

Use
 Responsibility
 Approximation
 Response

In his research with pre-school children, Cambourne identified those conditions present in the pre-school years, which facilitate the highly complex task of learning to speak. His research describes how from birth, infants are **immersed** in spoken language, and that the language of immersion is a **demonstration** of authentic language, language to achieve a life purpose. Because of these immersions and demonstrations the infant child **engages**, and babies are heard babbling, as they practise the oral language they hear taking place around them. Pre-school children experience **positive expectations** of their ability to learn to speak, and they have unlimited time to practise or **use** their developing speech. There is no timetable on the fridge door which says the baby may babble each morning only between 9.00am and 9.30am. In this process of learning to speak the **responsibility** for the sequence of acquisition of vocabulary items and types of grammatical sentences is left to the child. Thankfully no-one has published a talking curriculum setting out tight sequences for the baby to learn. Learning to speak involves much **approximation** of conventional speech, as the child practises intonation and tries to say new words. Parents do not growl at such approximations, rather in their **response** to the child they do two things. They show that the child has been understood, and they use the conventional form of the word(s). For example when a toddler bangs his juice bottle up and down saying, ‘Uice, uice, uice,’ the parent does not repeat this utterance, rather she says, ‘You want more juice do you?’

2. Construction of reading teachers, construction of learner-readers: the holistic view

I now contrast the construction of teachers and learner readers, in holistic classrooms, with the construction of teachers and learner-readers as evidenced by the NAPLAN Tests (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy).

a) Reading, the Holistic View

Construction of Teachers	Construction of Readers
Teachers are knowledgeable and plan	Children are unique individuals, the

teaching, based upon their students' life experiences and interests.	products of different cultural, religious, class, community and family experiences.
Teachers build upon individual children's existing understandings of language and literacy.	Children arrive at school at different places along the literacy learning continuum.
Teachers are experienced members of the literacy club who immerse their students in, and demonstrate to them, authentic, listening, speaking, reading & writing. They have positive expectations that all children can learn, and value and respond to their approximations.	Children are apprentices, who engage, use, approximate and feel valued.
Teachers stock their classroom with authentic texts of differing types, on different topics (including individual children's interests)	Children have need for independent and required reading of a wide variety of texts
Teachers are trusted by the System to assess student development and report to parents.	Children are trusted to learn.
The teacher kid-watches, interacts, collects dated samples of work and evaluates. This evaluation informs future teaching.	Children are involved in goal setting and evaluating their own progress.
Code Breaker	
Teachers are initial code breakers for beginning readers, reading aloud quality texts to whole class or small groups. Choice of quality books means children want to revisit, to re-read. Early reading instruction focuses on meaning.	Children are encouraged to 'read' books they have heard teachers read aloud. (revisiting texts) Children listen to popular books on class listening posts and follow the text in books. Learning to read begins with making meaning.
Teachers know that understanding a text helps break the code.	Children make connections with the print when they are familiar with the meaning or content of a book.

Teachers demonstrate that reading is the construction of meaning. eg teacher re-reads when text does not make sense.	Children are encouraged to re-read if text does not make sense.
Teachers understand the use of grapho-phonetic, semantic and syntactic cues. They conduct cloze activities, listing possible word inserts provided by the children. Discuss 'Does this word make sense?'	When children begin to focus on the print as they read, they are encouraged to insert words which make sense. Meaningful miscues are accepted.
Teacher and children co-construct class-made experiential texts.	Children help construct, & then reconstruct experiential texts. They take home individual copies of class made texts.
Teachers do not see reading as an exact process; they do not teach vocabulary before a child reads a text; they do not expect children to get each word right; they do not rigidly move children from one level of ability to the next.	Children are trusted to select books they want to read. Repeated readings develop meanings and help develop familiarity with written text and with particular words and letters.
Teachers invite children to share their print discoveries (words, letters, sounds).	Children find letters/words they know in familiar texts. They compile lists of patterns they have discovered.
Teachers understand that writing is of greater significance than reading, for learning about, and learning to apply, phonics.	Children write every day applying their developing understandings of print conventions.
Text Participant	
Teachers understand that text participation, or making meaning, helps break the code. Thus early reading texts must be meaningful.	Children are permitted to re-read and revisit favourite texts; to develop and elaborate meanings, to build familiarity with the language

