THEORY, PRACTICE AND 'EMPOWERMENT'

IN MEDIA EDUCATION:

A CASE STUDY OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY


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# Abstract

This thesis explores the issue of 'empowerment', which is often seen as a key question for media education. The first two chapters are a literature review. Chapter 1 critically discusses how the concept of empowerment might be constituted in the discourses of critical pedagogy. Following this, Chapter 2 discusses the kinds of empowerment offered by three different models of media education ('critical analysis of the media', 'media production as 'self-expression'', and 'media production training'), focusing on the pedagogic processes and the kinds of legitimate knowledge and skills offered in handbooks for teachers. Chapter 3 explores the complexity of empowerment in media education from a more learner-centred perspective on education and a sociocultural perspective on classroom practices, drawing on two distinctive areas of study: audience research and situative learning theory.

Three data analysis chapters follow Chapter 4, which discusses the methodology and methods used in collecting and analysing the data collected. Chapter 5 analyses a school context where 'critical media analysis' is presented as the 'official critical discourse' to make students into media critics. Chapter 6 discusses a youth project context where rules for media production are emphasised, while the professed aim is to empower young people to express their own voice in the process of training them as media producers. In both cases that I observed, the kinds of competence or legitimate knowledge and skills that the students were required to achieve were presented fundamentally as non-negotiable. Pursuing the questions raised in the previous two chapters in a context where the reading and writing sides of media education are brought together, Chapter 7 discusses how individual students with different background knowledge can be empowered in actual

learning situations and what might be the role of the teacher in doing so. Based on such classroom research, this thesis argues that empowerment in media education needs to be reconsidered in relation to the ways in which teaching and learning actually take place and how the teacher and the students are positioned in relation to particular abilities and knowledge about the media.

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# Preface

## 0.1. Korean background

In South Korea, there has been a growth of interest in media education amongst a range of groups such as academics, media critics, broadcasting regulators, consumer activists, religious groups, teachers and youth workers, although there is currently no formal provision for media education in Korean schools.

Informed by a range of critical and cultural theories, media academics and critics have produced criticisms of the media and popular culture, for instance, about consumerism and other kinds of dominant ideologies within the society. These criticisms, which are often explicitly regarded by the authors as a form of cultural politics, have implied a need for media education aimed at encouraging critical viewing and consumption of the media. Often inviting the originators of such critiques, various cultural institutions and civil rights activist groups have offered a series of short courses with titles such as 'critical television viewing' or 'cultural criticism', which have targeted young people as well as teachers and parents. For instance, one Korean women's activist group has provided media education programmes aimed at critical television viewing and at critical internet use for their own members, parents, university students as well as school children (Cho, 1999).

Apart from this critical 'reading' approach to the media, a more positive 'writing' approach focusing on media production has also grown. While such opportunities may have been one-off in many cases, broadcasting institutions and media activist groups have increasingly provided young people with opportunities to produce their own programmes and to learn about media production skills. For instance, the Korean Broadcasting Development Institute has provided young people with short courses during which they can produce their own programmes while acquiring television production skills. This institute has also provided teachers with in-service training courses, which combine critical television viewing, film criticism and television production training (Eun, 1999).

This more positive approach to media education has also grown amongst the groups who have argued for a need for alternative forms of education, which aim to respond to the voices of young people. In fact, educational debates in Korea since the mid 1990s have been almost dominated by concerns and anxieties about the 'crisis' of Korean schooling. While most students, particularly in high school, have been increasingly disillusioned by what is termed 'examination hell' or even the 'examination war' throughout their entire experience of schooling (Cho, 1995), teachers have also confessed the difficulties of trying to deliver the curriculum for such students.

In this social context, increasing numbers of teachers and youth workers have tried to offer a range of cultural and media activities such as extra-curricula film clubs both in schools and in youth centres, and various youth and cultural organisations have organised events such as a youth film festival (Kim, 1999; Choi, 1999). Such activities and events do not seem to have been consistent or clear in terms of their purposes and methods. Nevertheless, they have recognised the positive role of the media and popular culture in providing a useful pathway for teachers to get closer to young students' cultures and to offer an alternative form of education, which could be more meaningful to their students.

