For a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Reconciling Communicative and Text-Centered Instruction in the Elementary and Intermediate Foreign Language Classroom

Day 1

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Introductions

- Teaching context (language, level, type of institution)
- Courses you teach
- Approach(es) that inform your teaching
- Experience / interest in multiliteracies-based language teaching: in other words, what gaps do you see in the current approach you are using and how might they be addressed by multiliteracies approach?
Introductory questions

1. What are your associations with the word LITERACY? Write down the first three things that come to mind.

2. What does being *literate* in a given language mean for you?
Overview of the workshop

- Defining literacy & what it means to be literate in a language
- Comparing multiliteracies and communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches
- Understanding key concepts of a multiliteracies approach
- Putting a multiliteracies approach into practice
- Instructional examples
Defining what we mean by literacy

What is literacy?

“[T]he use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. … literacy is dynamic – not static – and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge”

(Kern, 2000, p. 16)
Dimensions of literacy

Sociocultural
- Collective determination of language uses and literacy practices
- Interweaving of literacy practices with other social practices
- Apprenticeship into ways of being (social acculturation, acquiring Discourses, joining the literary club)
- Social and political consciousness: problematizing textual and social realities
- Awareness of dynamism of culture and of one’s own cultural constructedness

Linguistic
- Lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic knowledge
- Familiarity with writing system and graphic and organizational conventions
- Awareness of interdependencies at all levels (orthography, lexicon, sentence, paragraph, text)
- Awareness of relationships between oral and written language (including awareness of distinction between medium and mode of expression)
- Familiarity with genres and styles

Cognitive/Metacognitive
- Existing knowledge (schemata)—allowing a person to establish relationships among pieces of information and to predict, infer, and synthesize meaning
  - Declarative knowledge—the ‘what’—facts, ideas, stories embedded in cultural contexts
  - Procedural knowledge—the ‘how’—strategies for reading, writing, and understanding, also embedded in cultural contexts
- Ability to formulate and discern goals and purposes—including planning, monitoring, and revising—in line with cultural norms
- Ability to create and transform knowledge

Kern, 2000
Why multiliteracies?

“Dealing with linguistic differences and cultural differences has now become central to the pragmatics of our working, civic, and private lives. Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively in multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries… When the proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the key facts of our time, the very nature of language learning has changed” (New London Group, 1996, p. 64)
What does it mean to be literate?

Literacy is anchored by time and context

i googled it
posted it on my blog
and then i IM’d
my friends

(Kern, 2006)
What does it mean to be literate?

Literacy is tied to sociocultural uses of language in a given society

- Républicain
- La France qui se lève tôt

- Libéral
- Les people / pipole

Excerpts from “ A French political lexicon for non-francophones  
http://www.rue89.com/2007/05/21/a-french-political-lexicon-for-non-francophones
What does it mean to be literate?

The ability to make meaning from a text depends on understanding much more than the words on the pages or the images.
Rationale for a multiliteracies approach

“In the context of globalization and in the post-9/11 environment, the usefulness of studying languages other than English is no longer contested. The goals and means of language study, however, continue to be hotly debated ... Institutional missions and teaching approaches typically reflect either the instrumentalist or the constitutive view of language. Freestanding language schools and some campus language-resource centers often embrace an instrumentalist focus to support the needs of students they serve, whereas university and college foreign language departments tend to emphasize the constitutive aspect of language and its relation to cultural and literary traditions, cognitive structures, and historical knowledge.”

(MLA Report, 2007)
Breaking down literacy: 7 principles (Kern, 2000)

- Interpretation
- Collaboration
- Conventions
- Cultural knowledge
- Problem solving
- Reflection & self-reflection
- Language use
Now, your turn

- In your opinion, what do each of these principles involve?
  - **Interpretation** involves…
  - **Collaboration** involves…
  - **Conventions** involve…
  - **Cultural knowledge** involves…
  - **Problem solving** involves…
  - **Reflection & self-reflection** involve…
  - **Language use** involves…
Interpretation
Writers and readers engage in a double act of interpretation.

