

English classroom reading practices frequently enact unacknowledged narratological theories (Willinsky, 1998). In turn, these pedagogies construct particular kinds of readers and privilege particular texts and textual practices (Kelly, 1997). This feigned atheoretical stance inhibits the development of more engaging pedagogical practices in the employment and appreciation of literature in reading instruction. Nor does the use of narrative theories have to be limited to academically high-achieving students or students in upper secondary grades (Thomson, 1992; Appleman, 2000). Because, English “is the subject which is concerned with the means for representing ourselves, our meanings, values and ideals to ourselves and to others,” the work of English teachers may be imagined as “making available to students the means for understanding the representations of others--whether in the past or the present--and then rendering them significant for [them]selves” (Kress, 1996, p. 4).

Taming Textual Cats

Textual cats can be found everywhere. Even the friendliest textual tabby is, in the end, wild. And, like any cat will not stay put very long, running off to go about its own business, even when we patiently and kindly attempt to domesticate it. One place where we work hardest to tame them is in classrooms, where we insist all cats look alike and compelled them to behave in predictable ways. Sometimes they comply, but often they don't. Sadly, some of our efforts to ensure their conformity borders on animal cruelty. But, if you befriend them, like Alice's famous textual cat, they can be quite illuminating about the world we happen to find ourselves in. And, when the purr and choose to cuddle, well... it's bliss.

Debates about what texts and textual practices are best have historically and academically shaped English education. Outside the classroom, when we engage in argue about what why that movie was good or not, why one author is a better writer than another, why we think this website is interesting... echoes of these debates—how they position us as

we position other through their employment—may be heard. What happens in English classrooms has always been an ‘interested’ practice reflecting larger social concerns of legitimation. Activities have been developed to expose the ‘interestedness’ of readers’ responses to text. Again, some of these have been published by Calkface Press.

Within the context of Britain and North America, the oldest traditions of the teaching of English found taught a form of literacy based on classical notions of rhetoric (Hunter, 1994). In this tradition, students were trained in the specialized genres of the church, the law, etc. A traditional canon of literature was taught. Christie (1993) has termed this the “received tradition” of English. Today’s English classrooms have been profoundly influenced by four theorists: Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, Louise Rosenblatt, and Northrop Frye (Willinsky, 1991). According to Willinsky (1991), Arnold represents the classical education of the grammar school, Leavis the tradition of ethical formation, Frye the great themes and myths of the literary canon, and Rosenblatt the aesthetic experience. Willinsky uses these four epistemic individuals, then, to encapsulate the conflicts that have existed in English teaching in the past century. Applebee (1990) notes that much of this conflict is resolved in schools through tracking programs in which “lower ability” students focus on the skills and ethical formation and “high ability” students focus on more classical and aesthetic approaches.

Bill Corcoran (1990) presents six historical relationships between texts, readers and teachers which conform in many respects to Willinsky’s analysis. In so far as each of these perspectives is seen as ways of acquiring knowledge of the world or of oneself, they are implicated in issues of power. What counts as knowledge, what is worth knowing, and how knowledge is presented can be focused on issues related to texts. Traditional literacies view texts as important cultural carriers of truth and beauty. Progressive literacies focus not on

the text so much as on the reader and writer of the text. "What texts mean and how they are used are fought over by communities with distinctly different commitments and by teachers and students as well" (Apple, 1993, p. 46). Such conflicts are about basic values: what is the common good? What is society like? What should be our future? How students engage these texts can reproduce existing forms of social regulation and exploitation or can explore alternative, more equitable, ways of imagining the world. This can be done when teachers and students interrogate their partial, tentative, varied, and particular responses to texts.

O'Neill's (1991) study of Western Australian classrooms found that traditional and progressive discourses are contested in schools. Both assume that the classroom is a neutral site. O'Neill argues that student response to texts is constructed; they become disposed in the particular uses of texts at the exclusion of others just as they learn about which texts are valuable and which are not. Consequently, reading is a maturing within contesting discourses about literacy, whether this discourse is a traditional or progressive view of what it means to be literate.

O'Neill notes six common and problematic textual practices found in classrooms. The deliberate nature of how text structure is taught, the insistence on the reliability of narrative voice, how characters behaviors are normalized, the overlooking of how readers are positioned by the text, how coherency and consistency of the reader's response is prized and how the text is compatible with cultural values work together to perpetuate preferred, single readings of any text (O'Neill, 1991, 86-87).

Purves (1993) notes that reading and writing in school must be defined as happening within a "legitimate context that differs from other contexts in which literature might be found. It would be futile to seek to make school like the world outside school when it cannot be: school exerts its own reality and influences the ways in which a particular subject

(mathematics) or activity (writing) is construed" (Purves, 1993, p. 351). But Purves also contends that contexts change the physical, attitudinal and intentional ways in which we read and write, and that schooling sets up discourses about what habits of mind to employ, what to do and what to say about reading and writing. Values concerning literature, literacy and society are developed. Learning academic discourses affects teachers' and students' dispositions which impinge on their lives outside schools.

Scholes (1997) and others (Graff, 1996) recognize the contested nature of English and those fields that intersect with it. In rethinking English teaching, Scholes argues he is trying to avoid the tendency "to circle the wagons around a very narrow definition of literature that corresponds to a very specialized mode of reading, ...ignoring the teaching of writing as a potential disciplinary core ...to ratify the domination of rhetoric by literature" (Scholes, 1998, p. 179). Gerald Graff writes that exposing the conflicts that shape the teaching of English is not a form of relativism. "The curriculum is *already* a shouting match and it can only become a more antagonistic one if we do not find more productive ways to engage our differences" (Graff, 1996, p. 138).