My own research interests and questions in media education have emerged in the context of such academic and educational concerns. While I was still interested in educating young people to become critical about the media and the society more broadly, what this might actually mean and how it might happen did not seem to be very clear. Furthermore, there seemed to be a potential contradiction in the rationale for media education, particularly between the cultural politics based on media criticism and the politics of youth culture driven by the discussions of an alternative form of education mentioned earlier. In pedagogic terms, the former seemed to suggest that teachers should teach their students to keep a critical distance from the hidden messages of the media, while the latter seemed to imply that teaching popular culture in itself could be an alternative form of education, which could provide the students with a way to express themselves.

Considering such potential contradictions in the arguments for media education, I wanted to explore what it might mean to 'empower' young people through media education. What might it mean to empower young people from the perspectives of these different approaches to media education? How might empowerment happen in actual situations of teaching and learning? And what kinds of tensions and contradictions might need to be considered? Particularly considering the recent concerns with 'media literacy' in my own academic background of Korean Language and Literature in Education (Cf. Kim, 1998), I also wanted to explore these issues in terms of making the students critical readers and creative writers of the media.

While I would ultimately like to bring my own reflections on media education back to Korea, I wanted to learn from the experience of media education in England where there have been useful debates about critical pedagogy, cultural studies and issues of teaching and learning, all of which are current issues in South Korea, particularly based on classroom research. (See Chapter 4 for my own reflection on researching 'Others'.) Therefore, I would consider some of the implications of my research in terms of trying to contribute to developing a more learner-centred curriculum and pedagogy both in schools and in youth projects. Nevertheless, the contexts in these two societies are different, and learning from this society should therefore involve some analogous and reflexive thinking.

## 0.2. An outline of the thesis

As a case study of critical pedagogy, this thesis explores the issue of empowerment, which is often seen as a key question for media education. The first two chapters (Chapters 1 and 2) are a literature review. Chapter 1 critically discusses how the concept of empowerment might be constituted in the discourses of critical pedagogy, which was my theoretical starting point, and what kinds of criticisms might have been raised in relation to its implementation in the classroom. Firstly, I outline the key arguments of the literature on critical pedagogy, which defines it as a form of cultural politics aimed at giving students power to transform oppressive social orders. Then, I argue that, despite the significance of the political aims, critical pedagogy rests on fundamentally rationalistic assumptions about dialogue, which is mediated by the ultimately authoritarian teacher, who is positioned as the emancipator.

Chapter 2 discusses the kinds of empowerment offered by three different models of media education ('critical analysis', 'youth work', and 'production training' approaches), focusing on the pedagogic processes and the kinds of legitimate knowledge and skills offered in handbooks for teachers. While the critical analysis approach applied in academic study of the media aims to make students media critics, the youth work approach aims to provide young people with opportunities to express their alternative voices (as critical citizens) through media production, and the training approach aims to

make students media producers. While I identify these rather pure versions of media education, as an analytical framework for my own research, I also discuss recent changes in the government's policies (both in education and in youth work) as well as in media technologies, which may result in some rethinking of the relationship between the theoretical and practical aspects of media learning.

Chapter 3 explores the complexity of empowerment in media education from a more learner-centred perspective on education and a sociocultural perspective on classroom practices, drawing on two distinctive areas of study: audience research and situative learning theory. Audience research is discussed in terms of its focus on how audiences might make meanings from media texts rather than how texts themselves produce meanings. Similarly, situative learning theory is discussed in terms of its emphasis on how students might learn particular knowledge and abilities in the process of constructing their own 'learning curriculum' by negotiating the meaning of the 'teaching curriculum' provided by the teacher and by particular 'communities of practice'. Drawing on these two areas of study and on some classroom research in media education, I explore how teaching and learning in media education might be theorised from a situative perspective, beyond the traditional, cognitive perspectives. Following this discussion, I lay out my own research questions pursued in the three case studies discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology and methods used in conducting the research and analysing the data collected. I begin by discussing my own situated identity in the research fields as a non-British researcher researching others' educational experiences, from a post-colonial perspective on knowledge production which has been developed in Korean educational research. There then follows an outline of the research, providing an account of how I conducted the qualitative, case studies in order to collect the data. Then, I provide the theoretical and analytical perspectives that inform my analysis of the data, particularly in terms of a discourse-analytic perspective, and some reflections on the research process.

