Mobilising Everyday Literacy Practices within the Curricula

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ABSTRACT New Literacy Studies is the theoretical basis for this research, providing a social view of literacy. Recent work in New Literacy Studies has extended further the notion of literacy and demonstrated the ways in which people engage in practices in their everyday lives that do not always get translated into their studies. This article draws on research within the Teaching and Learning Research Programme that attempts to explore these issues in the context of further education in the United Kingdom. It draws upon data collected over the last year to illustrate, first, how rich the students' home-based literacy practices are and, secondly, how these are differently mobilised within their curriculum. The article argues that an understanding of literacy as embedded in social practice could result in practices that enhance students' learning.

Introduction

> I just can't believe how much they do at home. Before becoming involved in this project, I thought most of them [students] maybe skimmed through a magazine occasionally or texted their friends, but no more than that. (Martin, a practitioner researcher on the LfLFE project)

Martin, and his fellow practitioner researchers within the Scottish end of the research project that I focus on here, have all remarked about this aspect of their involvement. Their surprise about the breadth and depth of students' home-based literacy practices is one that many teachers in Further Education (FE) would recognise and perhaps even share. FE students, particularly those under 19, are regularly portrayed as a media generation who have no interest in literacy practices beyond playing computer games (Luttrell & Parker, 2001). Furthermore, those practices

which they are thought to be involved in are often devalued (Gee, 2003). Yet the data collected by the researchers as part of the 'Literacies for Learning in Further Education Research Project' (LfLFE, www.lancs.ac.uk/lflfe/) which has been funded for 3 years from January 2004 as part of Phase 3 of the United Kingdom's (UK's) Teaching and Learning Research Programme have shown that, in the main, students engage in rich and varied literacy practices outwith their formal educational institutions, but these are largely not drawn upon during their experiences within their vocational areas.

This article is in three parts. In the first section, I describe the research project itself and briefly outline its theoretical framework. The second section explains how the methodology unfolded within the two Scottish colleges. The final section focuses on two students from different vocational areas to illustrate, first, how rich the students' home-based literacy practices are and, secondly, how these are differently mobilised within their vocational areas. I argue that if FE teachers actively developed an understanding of literacy as embedded in social practice, they could explicitly tap into students' existing literacy practices, which we suggest would enhance the students' learning experience.

The Project

LfLFE is a collaborative project between two universities – University of Stirling and Lancaster University – and four further education colleges in Scotland and England – Anniesland College in Glasgow, Lancaster and Morecambe College, Perth College and Preston College. The project is in three phases. Phase 1, between January and July 2004, was an Induction period, in which we were involved in the recruitment of university- and college-based researchers to the project. Phase 2, which ran until July 2005, is examining in detail the literacy practices of students in 11 curriculum areas across the domains of college, work, home and community. The final phase of the project will involve developing and evaluating pedagogic interventions based upon our initial data collection and analysis, to try to establish whether there are ways of mobilising learners' literacy resources to support learning, retention and achievement.

The project seeks to examine the literacy requirements of four curriculum areas in each of the four further education colleges. It also seeks to explore the literacy practices in which students engage outside their college-based learning. The use of the term 'practices' includes descriptions of features, values, understandings and intentions. We are investigating the interface between the literacy requirements which students face on their courses and the resources that they bring with them to their studies. This interface is described as 'border literacies', which, if they exist, could enable people to negotiate more successfully

between vernacular literacies of everyday life and the formal literacies required within the FE context. These border literacies are potentially the altered literacy practices that students are already familiar with, which become relevant in college contexts. Barton & Hamilton (1998, p. 247) describe vernacular literacies as 'ones which are not regulated by the formal rules and procedures of dominant social institutions and have their origins in everyday life'. We are exploring the extent to which such vernacular literacies can positively affect learning outcomes and can serve as generic resources for learning throughout the life course.