Luke (2004) argues that to respond to 21st Century material and discourse conditions, teachers need to pull from a variety of disciplines including linguistics, English literature(s), cultural studies, sociology, semiotics, multi-literacies, and media and communications studies. Referring to his research in Singapore he noted that there where there was less of a clear-cut knowledge/pedagogy, content/practice distinctions in English teaching than for mathematics and science. He notes that "many of the teacher standards in our discussions were curious amalgams of knowledge drawn from linguistics, literary theory, and instructional psychology (for example, "can select and introduce genre to teachers," "can assess background knowledge and choose appropriate texts for learner comprehension")

(91). Stating that “English is both subject and object, *lingua franca* and corpus, instructional medium and message,” Luke contends that,

I have argued here that debates over method, over lists of skills and texts, cannot be resolved without a strong normative rethinking and redirection of English education. We need to ask where it has been, the limits and lessons of that history, and how it can be reshaped in relation to new material and cultural conditions—a task not unlike that called for by Raymond Williams (1961) well over a quarter-century ago. To examine and understand the optimal ways of shaping and teaching English, that debate should enlist knowledge and insights from a range of fields: cultural studies in all of its variants; communications and media. (Luke, 2004, 87)

Skinning textual cats in Singapore

The research done in CRPP’s Core project has provided a comprehensive, large-scale, empirical and interpretive, quantitative and qualitative baseline picture of the Singapore school system. It provides a critical social science evidence base for educational innovation, with an explicit focus in its design and philosophy on the everyday practices of classroom pedagogy as well as on the intellectual and discourse work of teachers and students in classrooms. By focusing on teaching and learning, knowledge and discourse, the Core is structured such that research can be constructed around situated responses to local institutional and cultural contexts. Over 200 of Singapore’s 320 schools have participated in the Core project to date.

This research yielded several findings relevant to any discussion the English teaching is Singapore (Luke 2005). Setting aside the systemic problems related to poverty and non-English-speaking background as strong predictors of low achievement in the early years in Singaporean education, with regard to pedagogy, teacher threshold knowledge in mathematics and science is generally adequate, but there are apparent gaps in English and Social Studies that warrant close attention. In Singapore all textual cats appear to be the same colour and are skinned in the same fashion.

The dominant direct instruction model at work in Singaporean classrooms can be linked to improved standardised achievement test scores as measured in short answer and multiple-choice instruments in specific curriculum areas (e.g., Maths, Science) but not others (e.g., English). Most teachers seem unable or not inclined to digress or deviate from the 'curricular script' to broader discussions and engagement over world knowledge, rich disciplinary/field knowledge and prior knowledge. Teachers and students focus talk and activity on curriculum content, variously defined. Classrooms do not provide frequent opportunities for sustained discussion, debate and student exposition. Teachers and students focus talk and activity on curriculum content, variously defined. On the whole, teachers do not set intellectually rich or cognitively demanding tasks in classrooms, which in turn has impacts on the quality and depth of student-produced artefacts. And, teachers appear to have limited capacity to generate local, school-based curriculum that is developmentally coherent and responsive to students' needs. Importantly, direct instruction does not appear to produce student work of intellectual depth (e.g., sustained prose or speech, creative work, critical analysis, complex projects).

More specifically, in terms of secondary school English pedagogy, Core research highlights several key findings. Teachers conducting answer checking and whole class lectures largely dominate classroom activity in English at the Secondary 3 level. There is little evidence of sustained discussion, student exposition or active debates in the English classrooms. Furthermore, the higher-than-average incidences of groupwork in the classrooms are used more for managing the students rather than as a resource for group discussions, distributed/social knowledge building or dialogic activities. With the systemically high level of curriculum talk (English at 69.5%) in Singaporean classrooms, one has to wonder the utility of groupwork as a mechanism of regulation and management. It appears

that group discussions are just another form of classroom activity that serves to break the routine teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge and to even give teachers some reprieve from their whole class lecture and answer checking.

The pedagogical profile for knowledge classification in Secondary school English paints a picture of strongly classified subject teaching aimed at basic knowledge, often taken as unproblematic and the 'truth' by the teacher who is the main source of knowledge, with the expectation that students would reproduce what the teacher imparts to them. The subject matter is highly mono-disciplinary with little attempt to make English more interdisciplinary or intertextual. Considering the inherently interpretative nature of the English subject matter (or other humanities), the low level of interpretation of knowledge and comparison of knowledge implies that students are often expected to produce answers or knowledge that is required of them.

The overall pattern of pedagogical practice in Secondary school English therefore has the following characteristics:

- Monodisciplinary with teacher-centred social interaction
- Explicit pedagogy with strong orientation to traditional and direct instruction
- Focus on basic skills, facts, memorisation and knowledge transmission
- Assessment tasks that reinforce focus on basic knowledge and skills
- Quality of student work which were rated as neither highly authentic nor cognitively demanding
- Strong relationship between quality of teachers' assessment tasks and quality of student work – 'what you test is what you get'
- Thresholds in higher order, critical and advanced knowledge

The last characteristic leads Luke (2005) to hypothesise that there is a 'threshold/floor' effect in Singapore pedagogy that has produced a powerful and sustainable foundation (floor) of basic skills and factual knowledge for the majority of students, as evidenced by high scores on standardized achievement outcomes and international benchmarks. However, this strong and systematic pedagogical focus on explicit and direct pedagogy has

unintentionally produced a ceiling on higher order, critical, advanced and creative knowledges, capacities, competences and proficiencies.