Collaboration
Audience impacts what writers decide to say or not say, readers bring motivation and experience to make writers’ texts meaningful.

Cultural knowledge
Writing and reading function with specific cultural systems. For those operating outside a given cultural system, misunderstanding and being misunderstood by those operating within the given system is highly likely.

Problem-solving
Writing and reading involve figuring out relationships between word, between larger units of meaning, between texts and worlds.

Language use
Literacy is more than knowledge of writing systems, vocabulary & grammar. It requires knowing how to use language both in written and spoken contexts to create discourse.

Reflection and Self-reflection
Writers and readers think about language and its relation to the world and themselves.

Conventions
The way we write and read texts is not universal, cultural conventions play a huge role in how we carry out both activities.

Kern, 2000
Now, your turn

- Choose a chapter in your textbook and look for activities that require students to focus on ...

- For each principle below, summarize its relative emphasis: none, some, a lot
  - Interpretation
  - Collaboration
  - Conventions
  - Cultural knowledge
  - Problem solving
  - Reflection & self-reflection
  - Language use
“Communicative teaching programs have largely succeeded in their goal of promoting learners’ interactive speaking abilities. They have tended to be somewhat less successful, however, in developing learners’ extended discourse competence and written communication skills—areas of academic ability that are extraordinarily important in academic settings” (Kern, 2000, p. 19)

“It is not so much a difference of authenticity of communication ... Rather it is a difference in the ways that teachers and students make use of texts—their own and others’—to expand their awareness of a new language and culture” (Kern, 2000, p. 15)
Critique of CLT

“Communicative approaches generally emphasize the use of appropriate comprehensible input; meaning is perceived as more important than form ... Considerable instructional time is devoted to so-called skill-using activities performed in small groups of learners ... Communicative approaches do not specify a content ... Are communicative approaches and goals the most appropriate, sufficient, and effective in terms of learning outcomes in the general education language study sequence? I take the stance that communicative competence is neither a realistic nor a sufficient goal for the general education FL requirement ... unrealistic because neither time nor instructional context is sufficient or appropriate to develop a meaningful and lasting level of proficiency. It is insufficient because short-lived communicative survival skills are taught without intellectually challenging content ...” (Schulz, 2006, p. 254)
## Comparison of CLT & multiliteracies approaches

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CLT</th>
<th>Multiliteracies approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>Doing &amp; reflecting on doing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language functions</td>
<td><strong>Form/function relations</strong></td>
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<td>Expressing personal experiences</td>
<td>Personal readings of <strong>texts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Role of reading &amp; writing</strong></td>
<td>Language practice</td>
<td><strong>Design of meaning</strong></td>
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<td>Separate skills (R v. P)</td>
<td>Integrated commun. acts</td>
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<td>Focus process in writing</td>
<td><strong>Focus on genre in writing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Models for teachers &amp; learners</strong></td>
<td>Native speakers</td>
<td>Discourse analysts</td>
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<td>Intercultural explorers</td>
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<td><strong>Predominant learner role</strong></td>
<td>Active participation--Using language in face-to-face interaction</td>
<td>Active engagement--Using language use and revising</td>
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Kern, 2000
Two metaphors for communication: Conduit vs. design of meaning

**CLT / Conduit:**
- Communication = information transmission
  - Language as a conduit for transferring information
- Mastery of code -> unambiguous communication
  - Understanding the words -> understanding ideas

**Multiliteracies / Design:**
- Communication = meaning design
  - Language as a resource or tool for communication
- Meanings / messages are shifting, situational

“Communication occurs at the intersection between language and context and relies on the perception of linguistic, cognitive, and social relationships” (Kern, 2000, p. 45)
Key concepts for literacy-based teaching: Design (of meaning)

“We propose to treat any semiotic activity, including using language to produce or consume texts, as a matter of **Design** involving three elements: **Available Designs**, **Designing**, and **The Redesigned**” (New London Group, 1996, pp. 73-74)