Teachers understand meanings change over time or with further re-readings.	Children are encouraged to ask questions of text, to re-tell, to talk, to write, to draw, to act, to re-read, in the process of developing deeper interpretation of texts, and to learn that meanings may change over time.
Teachers understand that comprehension is not something that happens when one has finished reading; that comprehension happens before, during and after reading.	Children are encouraged to predict meaning before reading, to ask questions or make connections during reading, or, to stop and re-read, to clarify developing meanings, and, to draw, talk, act after reading.
Teachers know that there is no one right interpretation of a text. They encourage different individual interpretations, supported by reference to the text and individual children's life experiences.	Children understand that when reading, they are the meaning makers; they bring their own varied life experiences to a text; they make differing personal connections.
Text User	
Teachers ensure there is a variety of texts available in the classroom, and that these texts cater for the diverse interests of the students.	Children are able to select texts which enable them to read with purpose in exploring both individual and shared interests.
Teachers use texts for a wide range of purposes, eg songs for a bright start to the day, instructions for how to play a game, short emotive poems to help understand the heartbreak of bushfire victims, stories to imagine other lives, other ways of being.	Children experience different types of texts, and different ways of responding to texts.
Teachers understand we read to learn and integrate learning to read with reading to learn (reading across the curriculum).	Children read to carry out science experiments, to learn more about endangered Australian animals, or, how the body works.
Text Analyst	

Teachers understand texts are not value free, and so ensure the classroom book stock represents differing constructions of different social groups.	Children understand texts reflect author values and carry underlying author messages.
Teachers assist students to develop skills of analysing texts, identifying stereotypes, and identifying author messages.	Children identify strategies used by creators to construct social groups in particular ways. Children learn to identify stereotypes.
Teachers introduce the notion of 'silent voices' in texts, of those whose opinions have been ignored.	Children learn to identify all 'players' in any context, and to identify those voices which are silent.
Teachers understand critical literacy involves social action, and demonstrate different ways of taking action both for and against a text.	Children know different ways of taking action for or against texts.

3. Australian NAPLAN Reading tests

a) **The NAPLAN Reading Magazine** Year 3, 2010, has eight pages containing six different articles on six pages. These six articles total 1240 words.

Articles

How Birds Use their Beaks (non-fiction)

The Recycling Box (fiction)

The Ant (non-fiction)

The Best Teacher (fiction)

Athletics Versus Gardening (2 pieces of persuasive writing on this issue)

Elvis With Stripes (fiction)

There is no Table of Contents, nor is there any choice for the children in regard to the particular articles they choose to read, or in which order they read the articles. On the test day all children have to read each article. All children have to read the articles in the same order. Children have no responsibility over the articles they choose to read.

b) NAPLAN Test Magazine

The Test Magazine has 12 pages. There are 35 test questions covering 9 of the pages. Hence, children not only have the Reading Magazine to read, but also a 12 page Test Magazine

All children have **45 minutes** to complete the test, which includes reading the articles, reading the test questions, thinking about the questions, and writing the answers.

35 items in total

18 literal

6 inferential

4 questions about the writing (eg What does this sentence do?)

2 seek meaning of individual words

2 ask about the audience (eg, ‘This story was most likely written for ..’)

1 tests pre-existing knowledge (Need to know drink cans are made of metal)

1 tests knowledge of a print convention (setting out of word OH-SE- LI)

1 asks for the main message

c) Test Administration Instructions

Test administration instructions are read aloud by the teacher, before the children start the test. For the Grade 3 Reading Test, there are 17 instructions to be read aloud.

Example of one instruction: ‘Read the instructions for each question carefully. Remember you will either have to write a word in the box or shade a bubble. When you have to shade a bubble a pencil picture tells you how many bubbles to shade.’

Year 3 and 5 Test Administration 2010

d) Reading, the NAPLAN View

Construction of Teacher	Construction of Learner- reader
Teachers are without power.	Children are without power.
Teachers are standardized, robotic; all teachers say and do the same thing	Children are standardized; they are treated as if they have the same capacities to read the same texts and answer the same questions (despite State curriculum policies which require teachers to cater for individual differences)
Teachers are without knowledge. They need scripts to tell them what to do.	Individual children’s knowledge is not important.
Teachers have no responsibility for planning curricula relevant to the	Children have no responsibility for <i>what</i> they learn.

<p>needs of the students they teach. Unknown, remote, external body imposes a curriculum that is not taught in any State or Territory.</p>	<p>Unknown external body imposes curriculum, so curriculum cannot begin with the child. Children have no responsibility for <i>what</i> they learn.</p>
<p>During test, teachers have the role of guards or prison officers, ensuring the children do not speak, and that they keep moving in one direction, through the test booklet.</p>	<p>Children are passive in the evaluation process. They are not involved with goal setting, nor with evaluating their own learning.</p>
<p>Teachers have Role of coach on the sidelines: ‘Make sure you do your best.’ ‘Shade the bubbles carefully.’ Year 3 and 5 Test Administration Guide 2010, P16</p>	<p>Having children colouring bubbles is a significant form of response to reading.</p>
<p>Teachers have Role of timekeeper: ‘Half the test time has elapsed. If you are not up to P6 in your Test Book, you should be close to doing so.’ Year 3 and 5 Test Administration Guide 2010, P17</p>	<p>Reading is done quickly. Reflective thought is not valued.</p>
<p>Code Breaker</p>	
	<p>Children work silently during the test. Unknown ‘markers’ correct the tests. No-one discusses the children’s answers with them. Therefore it is impossible to assess the code breaking strategies used by any child. If answers are wrong – was the topic unknown to the child? Was the language construction foreign to the child? Did the child rely on visual cues?</p>
	<p>Children have limited time to complete the test paper. Pressure of time does not allow reader to take time developing meaning (eg re-</p>