Chapter 5 is a case study of the critical analysis approach. Based on classroom research during an induction course (on analysing women's magazines) for A-level Media Studies in a north London school, I discuss the pedagogic process in which a particular kind of critical discourse is legitimised as the 'official critical discourse' of the classroom. As such, I explore how the official critical discourse effectively controls the ways in which the 'personal discourses' both of the teacher and of the students enter into the classroom and the kinds of tensions and difficulties raised in the discursive process of the classroom. In doing so, I describe how the official critical discourse as a reified form of critical discourse might ritualise classroom talk, in a way which does not seem to make the students any more critical about the media and about the dominant ideologies that it aims to demythologise.

Chapter 6 is a case study of the youth work and the training approach to media education. Based on classroom research on an induction course (involving the production of a television interview and a drama production) in a youth media project in west London, the discussion focuses on the pedagogic process in which particular kinds of production methods and techniques are emphasised as rules to follow. At this point, I also discuss the competing notions of empowerment that seem to inform the project, in terms of providing disadvantaged young people with opportunities to express their 'alternative' voice, while simultaneously training them in particular kinds of television production skills in order to make them media producers. Based on the analysis both of the classroom talk and of the students' productions, I describe how particular kinds of voice and production knowledge are presented as fundamentally non-negotiable rules.

Chapter 7 discusses how students can be empowered both as critics (critical 'readers') and producers (creative 'writers'), based on a school context where the reading and writing aspects of media education are brought together for students' productions of gangster film trailers. In doing so, I describe how the emphasis on the ideological dimension of the chosen film genre (in terms of the theoretical aspect) might limit the ways in which the students construct the narrative and characters of their productions. I also describe how individual students with different background knowledge, particularly about media production, learn and work together in a group, negotiating their differences. Focusing on the implicit pedagogy of group production, I also discuss the role of the teachers in terms

of providing grounds for negotiation, both theoretically and practically, among the

students in the group.


Chapter 8 is the conclusion of this thesis. Following a summary of the research findings,

this chapter discusses the implications of the research for media education (including

some implications for Korean education), from a situative perspective on teaching and

learning. This includes some reflections on the limitations of this research. In doing so,

this chapter concludes that empowerment in media education needs rethinking; and in

doing so, we need to move beyond the discourses of critical pedagogy towards a more

learner-centred and situative perspective on media education.

Chapter 1.

Critical pedagogy as a form of cultural politics:

the discourse of 'empowerment' and its discontents

This chapter provides a review of the literature on critical pedagogy, focusing on how the discourse of 'empowerment' might be constituted and what kinds of difficulty might arise in implementing it in classroom practice. The literature on critical pedagogy has tried to provide teachers with ways of challenging oppressive social and cultural formations. It has also been an influential discourse on teaching the popular media, since it defines the media as one of the main sites where dominant ideologies are reproduced, and thus where critical pedagogy should intervene.

While the fundamental aims and goals of critical pedagogy – to struggles for 'critical democracy' – are widely shared amongst politically progressive educators and educational researchers, some serious disagreements have been raised, particularly concerning rationalistic assumptions about the role of critical theory and of the critical teacher. It has been found that the practices grounded on the discourses of critical pedagogy generate more problems than answers due to a self-claimed emancipatory mission. My own experiences as student, teacher and researcher have also made me rethink the hope and

possibility that the discourses of critical pedagogy might assert, and thus agree with

criticisms of them, although I continue to share their broader aim.

Following a brief outline of the discourses of critical pedagogy, particularly by the most

influential theorists such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, this chapter will then

review some of the problems with assumptions made by these discourses. Of particular

relevance to my critique are works by poststructuralist feminists, such as Elizabeth

Ellsworth, Jennifer Gore and Carmen Luke, and the critique from a media education

perspective by David Buckingham.

## 1.1.　　Critical pedagogy as a 'form of cultural politics'

Critical pedagogy has been given different labels which reflect a variety of concerns, such

as 'critical pedagogy', 'pedagogy of critique and possibility', 'pedagogy of student voice',

'pedagogy of empowerment', 'radical pedagogy', 'pedagogy for radical democracy',

'pedagogy of hope', 'pedagogy of possibility', and 'border pedagogy' (Ellsworth, 1992).