Learning to Skin Textual Cats: There is more than one way...

Teachers' narrative competence is a neglected aspect in professional development for improving students' literacy. Pedagogies based upon identifying, understanding, interpreting, creating and communicating rest on this essential and fundamental competence (Dobson 2005). As Ong argues, "Narrative is paramount among all verbal art forms because it underlies so many other art forms, often even the most abstract" (Ong 1982: 140).

Consequently, "Learning to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate narratives with plots, that are... potentially multi-accented, multi-directional and multi-punctual will be essential to an enhancement of literacy" (Dobson 2005: 2). Texts make sense in the acts of interpretation and explication, making competing readings possible through the analysis of its (inter)textual coherence and fidelity to personal/psychological/historical/cultural/ social/gendered ways of being in the world. It is through the use of intertextual referencing and indexing by both teachers and students that texts become relevant and pertinent to learning.

Bernstein (2004) argues that narrative competency is connected to all pedagogic practice. Teachers can guide students in what he calls the 'rhythm of narrative'.

Narratologically and textually rich classroom discussions and tasks promote more elaborated codes whereas those that concentrate on specific operations foster low-level skills.

Developing narrative and textual competence through an

...emphasis on identifying, understanding and interpreting 'relationships, processes, connections' ...becomes connected with an awareness of the codes that can be used to understand specific subjects and what it means to become competent or skilled in them. ...Bernstein's emphasis on codes highlights how the codes adopted by the teacher in an educational situation can invite the making of narrative connections between events, or the

opposite. Put differently, the codes exert an influence upon both the opportunity to construct or interpret narratives and the kind of socio-cultural teacher-student relations used to communicate these relations (Dobson, 2004: 8).

In descriptions of quality teaching, narrative has also been used as a tell-tale sign of pedagogies that can generate significance and lead to improved student achievement by connecting students' prior knowledge and identities, and contexts outside the classroom, with the intellectual demands of their school learning. This feature of connected learning [coded in the Singapore scheme as weaving of various kinds (Luke, Cazden, Lin, and Freebody, (2005))] was found sorely lacking in the CORE study of Singapore classrooms as well as similar large-scale studies in Queensland and New South Wales (Lingard et al 2000, NSW Department of Education 2003). The use of narrative as a pedagogical tool for opening up access to the more formal, specialized expository prose forms suited to, and highly valued in, the communication of scientific knowledge, abstraction and critical analysis has been advocated widely especially for non-mainstream and working-class learners (e.g. Davies 1993, Harris and Malin 1994, Shor 1996), for whom they may be more appropriate and powerful modes of expression. Likewise, poststructuralist feminist and critical educators have advocated student biographies and narrative accounts as crucial ways of making space for student 'voice' in the classroom and thereby empowering especially silenced and marginalised students.

Egan (1989, 1997) goes as far as to make the argument for the universal value of narrative and story form as an important strategy for teaching and learning in general, and particularly for scientific and moral education. What is unique about Egan's argument is his emphasis on narrative not just as selected curriculum content, but also as a significant instructional approach in classroom interaction. In his view, while narrative may be part of some specific curriculum areas in school, its value goes far beyond: in subjects where most

of the knowledge is more formal and the language expository, narrative can link students into formal knowledge, as a means of building the significance of the students' learning.

Narratological competence is therefore necessary in order to engage effectively with all genres or writing and representation. The study of literature has traditionally emphasised interpretation while reading comprehension emphasised primitive narrative skills with a move towards more sophisticated expository skills. Narrative and exposition need not be treaded as generically separate—the evolution of appreciation and the production of stories towards narrative maturity may coincide with the development of expository competence.

As Anne DiPardo points out:

Narrative and exposition may grow to be separate modes of thought and language (Bruner 1984) which reflect correspondingly distinct modes of cognitive processing (Olson et. al. 1981) and evaluation (Crowhurst 1980), but this needn't obscure their common genesis and enduring status as parts of an interrelated cognitive whole (DiPardo 1989: 13).

For example, sensitivity to audience or getting distance to consider events rather than simply outlining characters and plots develops students' facility to work with factual texts. Langer's (1985) study of third-graders' abilities to distinguish between and produce both explanatory and narrative prose contradicts commonly held beliefs that the ability to work with exposition emerges later and more slowly in students. Earlier, Labov and Waletzky (1967) argue that discourse production arises not simply from cognitive growth, but from a developing grasp of the real-world functions towards which language can be employed. Polkinghorne (1988: 146) argues that the "understanding of human expression of existence can produce far more authentic and useful descriptions for a science of the human realm." This case, that narrative forms the social and cognitive foundation for knowledge across the disciplines, is reiterated by Green et. al. (2002).

Importantly, students' ability to explore and develop possible narrative connections, understandings and analyses are dependent on teachers' pedagogical practices that afford students rich opportunities to work with texts. Experience in the merit of employing teachers' reading circles in their professional development has been documented extensively. Professional organizations such as the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) in the United States of America promote teachers' book groups. The NCTE's (1998) position statement recommending the *Teachers as Readers Project* states that it "helps teachers encourage students to become lifelong readers" arguing that, "when teachers read and enjoy quality literature with confidence, they contribute to the rich, literate environment of classrooms." Commeyras et. al. (2003) likewise document the success of these groups in changing teachers' lives as they come to better understand their own reading habits and in their classrooms as they impart their reading practices to their students. Tercanlioglu (2001) studied Turkish pre-service EFL teachers who did not describe themselves as very competent readers. As a result of their participation in a reading group, she found that they believed that good reading teachers should themselves be good readers.