	reading if necessary). Thus the readers are denied deep understanding, which would assist in breaking the code.
<p>Test Item (OH-SE-LI) ‘This word is written like this to show : the plural of ocelli. the correct way to say ocelli. a different way to say ocelli. how many letters are in ocelli.’ Reading Magazine 2010, Year 3</p>	<p>Test Item (OH-SE-LI) Why is this item included in the Reading test? Is it saying that when reading, one must change written words to spoken words? If so, this is a flawed view of the reading process.</p>
Text Participant	
	Children are forced by both the time constraints and the trivial nature of the test questions, to find snippets of superficial information.
	Children cannot draw, discuss, or act out, to construct deep meanings.
	Children have no room for individual interpretations - only specific right answers.
	Children in Australia are not standardised. In a country the size of Australia with the diversity of cultural, regional and economic groups, test standardisation discriminates against all those who cannot see themselves and their lives, in the test items. The same text selections for all children mean many cannot participate within the texts for there is no match between the content of the texts with their life experiences.
Text User	
	Children cannot read as text users.

	The articles in the Test Magazine are not designed to be useful to the children, rather they are designed to sift and sort. Rather than reading as a text user, the child is a passive question answerer of someone else's questions, for someone else's purposes
	Children who are text users read authentic texts. The Test Magazine is an inauthentic text. Authentic magazines have Tables of Contents, so the reader can choose those articles he wishes to read, and the order in which he reads them. One does not have to read every article in an authentic magazine.
Text Analyst	
	With the exception of one item where children are asked about the message of the piece, the children are not expected to read as text analysts. No questions require critical literacy.
	No time to develop deeper level of meaning, no time to do analysis, no time to take action.

e) The NAPLAN View of Reading as Evidenced by the NAPLAN Reading Test

Reading is for the purpose of answering some unknown person's questions and getting right answers, as quickly as possible, about topics which may be of no interest or use to the reader. During the NAPLAN test, one does not read for deep interpretation nor does one read to aid or enrich one's life purposes. Significantly critical literacy is almost ignored in the Test

Time is critical. NAPLAN Reading needs to be done quickly. It proves expedient to read the questions first and then refer to the article. It is counterproductive to be a thoughtful, reflective reader.

NAPLAN Reading is a solo activity. There is no opportunity to read with others, share meanings, engage in critical debate, challenge others' thinking, defend one's point of view ... only superficial interaction with the print.

Conclusion

The OECD has a very lengthy underpinning philosophy and framework for the PISA test of reading. The PISA 2009 definition of reading literacy as set out in the PISA Framework document is as follows:

‘The PISA 2009 definition of reading adds engagement in reading as an integral part of reading literacy:

Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.

Each part of the definition is considered in turn below, taking into account the original elaboration and some important developments in the defining of the domain which use evidence from PISA and other empirical studies, from theoretical advances and from the changing nature of the world.

Reading literacy . . .

The term “reading literacy” is preferred to “reading” because it is likely to convey to a non-expert audience more precisely what the survey is measuring. “Reading” is often understood as simply decoding, or even reading aloud, whereas the intention of this survey is to measure something broader and deeper. Reading literacy includes a wide range of cognitive competencies,

PISA 2009 Assessment Framework – Key Competencies in Reading, Mathematics and Science, P 23

At the time of writing this article, it appears that there is no underlying philosophical statement to outline how ACARA views reading. How can test items be formulated if the test writers are not informed by a coherent, consistent description of Reading?

After careful analysis of the NAPLAN 2010 Year 3 reading magazine and Test paper, the view of Reading identified and described in this article, is cause for deep concern. If reading is unrelated to children's life interests and needs, if reading serves no purpose for the reader, if reading is always competing with time

constraints, if reading is answering other people's questions, who in their right mind, would read?

Contrast the NAPLAN view of Reading with that of Grade 3 student Morgan, who is fortunate to be in Tim O'Keefe's third class, at the Centre for Inquiry in Richland School District Two, USA. Tim encourages his students to deepen their understanding of the reading process, by writing to the question, 'What is reading?'

Morgan answered thus:

"Reading is a great adventure, inside a little book, and once I take a look inside the little book, I get on the hook and I can't turn away. I go around the world, without leaving my room, the library or wherever I'm reading. Nothing else exists, just me and the book, alone in our world, the best of friends, just me and the book,'

Heidi Mills with Tim O'Keefe, 2011,P 6

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