As the various names suggest, critical pedagogues aim to empower students politically by

providing them with 'critical literacy' or a 'language of critique', which is thought to

enable them to challenge oppressive social orders. In other words, critical pedagogy is

aimed at giving students a language of 'hope' and 'possibility' to empower them (as

Giroux metaphorically suggests) to 'cross the border categories' such as race, class, gender and ethnicity, and therefore to achieve 'radical democracy' (Giroux, 1992: 28). Within this paradigm, the role of the teacher in the discourses of critical pedagogy is defined as the emancipator who can give students critical tools, which could make them 'cultural workers' who participate in the practice of cultural politics as critical agents (Giroux, 1997: 135).

In terms of its historical location, critical pedagogy can be seen as a 'third-wave' new sociology of education (Luke, 1992: 26). The new sociology of education refers to a sociological tradition, which, since the early 1970s, has drawn attention to the role of the school in creating and validating particular kinds of knowledge, which ultimately favours students from particular class (i.e., middle class rather than working class) backgrounds (McKenzie, 2001: 216). According to Luke, however, a first wave new sociology of education overemphasised the teacher's agency, based on the assumption that individual teachers could make a difference to schooling by taking into account their students' differential background knowledge (e.g., Young, 1971).

In reaction against this neglect of structural constraints, a second-wave new sociology of education, which is indebted to reproduction theory (e.g., Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), emphasised the function of schooling as the reproduction of social orders and inequalities based on socially constructed differences of

class, gender, subjectivity and culture. From this point of view, even working class young

people's resistance to schooling and the wider social order was seen to reproduce their

own social conditions (e.g., Willis, 1977; McRobbie, 1978). In this respect, critical

pedagogy, as a third wave new sociology of education can be seen as a counter-reaction to

the pessimism about schooling (and about the role of the teacher) implied both in

reproduction theory and in the second wave of new sociology of education, which appears

to allow little room for human agency to intervene for social change and the

transformation of schooling (Giroux, 1981; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; McLaren, 1986,

1987). In this context, Giroux identifies the failures of educational theorising as its

'entrapment in a dualism' that separates issues of human agency from structural analysis,

as follows:

> The absence of a full consideration of the dialectic between consciousness and
>
> structure in the work of radical educational theorists is at the root of their failure to
>
> develop a more critical theory of schooling. This becomes particularly clear in those
>
> modes of discourse that presuppose that schools are *merely* agencies of social and
>
> cultural reproduction. In these all too familiar accounts, power and agency are
>
> attributes almost exclusively of the dominant classes and the institutions they control.
>
> Even where resistance, agency, and mediation appear in accounts of the "excluded
>
> majorities" in the schools, such constructs are situated within the context of paralyzing

pessimism that often consigns them to the logic of defeat and domination rather than to

the imperatives of struggle and emancipation. (Giroux, 1997: 71, Giroux's *italics*)

In order to overcome the pessimistic view of schools as agencies of social and cultural

reproduction, Giroux argues that schooling needs to be reconceptualised to make it

emancipatory (rather than oppressive), and thus to give hope to achieve 'radical

democracy'. Theoretically, such reconceptualisation of schooling requires a redefinition of

ideology. According to Giroux, reproduction theory is based on the Althusserian notion of

ideology, which is seen as something inscribed in a material world, which determines

human subjectivities and social structures. He argues that this definition of ideology is

flawed because it misses the link of the concept of ideology to the notion of struggle and

critique. Drawing on Barrett's definition of ideology as the 'process by which meaning is

produced, challenged, reproduced and transformed' (Barrett, 1980: 97), Giroux defines

ideology as a set of meanings and ideas whose function is 'not only to limit human action

but also to enable it' (Giroux, 1997: 75).