In his discussion on developing readers' imaginations, Sumara's (1996) theory of embodied learning acknowledges that all 'knowing subjects' come to know through perceptually guided action. From this perspective, learning is more directed toward abilities to perceive relationships, to interpret connections between biological, social, political, cultural bodies, and to recognise usable insights. As a result, intelligence is not just the ability to remember and represent predetermined facts and ideas. Instead, intelligence is the learned ability to interpret useful relations between and among what is remembered, what is currently perceived, and what is imagined (Deacon 1997, Richardson 1999). Sumara argues therefore that intelligence accommodates us to the particularity of a situation, and assists us

in accessing diverse information and skills to meet new and unfamiliar challenges (Sumara 1996). Sumara (2002) argues further that the reader's response to a text becomes an important and interesting cultural artefact. Prompted by a text, the act of developing understanding through reading must always be considered evidence of how the reader's sense of mind, self, collectivity and intelligence are formed and represented. Along with Iser (1993, 2000), Sumara describes reading and reading pedagogy as a kind of literary anthropology. Like artefacts excavated from an archaeological dig, the response to reading is sedimented within aspects of the reader's person and a much wider set of cultural and social relationships. He proposes pedagogy where students conduct research on how reading provokes different associations, responses and conclusions evolved over time to understand the complexity of their reader/text/context relationships. Freire (1970) and Rosenblatt (1978) have helped us to understand that reading is not only decoding and interpreting printed texts—reading is the act of continually noticing and interpreting links between and among different “bodies” that fully comprise our experience of the world.

Beach (1993) demonstrates that teachers may broaden their personal reading practices and pedagogy by understanding and applying reader response theories and criticism to their teaching. Applebee (1994) maintains that part of the curriculum's primary objective should be the enhancement and maintenance of the conversational feature of culture. Applebee and his colleagues advocate a view of curriculum that creates a domain for culturally significant conversations into which we want our students to be able to enter. Applebee's aim, which demonstrates how, narratological theorizing has influenced English curriculum development, is to uphold a key principle: that content which does not invoke further conversation is of no interest; it is dead as well as deadly. Piem (1993), Pirie (1997), Morgan (1997), and Appleman (2000), Barrell and Hammett (2004), are exemplary of

Beach's and Applebee's aims to improve and enrich literacy education. Mellor and Patterson (2004) illustrate the effects of a more substantive classroom practice when critical engagement with theories about language and meaning are promoted. (See their earlier work: Mellor, O'Neill and Patterson (1992) and in their Chalkface Press publications for teachers (<http://www.chalkface.net.au/cfbook2.html>)).

Imparting narratological and literary competences to students can help classrooms become sites of constructive and interactive activity where students approach texts with curiosity, authority, initiative and criticality. Such literate repertoires consequently reflect the range of classroom practices offered to students. Effective literacy pedagogies engage students in activities that promote their capacity to recognizing and using fundamental features and architecture, including alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, and structural conventions and patterns, as code breakers; understand meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts, through prior knowledge and experiences, as text makers; know and act on the varied functions that texts do and understand that these functions shape texts, as text users; know that how texts are written, read and mean is not natural or neutral, and needs to be questioned and refashioned, as text critics (Freebody and Luke 1990) These capacities can be taught and access to different kinds of educative experiences is both a symptom and a cause of literacy performance. Carrington and Luke (1997) argue that literacy education can make a substantial contribution to transforming the social distribution of knowledge, discourse, and, with these, real economic and social capital among specific communities, groups, and individuals. Ultimately, schooled literate abilities can be evaluated for their capacity to reflect the breadth of an individual's or community's repertoire of literacies, the depth and degree of control of these literate practices and the degree to which they can be extended and developed (Freebody 1992).

An Intervention in Textual Cat Skinning

Or

Changing Civil Servants to English Teachers

In Singapore, as a consequence of the research done at CRPP, new educational reform and intervention projects have been initiated to focus on shifting the threshold effect noted above, through various innovative practices and restructuring processes that tweak the current mode of pedagogical practice. These practices include shifts towards implicit/indirect pedagogy, alternative modes of assessment, integrated programmes, and so on. The overall aim of such projects, including the one described in this paper, is to “change, alter and shift the cognitive, intellectual, social and cultural outcomes patterns” (Luke 2005: 8) via alternative approaches that mobilize different cognitive and social processes.

The Building Teachers’ Narrative and Textual Capacities intervention project is comprised of two stages scheduled over a period of two years, with a strong research focus on building teachers’ capacities in the first stage and a subsequent shift to improving students’ outcomes in the second stage. In the first stage of the project, the research team will work with teachers who will share their planning, curricular design, and assessment practices while participating in a reading circle that focuses on personal response to contemporary Singaporean literature. Later, the reading circle will take up non-fictional and professional texts. Both print and multimodal texts will be explored. The project’s initial aim is:

- To improve teachers’ understanding of textuality and textual interpretation and explication.
- To develop teachers’ capacity to design curriculum and pedagogy with special focus on narratology, textuality and student response.

Building teachers' narratological and textual capacity and developing a wider repertoire of related assessment and instructional practices, the project's ultimate goals are:

- To improve student performance and engagement as a consequence of teachers' improving narratological and textual capacity in their personal and professional reading practices.
- To promote teachers' collaboration to sustain ongoing professional growth in curriculum design and assessment within this focus.

