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INTERACTION WITH TEXT :

**A STUDY OF TEACHERS' MEDIATION OF
MATERIALS IN MAINSTREAM AND ESOL
SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS**

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fulfilment of the requirements
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Abstract

The increasingly multi-cultural nature of New Zealand society is accompanied by burgeoning school enrolments of students whose first language is not English (called ESOL students in this study). Immigration, refugee movements, and the recruitment of international students for largely economic purposes, all contribute to this. Whilst many of these students are competent English speakers when they enrol at our schools, large numbers are not. In secondary schools, regardless of English language competence, most ESOL students are placed in mainstream classes for the majority of their timetable, with the addition of a relatively small amount of specialist English language tuition. How do both these mainstream and ESOL teachers address the language learning needs of these students? Because texts remain central to classroom teaching and learning, this study considers how teachers mediate texts with students. It has a particular focus on how this mediation contributes to the language learning environment for ESOL students in both mainstream and ESOL classes, using classroom observation as its primary source of data.

This study reveals both predictable and unexpected results. It is not surprising that it finds extensive use of questioning by teachers in their mediation of texts. However, the value of copious recall or display questions for senior secondary school students is challenged by this study, and the importance is asserted of referential questioning to develop critical thinking skills in relation to text. The preponderance of teacher-dominated classrooms and classroom language is a disappointing finding of this study, especially because the study reveals that students say very little in such an environment. More collaborative and interactive teaching methods would help ESOL students use, and therefore learn, English more effectively. Thus the study finds a lot of class time invested in the use of texts, but comparatively little effective mediation to help both native-speaking and ESOL students comprehend the language of the texts. The study reveals the need for

teachers to acknowledge their role as teachers of language, and especially to mediate texts with students by teaching reading strategies.

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