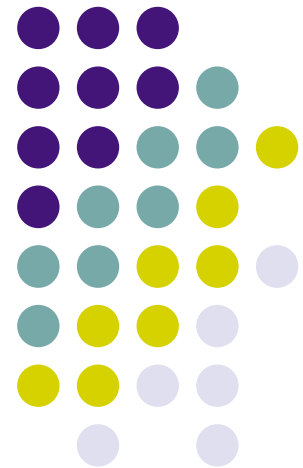


# Boys' use of cultural resources: a Bernsteinian perspective

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# Mobile learning in context: looking back to the book

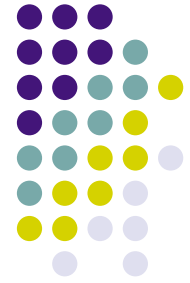


- This paper considers some key questions about research into *mobile learning* by reflecting on children's use of an older technology: the book

Key questions for children's learning:

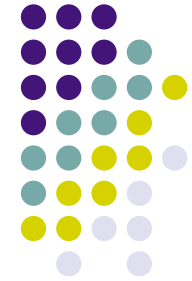
- How do children see what a technology means?
- Does “appropriation” lead to “transformation”?
- What changes, what stays the same, in and out of school?

# Research into children's learning: Structure, agency and appropriation



- Vygotsky's concept of "appropriation":
  - As they learn children enter into existing systems of knowledge and language
  - They accommodate to and also transform existing systems of knowledge and language as they make things anew
- A dialectical concept of learning in which structure and agency interact:
  - the given is the tool for the new
  - this creates tension between stasis and change

# Research into mobile learning in and out of school



- What are the existing technologies in school?
  - The old: text books; blackboard; school discursive practices predicated on old technologies; the older generation
- What are the technologies in use outside of school?
  - The new: mobile technologies; new discursive practices combining image and text in new ways; the younger generation
- What are the barriers to harnessing new technologies in old education contexts?

# Questions for research into mobile learning



Does the new reside in the technology, or in the texts or practices it supports?

- The flattening of knowledge hierarchies?
- The precedence of the visual over the written text?
- The compression of time and space?

Does the new demonstrate more agency on the part of learners than the old?

# Boys and books: Researching readers in context



Research funded by the ESRC:

- Fact and Fiction: Boys' development as readers in the 7-9 age range. 1996-8.
- Mixed Methods in the Study of Pattern and Variation in Children's Reading Habits. 2001
- Building a New Literacy Practice through the Adoption of the NLS. 2002-3

Researchers: Gemma Moss, Dena Attar, John McDonald

Published as *Literacy and Gender: Researching texts, contexts and readers*. (Moss, 2007)

# Reading and the social geography of the classroom



- Documenting reading in context: a focus on **literacy events**
- Which kinds of **texts** were getting into which kinds of **contexts** for which kinds of **readers**?
- Distinguishing between texts according to **contexts of use**





















# Findings: Three logics to reading in school



- **Procedural reading** – reading to get something else done
- **Reading for proficiency** – where how well you read becomes a matter of adult judgement
- **Reading for choice** – where children exercise most control over what and how they read. Pleasure and enjoyment are emphasised.

## *Findings:* Different groups of readers mix different aspects of school reading



The school itself has clear rules on who is entitled to access which kinds of texts

These rules vary:

- Some rules are reflected in book design e.g. fiction texts and rules of proficiency
- Boys designated weak readers play against these rules and spend most time with books whose design does not conform to “school” proficiency rules



King Harry was at the sink doing the dishes. Captain Smith was mopping the floor. Captain Jones was washing the royal shirts.



'Stop this at once,' cried Queen Norah. 'These are not jobs for a king and his captains. You should be out fighting dragons.'

'We've never seen any dragons, dear,' said the King.

'You have never even looked for them,' said Queen Norah.



# Fangs

**S**piders and venomous snakes have fangs that deliver venom into prey or predators. The fangs of snakes are very long, slender teeth with grooves or hollow centres through which the venom flows. Pit vipers, rattlesnakes, cobras, coral snakes and others have fangs at the front of their mouths. These fangs are like hypodermic needles and inject venom into the prey's bloodstream. The deadly African boomslang and other snakes have fangs at the rear of their mouths. These snakes catch prey in their mouths and push it to the back of their jaws. As they chew it with their fangs, venom flows into the bitten areas. When the venom takes effect and the prey stops struggling, the snake swallows it. The sharp, thin fangs of spiders, which pierce, hold and tear prey, are the end parts of their paired jaws, or chelicerae. When muscles in the spiders' venom glands contract, venom is injected through the chelicerae. The fangs of a funnel-web spider are particularly intimidating. Like a pair of pickaxes, they are poised, ready to strike any unsuspecting insect.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Venom can be more dangerous to some prey than to others. The eastern diamondback rattlesnake commonly eats rabbits, and its venom kills them very quickly. But this snake must inject more venom to kill an animal that is not usually on its menu.



**AND SQUEEZE**  
Eastern brown snake of Australia kills prey by injecting venom with its long fangs, or constricting with its coils. It will also strike and defend itself, and can inject enough venom to kill a human.



## STABBING FANGS

The fangs of rattlesnakes, such as this red diamondback, point forward to stab venom into their prey. While the fast-acting venom takes effect, the snake tracks down and eats its dead or dying meal.



## FATAL FANGS

The needle-sharp fangs of a red-back spider puncture and hold its prey while the paralyzing venom begins to work.

## FOLD-AWAY FANGS

Vipers and pit vipers, which includes adders and rattlesnakes, have the most efficient fangs of all the venomous snakes. When not in use, these very large fangs fold neatly away in the roof of the snake's mouth and are covered by a flap of skin. But when the snake opens its mouth, the flap is pulled back and the fang springs forward and strikes. Pressure on the storage area forces venom down a duct to the fang and into the snake's victim.

Mouth closed; fangs back



Mouth open; fangs forward



## VENOM SACS

The funnel-web's venom is stored in a pair of glands, or sacs, at the base of the fangs. When the spider bites, venom flows from the glands through ducts that end in a small hole at the tip of the fangs.



## FUNNEL-WEB FANGS

Australia's deadly funnel-web spider has two sharp fangs at the front of its head, or cephalothorax. This spider raises its head to attack and stabs its prey by moving its head down, with the fangs pointed downward. In many other kinds of spiders, the fangs are rotated to face each other. They move from side to side in a pincing action.

# From books back to new technologies



- The social world sets boundaries round texts, contexts and the social relationships between their users
- Boundaries can be contested and redrawn as well as upheld. This process is ongoing.
- As new technologies enter old settings they can hide or exacerbate as well as re-order existing tensions
- Agency alone is not enough to demonstrate what needs to change



## Conclusion:

- In the “telling case” I outline above children appropriate different aspects of the logic that underpins the reading curriculum and use it in different ways. These acts of appropriation cannot be sufficiently understood if they are only or always valorised as signs of agency. Agency in itself is not necessarily oppositional, nor can it be harnessed in straightforward ways. Rather the diverse forms that appropriation take in this context point to something else: that agency is often mobilised to reconcile competing influences, and that it highlights dilemmas that underpin action in the social world.