One of the premises for the project is that the literacy practices of colleges are not always fashioned around the resources people bring to student life and that students may have more resources to draw upon than college lecturers might be aware of. The intention is to achieve a critical understanding of the movement and flows of literacy practices in people's lives: how literacy practices are ordered and reordered, networked or overlapped across domains (home–college, virtual–real, reading–writing), across social roles in students' lives, and to describe what objects might mediate such mobilisations. Ivanic et al (2004, p. 10) warn that the processes of mobilising these border literacies are 'not simple "border-crossings", but are complex reorientations that are likely to entail effort, awareness-raising, creativity and identity work on the part of the learner'. It is worth noting that we are not focusing on the literacy demands of the students' communication or key/core skills classes, but the reading and writing that are integral to and essential for success in their curriculum areas.

This article concentrates on the experience within the Scottish context in phase 2 of the project. Across the two Scottish colleges (Anniesland and Perth), there are seven vocational areas being studied: Accounts, Multimedia, Sound Production, Construction, Social Sciences, Hospitality and Child Care. The vocational areas chosen depended to some extent on the willingness and availability of staff to take on the role of college-based researcher, and spanned a range from those in which literacy appears at first sight to be relatively peripheral to those where literacy appears to be constitutive of the area. The areas included both those that attract under 19-year-old students and those that attract mature students. While most of the areas were vocational, where possible one 'academic' subject in each college was chosen.

Theoretical Background

The policy agendas of widening participation and social inclusion often position literacy as a key issue. Literacy is identified as a significant factor affecting retention, progression and achievement in further education courses in the UK. Much of that agenda focuses on basic skills and works with an individualised deficit model of literacy (Department for

Educational Skills [DfES], 2003). New Literacy Studies (NLS), the theoretical basis for the LfLFE project, provides a social view of literacy that locates literacy practices (different forms of reading, writing and representation) in the context of those social relations within which they are developed (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton et al, 2000; Gee, 2003). NLS offers a view of literacy as multiple, emergent, and socially situated and constructed in particular contexts. This work has demonstrated the rich variety of literacy practices in which people engage as part of their daily lives, but also that these are not always mobilised as resources within more formal education provision.

One initial premise of the project is that vernacular literacy practices exist and students engage in them. These practices are seen as the sorts of resources for learning that may not be tapped into in all their richness. Research within the NLS umbrella recognises the importance of making the vernacular practices of everyday life visible. Ivanic et al (2004) argue that text-related practices increasingly involve an element of multi-modality (e.g. text, icons, pictures) and have been influenced by digital and new technologies. They argue that the use of new technology has facilitated a shift in the semiotic landscape towards the iconic and visual, as well as the written word. They question whether educational provision has changed to accommodate these wider cultural shifts.

Furthermore, NLS questions the view that literacy is a skill that can be transferred unproblemtically from one domain to another. Barton & Hamilton (1998) describe a domain as a structured and patterned context in which literacy is learned. The notion of transfer has been further problematised by Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom (2003) who argue that both cognitive and situated explanations of transfer are not sufficiently robust, especially when discussing transfer across domains. To overcome this, we have adopted the use of 'mobilisation' as a concept to explain that border crossing which requires the student to actively dis-embed and re-contextualise their literacy practices. To enable this mobilisation to take place, they have to be aware of their existing literacy practices and understand their role as 'designers' of text (Kress, 2003), rather than regurgitators.

Project Methodology

The research strategy adopted by the LfLFE team is broadly ethnographic. This research method is very close to the ways in which people make sense of the social context in which they find themselves and has its roots in anthropology and sociology (Street, 2001). The approach is that of illumination and de-cloaking existing practices to provide 'thick description' (Geertz, cited in Holliday, 2002, p. 77). Our aim, therefore, is to provide depth of description. The data-gathering process has involved the practitioner researchers (of whom there are 16)

and university-based researchers (of whom there are four). Where possible, the students themselves have become involved in the process as co-researchers, not simply respondents. However, it is recognised by the team that, for many of the students, the use of the term 'co-researcher' to represent the students' involvement may be more aspirational than evident from practice. Ethnography is a process, not a set of discrete stages, so as a team the members of LfLFE have been involved in an iterative process of planning, data gathering and analysis.