The intervention proposes the following research questions:

- What are the teachers' capacities for curriculum design and pedagogy with respect to reading and textual practices? How do these change as a consequence of their participation in a personal and professional reading circle?
- What are the discourses about textual interpretation and explication that occur in reading-circle read and in the classrooms? How do these change as a consequence of their participation in a personal and professional reading circle?
- The shift from monologic to polyphonic communication typically entails a proliferation of possible conflicting viewpoints and opinions. How well do teachers handle diversity of opinion and multiple perspectives, in the teacher reading-circle and in the classrooms? How do they encourage pluralism? How do they manage disagreements in respectful ways?
- What are the changes and effects that occur in classroom practices as teachers change and build up their narratological and textual knowledge?
- What are the changes and effects that occur in both the ways teachers talk about texts and read texts as they build up their narratological and textual knowledge?
- How does student performance and engagement change as a consequence of teachers' improving narratological and textual capacity in their personal and professional reading practices? As teachers begin to integrate the practices that have been learned from the project into the classroom, this final research question will serve as a basis for the second stage (Year 2) which will seek to improve student performance and engagement through intervening at the pedagogical, curriculum and assessment level.

Luke (2005:1) defined interventions as “systematic, structured attempts to generate desired or preferred change in the core business of curriculum, teaching and learning and thereby to shift patterns of educational outcomes and effects.” Accordingly, the central task of our intervention must be about:

- Building and expanding teacher capacities and repertoires,

- Examining the complexities of modifying the enacted curriculum, and suggesting ways to improve the curriculum-in-use,
- Understanding potential mis-alignment or tensions between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy with regards to the subject matter of English, and
- Developing new pedagogies that will prepare students for the globalising workplace socially, cognitively and critically.

The project is directly related to a number of strands and themes as indicated in the CRPP Research and Intervention Strategy Plan. The building and expansion of teachers' narratological and textual capacities have direct consequences for engaging students as readers and learners, engendering a deep understanding and appreciation of textual practices for both teachers and students, improving social participation from students as well as teachers as critical aspects of texts are brought to bear on their life worlds, encouraging and building a socially inclusive community of readers and text users while respecting their diverse backgrounds, engaging teachers to practice reflective pedagogy, and helping teachers to align pedagogical processes through increased capacities, ownership, and improved repertoires. After all, the reforms and interventions are geared towards not just shifting the threshold effect, but more broadly and systemically, it is an attempt to redress a classic educational problem that was highlighted more than a hundred years ago by Dewey (1902): to re-balance the heavy emphasis and loading of the 'old' dominant education as against 'new' and emergent education (Luke 2005):

Old Education	New Education
Excellence at the Top	Improvement for All
Rote Reproduction	Autonomous, Independent Thought
Respect for Authority, Teachers, Traditions	Critique, Originality, Creativity
Examination, Test Product Orientation	Learning In and For Itself
Risk Aversion	Risk Taking

Instrumental Knowledge	Theoretical, Abstract and Creative Knowledge
Scientific and Technical Knowledge	Aesthetic and Creative Knowledge
Expository Knowledge and Texts	Narrative Knowledge and Texts
Top Down Curriculum Design	Localised Curriculum Redesign

The dialectic tension between new and old forms of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment and the attempts to negotiate, mediate and productively utilise such tensions are manifested in the policy and intervention levers at system and local levels. For pedagogy, for example, there is a need to expand teacher pedagogical repertoire, which increasingly depends on their sense of ‘freedom’ to engage in local curriculum development and classroom innovation. This requires opening of the curriculum, a release of control to schools and teachers to manage what counts as relevant and important to their students, and the consequent partial decoupling from assessments. For curriculum, there is a need not just to reduce curriculum content, but to build new curriculum design principles that focus on local curriculum redesign, enhanced pedagogy, formative and developmental assessment and social/cognitive outcomes. Professional development is another focal point especially with regards to teacher threshold content knowledge. As Luke (2005) highlighted, the central issue with CRPP interventions must be about teacher capacities, the complexities of modifying the enacted curriculum and the need to develop new pedagogies that will prepare students for the globalising workplace socially, cognitively and critically.

The Building Teachers’ Narrative and Textual Capacities intervention project will gather descriptions of key texts, including syllabi, schemes of work, textbooks in use, student work, and teacher interviews, and literacy practices, via systematic, sustained classroom observation in a range of secondary school learning contexts, for English. A series of

collaborative inservice teacher development workshops and reading circles for teachers, with the specific purpose will be provided. These workshops will focus on improving teachers' use of multiple perspectives to understand textuality, intertextuality and textual interpretation and explication, developing teachers' capacity to design curriculum and pedagogy with a focus on narratology, textuality and student response, promoting teachers' collaboration to sustain ongoing professional growth in curriculum design, assessment and implementation, and building towards repertoires and capacities to improve student performance and engagement, as a direct consequence of teachers improving their abilities to use narratology in their personal reading practices. The intervention project will study teacher participants' responses to the first stage of the intervention project and the local, contextual feedback on the implementation of textual and narratological practices in Singapore schools. A set of recommendations resulting from the study of the effectiveness of this stage of the intervention project will be made and participating teachers will be invited to co-author mini action-research project papers.

Research associated with this intervention will employ interpretive research methodologies, drawing on critical reading practices (Wallace 2003), multiple perspectives on critical literary theories (Appleman 2000, Tyson 2001), classroom discourse analysis (Cazden 2001), and on principles of participatory action-research (see Wells 2001), turn-around pedagogies (Kamler and Comber 2005) and 'understanding by design' (Wiggins and McTighe 2000).

