Critical Epistemologies and Practices for New Media Literacies

> Newer technologies often afford newer and more varied representations and greater flexibility in navigating across these representations. Teachers need to know not just the subject matter they teach but also the manner in which the subject matter can be changed by the application of technology . and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge and to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones" (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p 1028-29).

However, because the goals of English are so rooted in school based print practices, transforming the epistemologies that define our valued representational discourse-practices poses a significant challenge

> "formulaic conceptions of writing, instruction, and texts encourage students *not* to think critically, innovatively, or well, even as they reinforce the positivist impression that Truth can be known and communicated if writers only train themselves to think and write in a clear, linear, and orderly fashion" (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006, p. 359.)

The tensions English teachers experience between print and image might be described as a clash of epistemologies between a school discourse embedded in the modernist agenda to establish and extend transcendent Truth using print, and a public digital discourse that inquires into partial truths from diverse experiential positions by mixing all modes of representation to construct and negotiate a shared postmodern experience of meaning

"Every literacy is learnt in a specific context in a particular way and the modes of learning, the social relationships of student to teacher are modes of socialization and acculturation. The student is learning cultural models of identity and personhood, not just how to decode script or to write a particular hand If that is the case, then leaving the critical process off until after they have learnt many of the genres of literacy used in that society is putting off, possibly for ever, the socialization into critical perspective" (Street, 1995, p. 140).

"All critical literacies involve challenging traditional notions of literacy and developing an awareness of the ideological nature of texts and their ability to position readers. They also focus on developing an understanding of how language relates to its social context and attempt to open up alternative reading and writing positions for students" (Frye,

Four video projects, their representational practices, and their framing epistemologies:

Ms. Iacobazzo: *Of Mice and Men* character videos
Mr. King: *Color of Water* novel scenes
Ms. Zhulke: Vocabulary videos
Ms. Becker: *Brave New World* commercials

Positivist Print Practices	Postmodern Media Practices
Quotes from novel used to evidence idea about character, and formal voice used to explain how evidence warrants claim; definitional practice focused on the object, for teacher audience	Images and video scenes connecting to life experience used to symbolize ideas about characters, and unique voice-overs and titles to focus humorous and connected interpretations for peer audience
Summaries of chapters lacked descriptive detail, used short choppy sentences, and didn't focus on an idea. Individually written to generalize a right meaning in text, or to turn in some answer to teacher.	Embody characters' motivations for video scene led to engaging print through the lens of a camera viewing a living social world that has personal connections. Created in small groups for class viewing.
Vocabulary workbooks closed down words to single transcendent correct meanings to be memorized and quizzed, transforming symbolic knowledge into a numerical grade	Transformed word into a visual embodied kinesthetic representation in video that played on lived experience to create humor for peer audience. Required symbolic inquiry into online and print resources to research contexts of word usage.
Discussed plot and characters in a literal and descriptive sense as having predetermined meanings the teacher planned to uncover.	Symbolized an idea in an advertisement video to disrupt or dislodge typical media messages, and gave symbols new meanings with underlying value messages. Then took this perspective back to the novel to discover new symbolic meanings that challenged values and beliefs of readers and characters.
Print practices allow us to name and define the world in a static representation with tight linear logic, separating out the self from objectivity reality, then to argue that generalized reality across time and space. Authoritative meanings for text are	Wielding symbols across multiple, fluid discourses and medias to represent partial and subjective experience in order to negotiate temporal and positioned meanings to construct shared or contested values, identities, and relationships. This

The affordances of print cannot help us to fully understand the affordances of media to represent and communicate ideas. The traditional school discourse uses print modes of representation to regulate right and wrong answers that reproduce knowledge about the world that is likewise positioned in published print representations authoritatively interpreted by teachers as proxies for the expert authors. Teachers use print to exercise power, and willingly point the way toward such power for students who can produce orderly printed texts.

Video authoring required complex thinking about how visual signs symbolize ideas, and how sequences of action and image can be constructed to represent particular ideas. Even further, video authoring requires students to wade through extensive collections of images, video, and enactments and interpret subtle differences in potential meanings as they select just the right images to be framed in the best sequence for their rhetorical intentions. These constructive and inquiring activities provided by video authoring created greater opportunities than print for students to engage in message design activities. The relevant technological pedagogical content knowledge for English teachers here is that working in digital media affords students with opportunities to wield symbols and deconstruct symbols in other texts of all modes.

Students exhibited a greater sense of audience in video authoring and a greater ability to express personal voice and uniqueness, especially reflected in their desire to create videos that simultaneously entertained and informed. The video authors who created humor received higher levels of peer response in classroom viewings, and in many cases the teachers identified students who struggled with print authoring as those who became recognized as experts in video authoring. The reflective affordances of digital tools for video authoring allowed the students to be both authors and audience in a more simultaneous and productive way than print authoring in which students often struggled to establish a real audience that would give value to their communicative efforts. This greater sense of a "real" audience for student authoring is essential pedagogical content knowledge, and the realization that digital spaces afford such accessible, diverse, and relevant audiences for student authoring is key technological knowledge for English teachers.