Smith (2004) found in her study of FE students' literacy practices that, when asked directly about their home-based literacies, students tended to say either that they did nothing or that they did very little. To overcome this direct approach, the LfLFE team used a series of 'conversations' with each student. Lillis (2001, p. 10), in her study of HE students' writing, described the difficulty of creating a 'space for talking' that was not teacher/student or researcher/participant.

This space was achieved by using an informal and unstructured approach, more conversation (Radner, 2002) than interview. Nevertheless, despite being informal and unstructured, the conversations were focused. The initial one was an informal un-taped discussion about the student's life history in which students were encouraged to talk about their family, education to date and reasons for joining the course. As far as possible, all subsequent conversations were taped. The second conversation was based around a 12-hour clock face. Each student was asked to choose a non-college day and write down what they did that day. When it was completed, they were engaged in a conversation around the literacy practices that were embedded in the social activities they had identified. In this way, students came to a closer understanding of our use of the term 'literacy practices' and they began to move away from a paper-based view of text.

After this conversation, they were given a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of their home or work-based literacies. From all the pictures taken, a conversation took place around those the students selected as significant to them. This conversation took us beyond simple description of an event. However, it has to be noted that not all students returned their camera to us for processing and so we used an alternative method to talk about vernacular literacies. In the icon-mapping exercise, we asked students to select a number of icons that represented literacy practices that were important to them. Once these were selected the students were asked to place them on a Venn diagram (Figure 1).

In the subsequent conversation, the students were encouraged to think about any potential or existing links between home- and college-based practices. Did these border practices exist and, if so, how were they being mobilised by the students? Where time allowed, students were

also asked to participate in a focus group in which the conversation focused on one literacy event from a class observation.

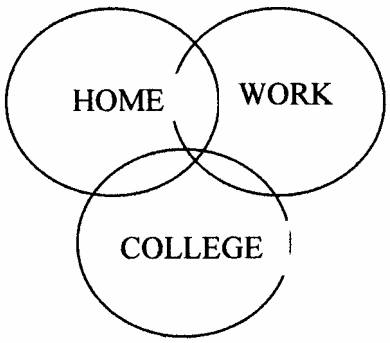

Figure 1. Icon mapping domains.

After each of these conversations, the researcher wrote a summary of the conversation, which was sent to the student for feedback. For most of the students, conversations took place over the period of an academic year, which enabled us to track the shifts in students' understandings around their own literacy practices across domain and time. Individual case studies of each student have been developed from reading each of the summaries of the conversations. In addition to this, a thematic approach to analysis of each of the summaries has been adopted where emerging issues and themes have been noted.

Pen Portraits

I focus this discussion on two students: one from Multimedia (Tom), the other from Child Care (Rebecca). Both are studying at the same level of work – Higher National Certificate (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework [SCQF], level 7, NVQ 3). These students were not selected because they are exceptional cases but rather because they provide contrasting examples. Holliday (2002) argues that because people construct the social world, any selection of participants is valid when the aim is to uncover what is there, not present a 'truth' that is generalisable. However, the two case studies discussed here do represent students whose home-based literacy practices are differently mobilised within their respective vocational areas. Secondly, and perhaps related to the first point, is that the primary medium for learning within the two vocational areas is very different. The delivery and content of the Multimedia course relies heavily on the interaction with and use of

screen-based practices by both lecturer and student, whereas Child Care relies heavily on traditional page-based practices.

Tom

The HN Multimedia course is taught within the computing department. Students on the HN course attend college 3 days a week, and are taught and assessed in discrete units by a team of people. The unit focused on within the research project was 'Introduction to the Internet'. As an added value to their course, the students are offered opportunities to undertake web-design projects or enter competitions. Three of the four project students have taken advantage of these opportunities. In their focus group, they all agreed they felt these experiences would help to further their employment opportunities. As there was no placement element on this course, this simulated work experience provided them with opportunities to put into practice the elements of the course in a 'real' environment and to develop an identity within this particular Discourse community. Gee (1996, p. 131) explains Discourse as:

> A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other than symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'.

