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Scaffolding semogenesis: designing teacher/student interactions for face-to-face and on-line learning

From an SFL perspective, one of the most fundamental principles of ontogenesis is Painter's notion of 'guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience', a principle resonating strongly with Vygotskian inspired notions of ZPD and scaffolding. This principle informs the design of the genre-based literacy intervention projects of the so-called Sydney School, including the teaching/learning cycles developed in the Disadvantaged Schools Program and Rose's Reading to Learn. These intervention programs involve two regions of instructional discourse - the recontextualised discourse of various subject domains (e.g. history, biology, mathematics) and the recontextualised discourse of social semiotics (e.g. genre, appraisal, grammar, multimodality), with the latter positioned as a meta-semiotic perspective on the former. This has meant that teacher/student interactions have to be carefully designed, on a range of macro- to micro-scales, in order to manage the complexity of the semogenesis going on. In this talk I'll report on on-going research focusing on productive implementations of what Gibbons calls bridging discourses, taking into account the complementarity of literacy and specialist subject area teaching, in secondary and tertiary contexts, for both face-to-face and on-line negotiations.