In a very practical sense, video authoring allowed the students to contextualize ideas in everyday activities and symbols. The video authoring gave a space for the multimodal interplay between various symbolic systems including images, interactions, gestures, clothing, language, music, and print text, as all of these were engaged interactively in the design process. Whereas, in print authoring, the representation of all

Figure 2
Models of Curriculum and Assumptions about Learning

	Content Focused	Student Centered	Practice Oriented
Skills	Explained as demonstrated, then practiced until automatic	Embedded in an activity or problem and learned as needed to complete it	Consequences of membership in a group working towards some valued object
Objectives	acquiring ideas to gain access to knowledge communities and/or material/cultural capital	personal development to achieve a more enlightened understanding	increase participation in activities which create social practices and belonging
Activity	Sequenced ideas which gradually uncover and develop the best knowledge	Given problem or project narrowed by interests of learner to relevant purpose	Engage in valued activities of group and reflect on the underlying beliefs
Knowledge	resides in the world and is universal for all	individual arrives at different amounts through different relevant experiences	constructed through symbolic interaction and specific to community activity
Relationships	expert-novice	expert guide-explorer	collaborative inquirers
Assessment	comparison to pre-determined standards for all learners	developmental comparison to judge individual's progress on predetermined lines	public reflection on activities in terms of desired community beliefs and values
decision-making	leadership	ownership	membership
literacy practices	reproduce conventions and genres of standard English	question standard English & promote cultural dialect	tools situated in purposeful activities of multiple worlds

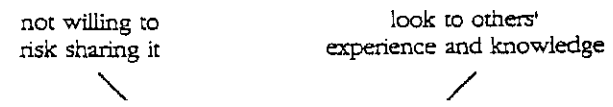
Beach, R. & Myers, J. (2001). *Inquiry-Based English Instruction: Engaging Students in*

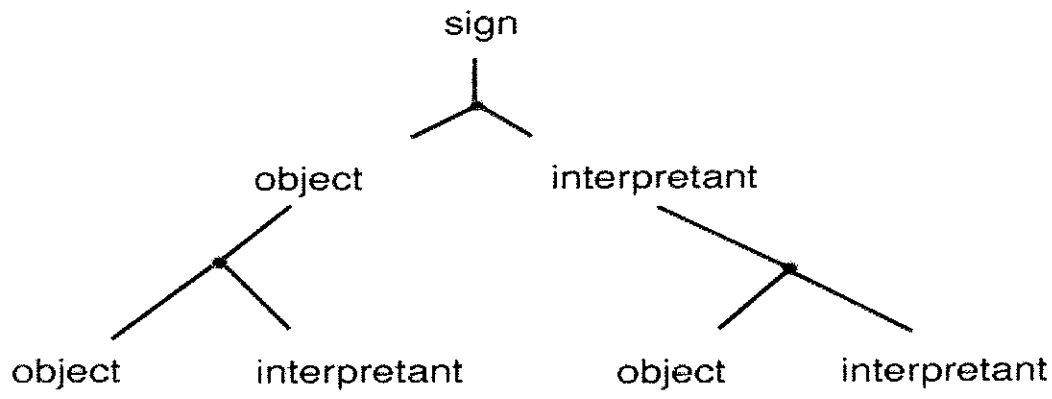
Myers, J (1992). The social contexts of school and personal literacy, Reading Research Quarterly, 27/4, 296-333.

Table 2 A sociopsychosemiotic theory of literacy

Community	Socio (pragmatics)	Psycho (intersubjectivity)	Semiotic (intertextuality)
Reflexive Critical Collaborative Diverse	Share membership	Organizing own experience and seeking connection to others' experience to share knowing as a negotiation of sign meaning	Signs have a wide open potential for personal connections and creation of meanings
Rebellious Antagonistic Cooperative Conformitive	Contest membership	Subvert an authorized knowing of community in power and signify quite opposite meanings, often using the same signs	Signs are open, but doubly closed in meaning: first by the community in power, second by the community that gives the sign an alternative meaning; sign connections are used to highlight different memberships
Deceptive Machiavellian Individualistic	Fake membership	Displaying the authorized meanings just to a degree that it gets you the rewards of a community; own meanings are hidden	Signs are used not for meaning or sharing experience but as keys for opening gates; sign function is closed and connections are hard to make at a meaningful level
Authoritarian Elitist Competitive Uniform	Maintain membership	Strive to represent the authorized meanings by learning its body of correct knowledge and actions	Sign function is closed and texts have specific meanings and connections

Figure 1 Member checking interpretive form





a sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (CP 2.228, Eco, 1984, p. 14).

"If the sign is not a three-term relation based on the structural centrality of the interpretant, it fails to be a sign and cannot account for semiosis or for inquiry" (Freadman, 2004, p. 118)

"In truth, the sign always *opens up* something new. No interpretant, in adjusting the sign interpreted, fails to change its borders to some degree" (Eco, 1984, p 44)

Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series" (CP 1.339, Freadman, 2004).

". . . that language is a primary modeling system, through which the other systems are expressed" (Eco, 1984, p. 32).

Linguistic symbols "are not based on the model of inference but on the model of equivalence. Aristotle was in fact the first to insist that linguistic terms are equivalent to their definitions and that word and definitions are fully reciprocable" (Eco, 1984, p 29)

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