The commitment of three of the project students to the vocational area was also evident when they spent break and lunch times within the classrooms working on their class work, extra projects or personal projects.

Tom (37) is a mature student who had been an apprentice qualified turner for over 12 years. He had studied and passed the National Certificate (NC level SCQF 5) Multimedia course the previous year. He is separated from his child's mother and his daughter visits him 1 day every weekend. He passed his HNC and intends to go on to HND level in 2005-2006, and from there to a degree level course.

From the conversations with Tom, a story of himself emerged as someone who did not read or write. Prior to our first taped conversation he told me that his previous occupation had not required that he engage with literacy at all and at home he said: 'I will maybe flick through the paper from time to time'. As an NC student the previous year, Tom, had been apprehensive about having to write in college, but had been particularly concerned about essays. However, by the time of the debriefing focus group, in May 2005, he explicitly declared that he was no longer afraid of tackling writing tasks at college. He said: 'if you had asked me to write a 500 word essay last year, I would have panicked. Now I can

manage 1500 words no bother'. He felt his awareness of his development was not due to the course, but to being involved in the conversations within the LfLFE research project. This awareness included both the literacy practices required of him within his FE course and also his home-based vernacular literacy practices.

During both the clock and camera activities, Tom described spending much of his leisure time at home involved in literacy practices which were directly connected to learning more about multimedia. These practices included reading textbooks and computer specialist magazines, downloading tutorials from specialist websites and joining multimedia forums where he could ask for advice and guidance on aspects of the software he was finding challenging. Prior to becoming involved in the LfLFE project, he would not have associated any of these activities as connected to literacy.

During the course of the three conversations with Tom the ways in which he talked about these activities changed. In the first one, the clock activity, he said he 'played' with his computer most evenings. He was motivated to play around with the computer to improve his chances of employment and because he saw it as fun. He did not engage with these practices to help him pass the class assessments. He felt he could pass them based on reading the handouts provided by the class tutor. In preparation for the second taped conversation, Tom was asked to take a number of photographs of his home-based literacy practices. From this range he was then asked to select six pictures that represented the most significant literacy practices at home. Five of the six chosen by Tom were connected to the use of his personal computer. During our conversation around these pictures, he surprised himself by articulating how literacy rich the activities he engaged in were. Before participating in the project, he said he had never explicitly explained what he did with computing at home nor had he associated them with literacy.

In our discussions, he came to understand that his attitudes towards and his practices around reading had changed. Tom described how his reading (and learning) had changed over the course of his time at college. At the beginning of the NC course, to learn a new aspect of computing, he said that, after listening to the demonstration given by the class teacher to the entire group, he used the step-by-step guides (which he referred to as tutorials) supplied by the class teacher, reading each step, one at a time. Then he carried out the step before reading the next instruction. He felt the tutorials were more significant than other handouts. He explained: 'the tutorials are sets of instructions which you need to follow carefully, word for word. The handouts have general background information. You can select which bits to read'.

However, half-way through his HNC year, Tom described a different process when he used a tutorial at home. He quickly reads through the entire tutorial, whether it is from a book, a magazine or a website, to get a

feel for the end product. Then, with the tutorial to one side, rather than at his side, he tries out the new feature of the software. He refers to the written text only if he needs some help. He feels that he now needs to visualise what the end product will be and the stages in between are less important to him. He has the confidence and the experience to experiment, and not rely on following step-by-step written instructions. Another difference is that he now feels he would consult textbooks to help his learning, whereas prior to his HNC year he felt they made no sense to him. Prior to this year, Tom felt textbooks were for academic people and not for people like him. This was part of his story of being a non-reader. He gave an example of one of his classmates who he thinks of as academic because he has four A levels and had studied at university. His view of what constitutes an academic person restricted his views of what was an appropriate text for him to read.