In fact, this more 'positive' notion of ideology originates from Antonio Gramsci (1971),

who argues that ideologies must be viewed as 'actively organising forces which are

psychologically [and by implication, politically] "valid"' (Eagleton, 1991: 117). Thus, in

this theoretical framework, ideologies do not necessarily have the negative function of

reproducing oppressive social orders or 'helping to "cement" together the social formation

and adapt individuals to its requirements' (*ibid*, 147). Instead, Giroux argues that ideologies can exist 'at the level of critical discourse as well as within the sphere of taken-for-granted lived experience and practical behaviour' (Giroux, 1997: 75). In this way, ideology is reconceived as a 'critical construct' for radical pedagogy and as a tool of critical analysis:

> As a political construct, it [ideology] makes meaning problematic and poses a question as to why human beings have unequal access to the intellectual and material resources that constitute the conditions for the production, consumption, and distribution of meaning. (Giroux, 1997: 91)

Following this redefinition of ideology, schooling is now conceived as a process in which critical or resistant ideologies can be produced, rather than dominant ideologies reproduced. It is argued that this reconceptualisation of schooling is based on a dialectic between agency and structure, which is mediated by critical consciousness or resistant ideologies. Therefore, the role of teacher is also redefined more positively (and 'radically') as the emancipator who provides students with the resistant or critical discourse, or a language of hope and possibility, with which students would be able to analyse meanings critically, and thus to resist dominant ideologies.

In this way, critical pedagogy is conceived as a form of cultural politics whose aim is to 'de- and reconstruct' meanings in the sense that it makes the students resist dominant ideologies and encourages them to make sense of the world with new kinds of ideologies, which are considered politically more sound. Given various names such as the 'politics of experience', the 'politics of the body' and the 'politics of student voice', critical pedagogy seeks to examine how meanings might be produced and deconstructed, particularly in cultural processes such as schooling, popular culture and students' lived experiences (Giroux, 1992, 1997; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; McLaren & Giroux, 1995; McLaren & Hammer, 1995). The critical tool enabling this political struggle over meanings is labeled 'critical (media) literacy', which can be seen as a form of critical analysis both of popular media and of students' lived experiences.

According to Giroux, critical literacy is informed by three related fields of discourses, which critical agents need to acquire: the 'discourse of production', the 'discourse of textual analysis', and the 'discourse of lived cultures' (Giroux, 1997). The discourse of production is described as a strategic framework, which enables teachers and students to understand that schooling is not a neutral process. Giroux emphasises that this is only a strategic framework because he wants to make it clear that his perspective on schooling is different from the pessimistic view of reproduction theory (although the former is indebted to the latter). As a starting point for critical pedagogy, what Giroux terms the discourse of production (or more precisely, reproduction theory) helps students to

understand schooling in relation to wider structural forces such as 'the state, the workplace, foundations, publishing companies, and other embodiments of political interests that directly or indirectly influence school policy' (Giroux, 1997: 135).

As day-to-day activities that can be applied in the classroom, the discourse of textual analysis and the discourse of lived cultures are suggested. Giroux argues that students need to analyse the socially constructed representations and interests of cultural forms such as school curricula and advertising, in order to become critical citizens. Textual criticism is defined as a critical tool, which can make students active producers of meanings, and this includes:

> treating the text as a social construct that is produced out of a number of available discourses; locating the contradictions and gaps within an educational text and situating them historically in terms of the interests they sustain and legitimate; recognizing in the text its internal politics of style and how this both opens up and constrain particular representations of the social world; understanding how the text actively works to silence certain voices; and finally, discovering how to release possibilities from the text that provide new insights and critical readings regarding human understanding and social practices. (Giroux, 1997: 139)

These principles of textual criticism are also applied to the analysis of students' lived cultures. It is suggested that students' own histories, experiences and languages have been enabled and limited by the power relations and social inequalities shaped by their class, race, and gender. Thus, critical pedagogues argue that students' lived culture should be interrogated in terms of the 'ideologies it contains, the means of representation it utilises, and the underlying social practices it confirms' (Giroux, 1997: 140). In other words, students' own experiences become texts to be deconstructed, just like other cultural processes such as school curricula and popular culture.

This process of students' own reflection on their self-production is termed as the 'politics of the body', in which students learn that their own bodies are 'ideologically swollen with residues of domination preserved in breathing tissue' (McLaren & Giroux, 1995: 48). While it is quite problematic to define students' lived cultures as oppressed by dominant ideologies (I shall discuss the relationship between the media and the audience in more detail in Chapter 3), it is nevertheless argued that these oppressed cultures should be replaced by resistant ideologies.