- Unpacking the definition: 3 interrelated concepts

Figure 2.1: Design of meaning (based on New London Group, 1996)

Kern, 2000
Available designs

- Involve learners’ existing knowledge and resources that are drawn on, consciously or unconsciously, in understanding & making meaning from texts:
  - Linguistic
  - Schematic
  - Visual
  - Audio
  - Gestural
  - Spatial

### LINGUISTIC
- writing system
- vocabulary
- syntax
- cohesion / coherence

### SCHEMATIC
- formal schemata
- genre / style
- content schemata
- stories

Kern, 2000
Available designs

- Vocabulary and syntax
- Typographical conventions
- Style
- Stories
- Content schemata
Designing and the redesigned

- **Designing**
  - Forms of Designing:
    - Listening/viewing and speaking
    - Reading and writing

- **The Redesigned**
  - In the Designing process, the resources the learner possesses and has acquired (Available Designs) are redesigned
Designing & the redesigned: The role of genre

- In a multiliteracies approach, a focus on specific textual genres and their associated conventions facilitates the acquisition of new available designs, which function as resources for redesigning meaning.

- Genre: “an oral or written rhetorical practice that structures culturally embedded communicative situations in a highly predictable pattern, thereby creating horizons of expectations for its community of users” (Swaffar & Arens, 2005, p. 99).

- As Kern (2000) explains, “If we do not have practical knowledge of the conventions relevant to a particular situation, we may seem or feel communicatively inept” (p. 183).
Now, your turn

- What conventions do you associate with the textual genre of TV advertisement for a food product?

- In your own culture, what associations do you have with yogurt?

- Let’s watch:
  - Focus on the images
    - Activia
    - Taillefine
  - Focus on the message
Activia yogurt is the only yogurt with B. L. Regularis which aids in regulating your digestive system...naturally.

Visit Activia.ca for more information and to start your movement today.
It’s your turn

- What types of textual genres do your students engage in reading?

- How do you structure reading activities? What role(s) do you play and what role(s) do your students play?

- What textual genres do your students write?

- How do you structure writing activities? What role(s) do you play and what role(s) do your students play?
Reading as meaning design

- Reading = a dynamic communicative act that is both individual and social; creating discourse from texts

“Reading and writing are always socially-imbedded activities involving relationships, shared assumptions, and conventions as well as individual, personal acts involving imagination, creativity, and emotions” (Kern, 2000, p. 111)

- Readers as representatives of a given interpretive community

We are socialized to read in certain ways for particular purposes in particular settings and to hold certain beliefs about texts ... We abide by certain interpretive conventions established within the discourse communities to which we belong and we gain entry into new discourse communities by learning their conventions through apprenticeship” (Kern, 2000, p. 117)
Writing as meaning design

- Writing = a dynamic process of designing meaning through texts; a process both individual and creative as well as socially constrained

- Key aspects of writing in a FL:
  - Allows manipulating and “trying out” new forms so they can consider the effects of such manipulation on meaning
  - Allows time for learners to process and create meaning
  - Allows learners' language use to go beyond purely functional communication and opens the possibility "to create imagined worlds of their own design" (Kern, 2000, p. 172)
Now, your turn

- What is the traditional sequence of instruction regarding reading, talking, and writing?

Kern, 2000, p. 131
Relationship between reading, writing, and talking in a multiliteracies-based approach

Kern, 2000, p. 132
A multiliteracies-based framework for teaching

- **Four curricular components** (The New London Group, 1996) -> a means of translating Design into a meaningful pedagogy:

“[P]edagogy is a complex integration of four factors: **Situated Practice** based on the world of learners’ Designed & Designing experiences; **Overt Instruction** through which students shape for themselves an explicit metalanguage of Design; **Critical Framing** which relates meanings to their social contexts & purposes; and **Transformed Practice** in which students transfer & re-create Designs of meaning from one context to another” (New London Group, 1996, p. 83)
The four curricular components: Situated practice & overt instruction