After nearly 2 years of studying Multimedia, the physical location of where these activities take place may be different, but for Tom the main features of a literacy practice (Mannion, 2005) remain the same: the medium used, the text types, the purpose, values and expectations. He does not have significant borders to cross. I would argue that there are two reasons for this. First, the fact that he viewed learning within the classroom as a collaborative activity and, secondly, the way in which ICT was used in this course. Both students and the class teacher acknowledged that the teacher was not an expert in all aspects of computing. Although the teacher provided demonstrations of aspects of a computing package, it was recognised that the teacher could only provide a starting point from which the students had to move on. Tom said: 'What I am learning here (at college), I am implementing at home. The teachers can only point you in a certain direction and you have to do the rest'. In the Multimedia classroom, students learnt from each other, as well as from the teacher. They brought in to college tutorials they had found on the Internet; they shared magazines and textbooks, and they told each other of new websites or forums they had found. By sharing and collaborating the students were co-constructing their understanding and actively involved in the meaning-making process. This situated view focuses on learning as developing shared meanings. Within the multi-modal world of Tom's classroom, Kress (2003) argues that it would be more appropriate to talk of writing as 'design', moving the discussion away from that of students acquiring skills and competencies (a cognitive view) to them constructing their literacies and learning (a sociocultural view).

However, this collaborative approach is not an explicit part of the teacher's pedagogical approach. Once established the teacher supported it by providing classroom space, but he had not initiated it. In this classroom, it happened because one of the students had considerable computing experience and set up informal sharing sessions during class

time, break times and at non-teaching times. During one of my observations, he was asked to desist from one of his sharing activities because it was an inappropriate time. He had completed the assessment he had been given, but the others had not. Additionally, prior to the data from the conversations, the teacher was not aware of the richness and variety of literacy practices the students were engaging with at home. He could not, therefore, tap into this rich vein to explicitly mobilise students' existing practices. I argue that the literacy practices around learning within this Multimedia classroom are more suited to learners' expectations, experiences and home-based literacy practices. For Tom there was an easy movement and flow of literacy practices between the domains of home and college.

Rebecca

Students on the HN Child Care course spend one-and-a-half days in college and 2 days in placement over the course of the year. At college, this group of students are taught by the same teacher across all their units of study. This teacher is also responsible for visiting them and observing their placement work, and is their vocational guidance tutor during the year. The four project participants all reported enjoying a positive relationship with this tutor and were sometimes anxious that what they were saying would negatively reflect on her. The unit focused on within the project was: 'Assessment Approaches'.

Rebecca (19) is a quiet student who, despite being articulate, found it difficult or was reluctant to explain her motivations and actions. In interview, she often responded: 'I don't know' or shrugged. Indeed, at the debrief focus group, when asked why she had volunteered to join the project, she said: 'H (her teacher) thought it would be a good idea'. The only time she became animated was when talking about music. She had passed some higher level courses (SCQF 6) while at secondary school, but had decided to leave half way through her final year because she did not want to go to university and thought continuing on an academic course was a waste of time. She started her Child Care college course at NC level (SCQF 5); this year passed her HNC course and intends to find employment as a nursery nurse. She feels she may return to degree level work when she has some experience. Rebecca doesn't feel she has the self-discipline or organisational skills to study independently, which she believes are required to be a successful university student. The story which recurred through our conversations was of someone who was disorganised and slightly 'ditzy'.

During the clock exercise, Rebecca described a variety and depth of home-based literacy practices around her passion – music. She downloads music from the Internet and burns her own CDs. She follows the progress of her favourite bands in magazines and newspapers,

wherever possible attending concerts at local venues. Often she uses the Internet to buy tickets or music from Amazon. She also accesses websites to find out more about her favourite style of music – Indie. She is comfortable using the Internet, but said she would not choose to spend much of her leisure time on it. As with Tom, she did not associate any of these activities with literacy at all. Indeed, she chose to complete her clock around a placement day because she felt she would have nothing to talk about had she chosen a home-based day. Our conversation arrived at these home-based literacy practices in a very circuitous way. From talking about the magazines she flicked through during the lunch break in the canteen, we moved to those she read at home and the practices mentioned above tumbled out from that.

