ED. 703: Historical Perspectives of Literacy Research

This course is designed to critically examine literacy research from historical perspectives, including behavioral, and cognitive/metacognitive research paradigms. Historical perspectives are considered in terms of theoretical frameworks, research methods, and implications for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The course is framed around a central question: What literacy research has made a difference? In this course, we will focus on research that colleague Tim Shanahan and I regarded as “making a difference.” Your task throughout the course is to examine this research, and ultimately come up with your own ‘top 10.’

In this course, you will be asked to critically evaluate literacy research in terms of conceptual perspective, the mode of inquiry reported, and the influence on practice.

Course Requirements

1. Attend class and actively participate in discussions. Carefully read all assigned readings before the date for which they are listed.

2. Research abstracts: Each week a student will locate, read, and abstract a primary source research article related to the review topic of the week. Students should provide copies of their abstracts for others in the class, and be prepared to discuss their articles in relation to the required reading for the week. Abstracts will be evaluated as weak, satisfactory, or outstanding.

3. Final paper: You will be required to write an article detailing your “top 10” articles that have made a difference. You can decide what criteria you will use. For example, you can examine the history from 1) methodologies that have made a difference; 2) theoretical advances in the field 3) policy changes; 4) or some other criteria. You will be asked to make a verbal presentation of your findings.

Course Outline

1. Introduction: The history. Research that makes a difference. Reading Research that should have made a difference; Reading Research that made a difference, but shouldn’t have.

Read Russell; Singer; Shanahan and Neuman

2. How would you define “Making a difference?”; What are the different ways of making a difference in literacy research? The Shanahan and Neuman list.
3. **Language and its prominence in reading instruction.**

Read “Goodman, Reading, A psychological guessing game,” and other prominent studies on the topic.

From this week, you will be asked to read the “key article” for the week. In addition, 1 student will be asked to review the context of the period, and other influential articles at the time, and hypothesize why this study above the others made a difference.

4. **The importance of the early years.**

Read Durkin.

5. **The importance of the instructional method:**

The first grade studies. (Bond & Dykstra study is available on the International Reading Association website, www.reading.org. You can download it from there.

6. **The television revolution and its relation to reading.**

Watch Sesame Street. Read Lesser, “The Experiences of Sesame Street.”

7. **Critical theory in Literacy pedagogy.**

Read, “Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed”

8. **Functional Literacy: Workplace literacy.**

Read, “Sticht....Functional Literacy”

9. **Schema theory.**

Read Pichert & Anderson

10. **The Structural Nature of Narrative: Story grammar**

Read, Stein and Glenn

11. **Comprehension research.**

Read Durkin

12. **Early Intervention as Innoculation**

Read Clay. Note: Clay’s book, “The prevention of reading difficulties” is out of print. You will have to borrow my copy or borrow a copy from the library.
13. Writing

Read Graves

14. Teacher Research

Read, Atwell

References