A structural emphasis on building teacher communities (Wineburg and Grossman 1998) frames both first and second stages of this intervention. The researchers' commitment to: the importance of extended and intensive observation and interviews, the need to sustain a productive, collaborative partnership with participating schools and teachers, where their

standpoints and perspectives are valued, the need to involve the teachers in the process of knowledge building and improvement of social practices at every phase of the project—an experience which will enable them to continually clarify, reflect upon, and refine their teaching practice even when the project has been completed, and the recognition that each institutional site is in some ways unique in its context, population and history. Any effective intervention has to be worked out collectively in a way that is appropriate to local conditions.

An implicit assumption about professional communities is that they are often generic, but the nature of such communities differs by level, by subject matter, by student population; a model of community developed for one population of teachers may not necessarily work for others. The most developed frameworks for teacher community originated in primary mathematics (Wilson & Berne 1999). At the core of this kind of teacher community is the assumption that teachers cannot teach concepts they themselves have never mastered. Adult learning in such projects requires learning the workings of fractions and understanding various mathematical concepts for primary mathematics. Primary school teachers are not assumed to possess extensive mathematical knowledge (and in Singapore's case, primary teachers are often required to teach multiple subjects).

The limitations of such models become apparent when we consider the needs of secondary school teachers. Such a group may include teachers with higher degrees in their subjects and who have chosen to teach a particular subject because of their own passion for it. Such a group differs fundamentally from the prototypical primary school teacher, anxious about her own mathematical understanding. By relying primarily on the research on teacher community in primary mathematics, there is a risk of simplification and over-generalising claims about professional communities based on such frameworks. Subsequently, there is a

need to understand why primary teachers are different from secondary teachers, and why we have chosen to aim our intervention at the secondary school level.

One key difference between primary and secondary school teachers lies in the assumption of subject matter knowledge. Primary teachers are often not expected to be experts in all the subjects they teach; most will profess a preference for certain aspects of the curriculum and not others. Secondary teachers however are defined in part by the subjects that they teach. Subject matter therefore provides an important part of their professional identities as teachers (Siskin & Little 1995). Secondary school teachers whose identities are invested in their subject matter expertise might perceive the assumption that teachers do not possess adequate content knowledge as problematic.

Teacher communities differ as well with regard to subject matter. If subject matters operate as distinct subcultures (Siskin & Little 1995), the implication is then that the sociocultural norms of the language arts and humanities differ in important ways from those in mathematics. Such norms have consequences for the various aspects that comprise a community. For example, unlike mathematics which value parsimony in terms of mathematical axioms and solutions, the humanities and language arts do not often agree on what constitutes a text or how to read a text, or how history differs from fiction for example. Discussions are often characterised by divergence rather than convergence. Rather than a single interpretation, multiple perspectives and interpretation is the ideal outcome of reading texts. Indeed, this is one of the tasks of the project.

Another important aspect of the language arts and humanities is the notion of self and identity. In literature for example, the content often invites questions of what it means to be human; our selves, our identity, and our place in society form the core of the subject. To read Catherine Lim's *Following the Wrong God Home* (Lim 2001) for example is to question

notions of identity – gender, class, religion, race, and generation—what Huntington (1993) calls the ‘fault lines’ of contemporary society. These fault lines identify the social and cultural differences that divide people. Any group of public school teachers invariably represent a microcosm of the larger society. Differences in perspective and background will emerge in the planned reading circles and if race, class, gender, religion, politics etc contribute to our identities, there is no way to avoid these fault lines in any serious discussion. It is also at the secondary school level that students begin to embody and react to these fault lines in their daily lives, and it is imperative that teachers be prepared to handle that. Another task of the project is to equip teachers to discuss such issues and to navigate the fault lines productively, both between themselves and in the classroom.

The final but important aspect of the rationale for selecting an intervention at the secondary school level is significantly linked to the English syllabus’s focus on language and literacy development. A component of the syllabus targeted by the Ministry of Education (MOE 2001) is the focus on language use for *literacy response and expression* which aims to prepare secondary school students to respond creatively and critically to literary texts, relate them to personal experiences and prior knowledge, culture and society, and use language creatively to express their selves and identities. At the heart of secondary level language and literacy learning is the need to enhance students’ ability to interpret, evaluate and develop critical literacy and reading skills. However, as our Core findings indicated in the previous section, the use of texts in classrooms are largely to extract information with very little need for interpretation or manipulation of knowledge, or even generation of knowledge new to students. We find the disparity and mis-alignment between the espoused curriculum as explicated in the Ministry’s English syllabus and the enacted curriculum to be a problematic area that needs to be addressed.

The research will be carried out in two stages. In stage one, two schools will be selected from the same Cluster and both schools are either low or middle ranked by the Ministry. Currently, we are approaching schools from the North Cluster due to a concentration of low/middle ranking schools. For each school, we will invite participation of teachers at the departmental level at Lower Secondary for English and Literature/Social Studies. The aim is to encourage all English teachers at one level to participate (e.g. Secondary 1) per school. The aim is to build a teacher community within school at one level, to be propagated later across other levels and schools.