The clock exercise helped her develop a broader view of her own literacy. She was confident that our conversation about literacy would encompass the novels she loves to read, but had not thought it would embrace keeping in touch with friends through email and texting or any of the other non-paper-based practices. This broader understanding enabled her to use the camera to take pictures of her home-based activities for our second conversation. Of the five photographs she chose to talk about as significant for her, four were related to music and ICT (including her mobile phone). The fifth one was a picture of a novel she was reading. She used her PC primarily to download music and occasionally buy tickets for concerts, but also to type up her completed hand-written essays to help improve their presentation. Interestingly, she did not find the PC useful in the construction of the essay. Indeed she said handwriting the essay helped her think. She also used her home PC to help her research topics for her assessments. She preferred to use her home PC for this because to use a college PC, she would have to book a limited time period and machine, stay behind after class time and there were too many distractions. She did not spend time in college other than for class activities. The conversations provided a picture of someone involved in a diverse range of literacy practices.

Like Tom, Rebecca did college work at home. However, all the college literacy events she carried out at home are connected to the completion of assessments, not practices connected to learning about or around her vocational area. Rebecca's understanding of the purpose of the reading and writing around her vocational course is to pass her assessments that will help her gain the HNC, which would then allow her to work with children. She feels that most of the literacy demands of the course are not those she will need when she is working as a nursery nurse. So although many of her literacy practices at home are college and placement related, it is for expediency and convenience, not because they are part and parcel of who she is. The relationship between her college and home-based practices is unidirectional.

Equally, many of the literacy practices at college are not ones she would engage in at home. In a post-observation discussion, the classroom teacher explained that Rebecca and her classmates had requested that she adopt a teaching method that relied on students copying down bulleted notes from an overhead. This involves the teacher talking the students through each point at a pace they can keep up with. She does not extemporise from the bullet points because she feels the students would not know what to note down. She said: '…but what they can't cope with is if you're reading something off the overhead but talking about something to maybe extend the overhead or whatever so in terms of the overheads that's their request they prefer something in front of them'. Both the teacher and most of the students feel this approach helps them to memorise the details that they would need to pass the assessments. They feel confident that the teacher has already selected the elements they would be assessed on and they would then later refer to these notes when writing their summative assessments. However, Rebecca found this practice very boring and said she 'zoned out' when the teacher talked through the overheads. Rebecca said she preferred to find things out for herself.

In contrast to the Multimedia classroom, the Child Care teacher is seen by the students as the expert who provides them with all the information they needed to pass their assessments. The teacher is seen by herself, and by her students, as someone who has access to knowledge that she passes on to her students directly or through guided reading. Within this acquisition model of learning, both the students and the teacher adopt an instrumental approach seeing the teacher as the expert. Their classroom literacy practices are related to passing assessments. Additionally, in contrast to the Multimedia classroom, students are not authors or producers of text. Rather, they are regurgitators of knowledge. From their focus group discussion it was clear that the students saw their role as passively to absorb the material the teacher provides. Reading in and around the subject is focused only on the aspects of the subject that are required by the assessment.

This view of knowledge fits within a traditional cognitive paradigm which portrays learners as 'disconnected knowledge processing agents' (James & Bloomer, 2001, p. 2). This view has been challenged by sociocultural theories, which argue that learners construct meaning in a dynamic way from their interactions with others, their activities and their environments. Rebecca may have carried out college-based tasks in the context of her own home, but the media, text types, purposes, values and expectations of these literacy events were radically different from her home-based literacy events. Rebecca's home-based literacy practices and those of her vocational classroom are so divergent that she is unable to bridge the gap between the two worlds. Indeed, she said: 'home is home and college is college'. For Rebecca, her leisure-related and college-

related literacy practices are kept strictly separate. Within the Child Care area there was little evidence that the pedagogical approaches or the literacy demands had shifted to accommodate wider cultural shifts that Ivanic et al (2004) felt would be necessary to help students actively engage with border-crossing.

