture. Before implementing the claymation movie unit, the teacher had reflected, 'The interesting thing about these kids is they have no background in this, so they've just got no idea.' The designing of claymation movies was congruent with the uses of literacy in the community, and workplace (New London Group 2000). Students were required to engage in a new form of subjectivity, a new way of being and becoming in a multimedia world (Green 1993, Green & Bigum 1993, Green, Fitclarence & Bigum 1994).

A second strength was the presence of a teaching-learning relationship that characterised a learning community. Specifically, a relationship was developed that allowed students to engage in peer-group activities that emerged around collaborative designing of claymation movies, rather than the expert to novice transmission of knowledge (Seixas 1993).

The teacher had a momentous challenge in the aim of guiding learners toward claymation designing, since there were marked differences in the knowledge, resources, values and experiences of the members of the learning community. The teacher was required to be a bridge between the professional community of teachers and the community of learners (Seixas, 1993). This involved connecting the pathways of learners across seven ethnic communities, multiple "Englishes", and diverse economic conditions, and differing lifeworld experiences of twenty-three students.

This challenge was heightened by the recency of pedagogy of multiliteracies in schools, which the teacher had only begun to implement the previous year. During dialogue about the outcomes of the critical ethnography, the teacher reflected: "I've really seen a difference in my teaching because of the professional development and over time as I've used the pedagogy in my classroom". The teacher reported that in the second semester, the students had demonstrated significant proficiency in the specialist domain of collaborative, claymation designing.

Keeping in mind the challenges confronted by the teacher in this study, a key principle to guide multiliteracies praxis can be generated from the findings of this study. Situated practice involved more than exploiting the affordances of different media and modes in a situated, collaborative learning community. It required the skilful scaffolding or temporary support structures of experts to enable learners to draw upon the cultural resources for meaning making necessary to transfer knowledge to new, multimodal designs.

Specifically, scaffolding was required to perform two important functions in the community of learning. Firstly, there was a need to limit the possible paths of inquiry to prevent learners from the collaborative pursuit of costly and unproductive directions of

designing. For example, in the exploration of design possibilities for clothing three-dimensional movie characters, there was a need for earlier signposts to show students how different media could be joined together to communicate the intended message. Secondly, there was a need to focus students' attention on the salient features of claymation designing that were too far removed from the learners' previous experiences to make these links independently. Focusing learners' attention could have taken multiple forms, including the use of verbal directions from an expert peer or adult, systematic written instructions for each aspect of movie designing, or examples of cultural products. For example, the learners required early exposure to tangible, claymation movie sets and three-dimensional characters, rather than viewing completed digital films. In this way, collaboration in practice could be established on a foundation of powerful exemplars by experts (Brown 2005).

These recommendations are supported by Brown (2005) who recently addressed the issue of scaffolding in relation to a broad notion of "learning community" in teachers' professional and classroom practice. Brown cites Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) who articulate a number of important functions in the teacher-learning relationship. Included in these functions is the aforementioned need to scaffold participation in learning by limiting possible activity paths, by focusing learners' attention, and by highlighting important task features (Brown 2005).

A clear understanding of scaffolding in situated practice requires recognising the complementary role of overt instruction in a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Overt instruction includes the collaborative interactions between expert and novice that enable learners to transcend what they can achieve independently. Such guidance should assist learners to gain conscious knowledge and mastery of what is practised. Thus, overt instruction comprises active interventions on the part of experts in the community of learners that focus learners on the salient features of designing texts (New London Group 2000). This explicit information must be carefully timed and contextualised for students, so that learners know when to draw upon the new knowledge or skills, and what contexts are relevant for their application (Anstey & Bull 2004). The key recommendation of this paper is that overt instruction and situated practice be enacted simultaneously, rather than as separate components in a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

We are living in the context of increasingly diverse, globalised societies characterised by a burgeoning plethora of text types associated with multimedia and information technologies. This creates the need for a pedagogy of multiliteracies that works toward developing a community where different learners participate meaningfully in the dynamic and authentic social practices and collaborative relationships required in private and public life (New London Group 1996). Educators need to induct learners

into the powerful social practices that will count for success in the imminent future. The monumental challenge for teachers of multiliteracies is to create a community of practice where situated and scaffolded learning flows like a channeled stream – a place where learners are seldom found "wastin' a whole million."

Endnotes

[1] All names in this paper are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

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