During stage one, classroom observations not of individual snapshot lessons but of units of work extending over several weeks will be made. The focus will primarily be on curricular agenda of classroom talk, the overarching question being, 'How are language and literacy pedagogy being framed?' This classroom data will be coded using the Core Program Coding Scheme that reliably captures important features of classroom teaching and learning activities. Using Bernstein's notion of 'pedagogic discourse' (Bernstein 1996), the coding scheme looks at how knowledge is framed, that is, how the social interaction of teacher/student discourse and behaviour creates a mediating environment for working with ideas, knowledge and texts, using a range of semiotic tools and artefacts. It also looks at how knowledge is classified, focusing on the representation and scaffolding of knowledge, disciplinary framing, and depth of disciplinary concepts, knowledge reproduction, construction and critique, as well as weaving between types of knowledge (Luke et al 2005). The coding scheme will be supplemented with extensive fieldnotes. As well, The Four Resources Model, which captures the knowledge and skills associated with each resource (Ryan and Anstey 2003), will be used to interpret the data collected at this stage. Related questions also include: What are the focal points of lessons? Is there diversity or similarity in

these focal points? With regards to reading lessons, what are the reading practices? To what extent does the curriculum become more complex? Are the teachers explicitly complicating the reading lessons and if so, how? We plan to adapt the model to examine in greater detail the nature of text users and text analysts.

Semi-structured interviews on teachers' beliefs and knowledge about language and literacy pedagogy, about literacy demands in their subjects, the kinds of competencies with texts they value and feel need to be imparted, views about effective classroom strategies, tasks, their needs in light of the new syllabus, their beliefs about their own teacher capacities and their confidence in their subject matter, etc. will be conducted, as well. The objective is to use this information in the second phase to customise the workshop and reading circles and to get the teachers to examine the relationship between their knowledge and beliefs about literacy teaching and their pedagogical practice (Anstey and Bull 2003, Bull 1992). Further, semi-structured interviews about the textual practices of teachers, their reading histories, the texts they select for classrooms and why, their own personal reading habits, and their beliefs about their students' reading practices are planned. Such information will be used in the reading circles in the second phase. In the meantime, teachers will be encouraged to begin a reading journal to maintain a log of what they read during this phase. Follow up focused interviews on key lessons observed, in order to obtain specific information about pedagogy of lessons/unit as a whole will be done (Anstey and Bull 2003). These 'telling moments' will be selected to for use later in the workshops to promote critical analysis and reflection.

Using transcripts of lessons observed that centre on narratological and textual interpretation and explication and especially telling moments of particular lessons, the researchers will begin to encourage teachers to reflection of their own practices. The aim is

to position teachers as active participants and collaborators in the project, and to encourage teachers to reflectively analyse and problematise their own pedagogical practices. Teachers will be encouraged to share their own data with other teachers and discuss problems that they feel needs to be improved upon. The reflection process will provide the foundation and rationale for teachers to think about the utility of reading circles as well as customise the various reading circles to their own preferences and styles. Providing a collaborative and supportive environment for teachers via reading circles with the aim of building towards a teacher community and increasing teacher threshold knowledge and capacities for narratology and textuality is crucial to the success of the intervention.

During the first stage of this intervention the participating teachers to work with the researchers to share their planning, curriculum design and assessment practices. Syllabus objectives, schemes of work and textbooks, reading and writing tasks, student work in response will be collectively and collaboratively examined.

In preparation for the intervention's second stage the researchers will be preparing themselves to conduct the reading circles and professional development workshops. There will be intensive reading of critical literary theory, classroom discourse analysis, developing multiple perspectives. This is hoped to ensure that their capacities the professional development of the participating teachers' narratological skills and dispositions are up to the task.

Literary texts for reading circles will be chosen based on data collected in Phase 1. Research assistants will be deployed to begin reading circles after having established a collegial relationship with the participants. Teachers will be asked to read the texts and meet up biweekly for two and half hours in the school as a group to discuss texts with the researchers. Throughout, the researchers will help to scaffold the discussions and

interactions as both they and the teachers create new relationships and build their collaborative capacities. Within these circles it is hoped that a collegial group identity and norms of interaction will be formed. The reading circles will provide teachers with a shared metalanguage to talk about language/texts/genre/multiple perspectives and to talk about their pedagogical practices. Working together the goal is have teachers see that their engagement with these texts is enriched by sharing multiple and varied interpretations.

Valuing polysemic responses to shared texts requires readers to understand and appreciate difference and to be able to respectfully navigate the fault lines that arise when multiple readings are encouraged. Such pedagogy promotes movement from denial of different or fault lines to understanding and productive use of difference, which shifts teachers work from managing backstage conflict to mainstaging the negotiation of conflicting issues (Goffman 1959). Negotiating these tensions depends on developing a community of readers. Teachers must move past seeing divergent views as antagonistic to accept these tensions within the group, and, importantly, to recognize that teacher learning and student learning are fundamentally intertwined. Working in the literature circles, it is hoped that participants will come to feel a responsibility to help their colleagues learn through their sharing of their interpretations. They may come to recognise that their colleagues are resources for their own learning and reflection, and thus, develop a commitment to their collective growth.

Throughout the reading circle meetings, examination and critical analysis of transcripts of circle discussions will be ongoing by both RAs as well as participants. Teachers will be metacognitively challenged to reflect back on what is going on in the circle, their underlying assumptions about their social, cultural, educational and pedagogical beliefs, and productively discuss ways forward. Teacher participants will be invited to collaborate and

work with one another through methods such as interviewing one another, observing their own practices and reflecting on perceived problems.

As the intervention project shifts into its second stage, teachers will be asked to do initial action-research projects to find out what are their own students literacy practices. Teachers will ask students to begin tracking their own literacy histories and practices, using literacy logs. Students are encouraged to view literacy and not just text-based or book-based (Albright et al 2005). During this transition, teacher participants will focus on particular texts that directly applicable to their teaching. As well discussions and planning sessions will be held on how the practices and skills they have acquired during the reading circles can be applied in their own classrooms.