Discussion

The two case studies illustrate the different literacy practices within the students' respective vocational areas and their home-based literacies. Their home-based literacy practices in their everyday lives are differentiated according to their own life histories and passions, but are also affected by the vocational area they are studying. Many of Tom's home-based literacy practices were the same as those expected of him in the classroom. For him there was no border to cross. The literacy practices of his passion and learning within his course were the same. As Tom became more involved in the research project, talking about his literacy practices, his story of himself as a person who could not read or write changed into one who was capable of producing text. I argue, therefore, that when students' literacies are mobilised explicitly by either them or their teacher, it can and does affect their identity as literate students.

In contrast, for Rebecca there was a gulf between her home and college literacies. As she became aware of her existing practices she could not find a way to bridge that gulf and continued to see the domains as separate. The cases demonstrate that students' experiences of and dispositions to mobilising home-related practices for college purposes and vice versa is heterogeneous. As a result, the potential for colleges to draw on these practices is likely to be a negotiated activity. That said, there is no evidence that college staff were in a position to systematically know what might be possible in regard to mobilising literacy practices or in a position to help students draw on the potential for such crossover. This will not be an easy process to adopt. However, if we want to engage our students then it is one we need to begin. Lankshear & Knobel (2004) warn that when the gap between educational practices and non-educational practices becomes too wide, even successful students like Rebecca and Tom may start to resist and drop out.

Both Tom and Rebecca were successful learners in many of the traditional measures of being a student. They had both made a transition from a National Certificate level course (SCQF level 5) to an HNC (SCQF level 7). They both attended regularly. They both completed the HNC year and passed their respective courses, but when we compared their engagement with the literacy demands of their vocational area, we saw they were qualitatively different. Tom was fully engaged in the literacy practices of his vocational area. Tom saw himself as a designer of text

where Rebecca on the other hand was a regurgitator of text. She did not feel any connection between the texts she was writing to her vocational area other than as a means of passing the course.

Gupta (2004) discusses two kinds of readers: transactional and reduced. The transactional reader is one who can interact with the text to create meaning and enjoy reading; the reduced reader perceives reading as painful and is reluctant to read. Before joining the Multimedia course, Tom could have been described as a reduced reader at home and at college, but his approach to reading changed to that of a transactional reader when he engaged with his passion. He developed an active meaning-making strategy that was based on context and prior knowledge. Rebecca, on the other hand, described her home-based reading in a way that we might refer to as transactional, but her college-based reading remained one of a reduced reader whose goal within academic reading was to select the parts of the text that were relevant to passing the assessment.

Luttrell & Parker (2001, p. 239) state: 'students' recruitment into, and experience of being in, vocational or academic courses shape how they make meaning of everyday literacy practices'. For Tom, before studying at college his early perceptions of what constitutes an academic person prevented him from experimenting with certain forms of text. As he progressed through his Multimedia courses, his literacy practices around learning multimedia in and out of the classroom and his vernacular practices blended together. Over time, he developed an active role in constructing his knowledge, learning and text. There were no border literacies for us to find because there were no borders. However, there is still the question of how much Tom's experience was chance. Before becoming a practitioner researcher within the project, Martin had not been aware of the complex rich and varied practices his students were engaging in at home.

In contrast, for Rebecca the literacy practices around both learning and assessment were academic literacy practices, which were removed from her vernacular practices and passions. Her experience of her vocational learning in college was one where meaning and knowledge came as a set of fixed ideas to be learned by rote, rather than constructed through her literacy practices. For her, there was no evidence of border literacies because for her the two domains were too distinct. Neither she nor her teacher saw any potential for overlap. Nevertheless, like Tom, despite continuing to see the two domains as separate worlds, her involvement made her more aware of her existing literacy practices and broadened her understanding of literacy. As argued by Ivanic et al (2004), there would appear to be a requirement to help Rebecca construct border crossings.

The next phase of the research project will focus on changes of practice that the practitioner researchers decide to implement within

their curricular areas. The insights and findings from the Phase 2 data will be drawn upon to decide what changes to make. These changes will not necessarily be radical, such as the complete rewriting of a course of study, but may include refining which literacies are assumed, which are expected to be picked up through participation and which are explicitly taught. Some of these changes of practice will be reported in due course.

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