

EDUC 172 – Part 2-01

Reading a good book. I'll read to you.

The first classes of ecophilosophical approaches may therefore be referred to as instrumental non-human value theory.

However, many people including many ecophilosophers philosophers, would probably prefer the term instrumental environmental value theory since they are used to referring to the non-human world by employing the term environment in the anthropocentric sense of "all that is external to or that surrounds the human world".

And which there follows a very small 1. As an academic reader, I know that "1" tells me to go look add a footnote, part of the genre, a genre marker of academic texts.

So why don't I do that. And when I go back to the academic texts are footnoted here, I see it says, 1: The Collins English Dictionary, for example, lists this common anthropocentric sense of environment before the more precise ecological (non anthropocentric) sense of the word and here it's quoted "environment and 1: External conditions or surroundings, especially those in which people live or work, like this one.

2: Ecology, the external surroundings in which a plant or animal lives, which tend to influence its development and behavior."

After which he has a bracketed statement emphasis added in bracket.

As we can see the footnote is a convention; it's a genre convention; it's a convention of writing in academic texts which allows you to elaborate a little more on something that you've made passing reference to in the text itself.

So a footnote in this case is also giving us a different kind of information, information written in a different genre that is a dictionary definition, as its own genre of presenting information.

And he continues, I'll just read you a little more... Either way, we may refer to this class of ecophilosophical approaches simply as instrumental value theory as long as we bear in mind that what is being referred to is the value of the non-human world. And in that sentence he's clarified and provided the definition, a way to help us understand how he's using the term and how we can better get a grip on the discussion or discourse that surrounds these kinds of environmentalist and ecological practices.

That's reading to you from Warwick Fox's "Toward a transpersonal ecology: Developing new foundations for environmentalism".

That's important because environment has a lot to do with academic reading. When students are beginning to encounter difficult academic texts, and they tend to encounter a great many of them, when they're entering secondary school subjects.

They encounter text each that use language in specific ways to convey very particular meanings and as you can see in the passage I read they're being very precise in the way they wish to use the terminologies of that discipline.

One thing students need to do is to not only grapple with all the different challenges that they have in terms of workload but also the challenges they have just around reading and comprehending.

The challenges students face with academic reading are more complex simply than acquiring the language. Second language acquisition theorist Jim Cummins has stated that cognitive academic language proficiency or CALP as it's called for short can take up to five to seven years to develop in students to the point where they are fluent enough to deal with complex academic texts.

Even if they appear to have verbal fluency, which he would call basic interpersonal communication skills within a language, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're ready to deal with the range of text books and academic print matter that they will encounter as they go through the secondary subjects.

And so we need to pay very close attention to the ways that students are coping with the kinds of texts we're using to teach.

One of the important aspects of becoming fluent with academic language and able to not only engage with it and comprehend it but also to become a contributor to that particular field of discourse, one of the most essential components is reading.

It's very difficult to acquire the specialized kinds of language and language use within the disciplines unless one does sustained reading. And so a sustained and constant practice at reading is very important in becoming academic language proficient.

What's important about some of this is again that we need to consider the environment in so far as students need the opportunity to practice reading and to gain that one-to-one familiarity with the texts.

And an environment that allows them and even provides them the wherewithal to spend time reading, whether or not being challenged to do other things, sometimes it's quiet time, but even in a noisy environment we are able to develop a relationship with a text to the point that we can learn and shut out external stimuli.

You can see that we're having that right now.

In the nineteen thirties, an American reading theorist Louise Rosenblatt posited a certain model of reading that changed the prior perception that meaning was really something that was entirely within the writer's domain and that the reader was simply going to the text to get the writer's meaning.

Louise Rosenblatt challenged that notion with a notion of transactionalism and in transactionalism there's a transaction of meaning across, through the text, between the reader and the writer.

And that each of these different components of reading comprehension mutually influence the construction of meaning. Therefore the reader brings a meaning to the text as does the writer and through the text they transact a deeper understanding.

This really brings about the idea that there really is no one single reading of any text, that a text's meaning is constructed and it's a collaborative construction.

All of the understandings that the reader bring it brings to the text are as influential in the meaning that is taken away as what the writer has intended. And the text itself, as we've seen in the example I read to you, holds many different intertextual references as well. In this case referencing a footnote which then references another kind text, the dictionary and that case another genre in order to support and develop its own textual sense of meaning.

So there's also been key work that demonstrates that as a part of becoming fluent in those transactions of meaning, we need the kind up space which allows us to get good at that.

Another theorist from the nineteen-thirties in America Shirley Brice Heath did a long study comparing different communities in a similar geographical area of America. They were different by class and culture and she pointed to the simple practice of bedtime reading, that is reading to children when they go to bed, as being an early indicator of their later success in dealing with school level readings, especially as subjects became more complex and they dealt with more academic language.

So the more we are familiar with and learn to develop reading habits and behaviors at an early age the more successful it seems that students will be when later dealing with all kinds of difficult reading material.

These ideas have also been fleshed out in current reading theory with a sense of how the role of society really influences our practices and the ways we engage our types of behaviors that we have around reading.

It's important of course to model reading as much as we can for our students, that our students get a lot out of our taking the time to read and to share with them our processes of reading to make those things explicit.

So following through a text and being able to ask questions in the present is very important as well as we'll see a part of what the model of text that I'm presenting you here with is one in which the reader is bringing ideas in helping to co-construct meaning so their questions become essential to what the meaning of that text ultimately is the one they take away.

Some of these theories are even based in earlier work done by the social constructivists in the nineteen twenties in Russia like Vygotsky being an example of you know presenting a theory in which there was social construction of meaning even in print literacy domains.

So, for now let's think of this as and a brief introduction to what we're hoping to assist our students with when we assign them reading and how from here on we'll look at some different methods by which you can prepare a text to deliver it to students when you have a difficult text and you need them to understand it how you can do preparatory work that will aid their comprehension.

And also different kinds of activities that we can engage them as they work through comprehension and share in the discourse of a text.