In the second stage, research will focus on the teacher participants employment of the narratological and textual knowledge, skills, and dispositions developed in the first stage of the project. Attention will be on how well these teachers are able to transfer what they've acquired through their participation in these circles. Focus will be on how they may go about encouraging their students to respond reflectively, and analytically—but also divergently—to literary and non-literary texts, both canonical and multicultural.

Narratological theory and practice can therefore provide a powerful and useful way for students to read and interpret not only literary texts but also their lives – both in and out of school. As Appleman (2000) argues:

[L]iterary theories provide lenses that can sharpen one's vision and provide alternative ways of seeing. Literary theories augment our sometimes failing sight. They bring into relief things we fail to notice. Literary theories recontextualise the familiar and comfortable, making us reappraise it. They make the strange seem oddly familiar. As we view the dynamic world around us, literary theories can become critical lenses to guide, inform, and instruct us (2000: 2).

Such narratological and textual tools that will be taught during stage one of the interventions can inform teachers' textual work with their students and provide them with multiple ways of reading their world, allowing them to view the world differently. Learning multiple ways of making sense of the world can help them adapt to the intellectual perspectives and learning styles required not just by other disciplines but by our modern and globalising society.

Im/Possibility of Skinning Textual Cats

The metaphor of skinning textual cats has some limited utility in capturing the idea the texts can and do invite multiple responses and that English teachers' work ought to develop students' facility to critically work with texts from multiple perspectives. While the idea of skinning a cat is a barbaric notion, so is the pedagogical and textual violence associated with the insistence that texts have categorical, monological meanings. Such a fundamentalist narratology is educatively limiting and fails to foster the kind of skills and dispositions students will need to work responsibly and effectively in the future. Our students—and the texts and related practices that inhabit it—reside in a world of increasing complexity. Students, no matter how academically attuned they are to the demands of the current education system, will need to develop the necessary skills and dispositions to respond to this complexity in personally and professionally efficacious ways. Some students develop these outside of school. A few are privileged to have schools and teachers that are aware of these needs. But, many are thought to be incapable of appreciating and learning from engaging with willful textual cats. Better that they given plush toys to play with instead. And, many have teachers who seem incapable of seeing textual cats for the contrary creatures they are. Some are afraid of being scratched.

The intervention outlined in this paper attempts to address the new challenges facing English education in Singapore and, one might argue, the field in globally. CRPP Core research reveals that much has been accomplished and much remains to be done to prepare future generations of Singaporean citizens to find and make a place for themselves in the world. Hawker-stall cats, after all, are textual cats, too—alert, agile, open to opportunity, discerning, and wary. And, as Luke (2004) reminds us,

Curriculum is about the narrative invention and contestation of identity, about the learning and imagining, weaving and taking apart of *bildung* and folk theory of success and failure, life project and social pathway. If indeed literacy education is by definition a historical, cultural and ideological selection, any reinvention will return to this task. But for its narratives to be credible and viable, to be told and lived with material force and consequence, will require a more grounded understanding of what is at stake for students in a new millennium, in risky economic and social environments, in possible worlds virtual and real, face-to-face and globally, lived between many cultures and languages. (94)

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CAE Reading and Use of English Part 1: Multiple Choice Cloze. For Questions 1-8, read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning. Example (0) A) straight B) common C) everyday D) conventional.

Studying Black Bears. After years studying North America's black bears in the (0) . way wildlife biologist Luke Robertson felt no closer to understanding the creatures. He realised that he had to (1) . their trust. Abandoning scientific detachment, he took the daring step of forming relationships with the animals, bringing the With a non-exam class using a pre-reading stage to generate discussion about the topic, particularly with lower levels. It is necessary to activate students' background knowledge to aid them in understanding the text. Activating schema is rewarding in the classroom, many minutes can go by as students discuss the merits of a form of transport or being famous. By employing the pre-reading stage in an exam class educators rob the students of the ability to effectively interpret the text against the questions to be answered. Multiple Choice Reading Tests Multiple Choice Test Reading Practices Cultural Bias In Testing Reading Comprehension Constructing Questions The Reader's Use of Background Information. 40 42 45 46 48. The Mismatch Between Theory, Teaching English 52 and Multiple Choice Testing. CHAPTER 3. CHAPTER.Â The methods and strategies used by the students in the process of determining correct answers and the degree of alignment with the readings privileged by the item writers were a central focus of the study. The following discussion provides a context for the research. Background to the Problem. This is a reading comprehension about the house cat. The first paragraph has historical facts about the cat specially in ancient Egypt its. The text is also about...Â The text is also about the characteristics and qualities of the cats and their senses. And how people nowadays keep them and why do they keep them. The file also has some multiple choice questions that students should choose the correct answer. The second set of questions is vocabulary. Where students should Match the adjectives on the right with the pets to express their opinion. The present printable, downloadable handout is intended for at Intermediate (B1) and Upper-intermediate (B2) level. It is aimed at practising Adjectives in English, and is useful for honing your pupils' Reading Textual literacy skills include the ability to put what is read into context, evaluate it, and challenge it, if necessary. Analyzing and responding to books, blogs, news articles, or websites through reports, debates, or persuasive or opinion essays is one way to build a student's textual literacy. Digital Literacy.Â Try these tips for integrating multiple literacies in the classroom. Create Engaging Classroom Activities. Engage in activities to promote visual literacy, such as Five Card Flickr. Provide students with five random photos or images. Ask them to write a word associated with each image, name a song that reminds them of each image, and describe what all of the images have in common. Then, invite the students to compare their answers with those of their classmates. Diversify Text Media.