See pp. 3-4 & 6 handout

- **Situated practice**
  - Immersion in language use
  - Focus on learners expression thoughts, opinions and feelings
  - Does not involve conscious reflection or meta-language
  - Involvement in legitimate communicative activities using the FL
  - **Examples:** wiki/blog writing, reading journal, information gap activity, digital voice recording, paired oral interview

- **Overt instruction**
  - Involves learners in developing an explicit meta-language of Design to identify, discuss, learn those linguistic & schematic elements that contribute to meaning making
  - Entails participation in scaffolded learning opportunities rather than drills
  - Allows students to step back and talk about the meaning-making process in order to gain skills and knowledge needed for competent participation in FL communication
  - Role of grammar: Requires intentional focus, viewed as a tool for meaning making rather than an end in and of itself
  - **Examples:** text mapping, revising/editing, analyzing word/syntax relationships
The four curricular components: Critical framing & transformed practice

See pp. 3-4 & 6 handout

**Critical framing**
- Involves stepping back and trying to understand the social, cultural, historical, and ideological contexts of communication and texts
- Entails developing a critical awareness of language use and how the meanings / rules related to communication are tied to context in complex ways
- Can involve cross-cultural or intercultural comparisons
- **Examples**: research/presentation activity, reflective journaling, comparison reading/analysis activity

**Transformed practice**
- Involves learners in recreating designs of meaning by transferring them from one context to another by creating new texts on the basis of existing ones or reshaping texts for a different context
- Allows learner to take the lead and use what they know to create something original and personal
- **Examples**: story retelling, stylistic/genre reformulation of a (written) text, oral presentation / debate / panel
Example 1: Literacy-based instruction - elementary level

Mange ta soupe...

JEAN COCTEAU


Cette petite liste réveille une foule de souvenirs, ceux de l'enfance… C'est très longtemps après qu'on arrive à comprendre qu'un dîner peut être un véritable chef-d'œuvre.
Example 1: Instructional sequence - elementary level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>critical framing</th>
<th>activity comparing US v. France table manners or parent/child communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>situated practice</td>
<td>reading matrix: table wherein learners focus on text’s themes, who is speaking, who is addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overt instruction</td>
<td>inductive grammatical activity wherein learners’ attention is drawn to repeated use of imperative tense; learners categorize verbs based on -er, -ir, -re ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transformed practice</td>
<td>rewrite the story as a dialogue or rewrite the story based on your own experiences; in either case, utilize the imperative tense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 2: Instructional sequence – intermediate level
Example 2: Instructional sequence – intermediate level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>critical framing</th>
<th>peer survey on what you cook to impress guests (writing → speaking)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| overt instruction | - brainstorming the elements of a written recipe (conventions/schematic resources)  
                      - scanning p. 3 of text to confirm/disconfirm ideas |
| situated practice | - comprehension of major textual details  
                     - reading matrix: raising awareness of form – meaning relationships (p. 3) |
| transformed practice | - create your own magazine article including a handwritten recipe, a photo sequence w/ recipe instructions and a commentary |
Now, your turn

- Which of the four curricular components do you think have traditionally been the focus of language programs and instructional materials? Which have been de-emphasized?

- What consequences does this lead to for learners if certain components are not included in classroom activities and assessment?

- Write a list of key elements of a multiliteracies oriented instruction that you want to explore further. Do you envision any constraints to incorporating these in your language program? If yes, how do you envision negotiating those constraints?
Putting the pieces together: Multiliteracies-based pedagogy

Available Designs & Genre
= content
= what to teach

Curricular Components
= instructional activities
= application of what and how

Principles of Literacy
= learning processes
= how to teach

Putting the pieces together: Multiliteracies-based pedagogy

Available Designs & Genre
= content
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Principles of Literacy
= learning processes
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Sources

Selected References

Your homework

- Select a chapter

- Reread through the chapter reflecting on its activities and materials in light of what we discussed today

- How well do the materials and activities in this chapter align with a multiliteracies approach
Thank you!