In this way, in critical pedagogy, the teacher's voice becomes crucial to this 'demystifying' process, because it is through the mediation and action of teacher voice that the very nature of the schooling process can be challenged. In order to do so, teachers are required to 'master the language of critical understanding' (Giroux, 1997: 141). As

such, the teacher is given emancipatory authority, which is to be used to transform

schooling and to give students the potential to transform society. More specifically, the

teacher's job is to be defined as helping his or her students to acquire 'critical knowledge

about basic societal structures', such as the economy, the state, the work place, and mass

culture, so that such institutions can be open to potential transformation (Giroux, 1997:

103).


Thus far, I have outlined the key arguments of the discourses of critical pedagogy. As a

new sociology of education which tries to overcome the dualism of agency and structure,

the discourses of critical pedagogy emphasise a language of critique which is thought to

make both teachers and students critical agents in order to transform the oppressive social

order. Teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' are given an emancipatory authority to

mediate the language of critique to students. However, despite the politically progressive

aims that they wish to achieve, and indeed precisely because of the theoretical

assumptions that underlie them, the practices informed by these discourses seem to

generate some serious problems in the classroom. In the following section, I shall

therefore discuss some critiques of the discourses of critical pedagogy.


## 1.2. Criticisms of the classroom practice of critical pedagogy

One of the problems with the discourses of critical pedagogy is that there is little empirical

evidence of how effective they are in terms of achieving their aims: transforming

oppressive social orders both inside and outside school. As Ellsworth rightly points out,

while the literature on critical pedagogy states that it is political, there have hardly been

any research attempts by the pedagogues themselves to explore 'whether or how the

practices actually alter specific power relations outside or inside schools' (Ellsworth,

1992: 93). Instead of addressing questions about the empirical realities of classroom

practice and about teaching strategies in schools, critical pedagogues have replaced their

political practice by generating academic theory, and have thus excluded the very

practitioners at whom their discourses are directed (Gore, 1993: 38; Buckingham, 1996a:

633). Perhaps preoccupied with producing a language of critique, critical pedagogues

seem to decontextualise its use from students' lives both inside and outside the classroom.


In her widely cited article, Ellsworth (1992) points to this very issue and raises questions

about the assumptions that underlie the discourses of critical pedagogy, particularly about

the assumption that the classroom can become a 'safe, public space' where students are

freely able to speak a language of critique. Writing about the difficulties that she faced in

her own classroom where she tried to apply anti-racist pedagogies, she argues that

dialogue between different groups of people from diverse social positions and political

ideologies in the classroom as a public sphere is simply a myth. As she rightly points out,

the notion of dialogue is based on an assumption about rationalised and individualised

subjects capable of agreeing on 'universalised fundamental moral principles' and 'human dignity'. Based on their *wish* or imagination of the classroom as a space where democratic dialogue is possible, critical pedagogues encourage rational students to *confess* the ideologies that they bring with them from their lived experiences. However, as Ellsworth suggests, in a society and its institutions which are affected by oppressive social constraints such as racism or sexism,

> such debate has not and cannot be "public" or "democratic" in the sense of including the voices of all affected parties and affording them equal weight and legitimacy. Nor can such debate be free of conscious and unconscious concealment of interests, or assertion of interests which some participants hold as non-negotiable no matter what arguments are presented. (Ellsworth, 1992: 94)

Neglecting this reality, critical pedagogues assume that teachers can mediate the dialogue, *regardless of* diverse and conflicting interests and positions that students might bring from outside the classroom, insofar as the dialogue is based on reason. Based on a simplistic dichotomy between empowerment and oppression, the discourse of critical pedagogy effectively positions students as 'Others', who can be liberated from their oppressed positions by the *rationalistic* dialogue mediated by the emancipator (Gore, 1992: 61).

Perhaps worried about some 'mindless' students' disruption of the classroom, critical pedagogues give teachers huge responsibility for securing a dialogue. Defined as a 'transformative intellectual' and given 'emancipatory authority', the teacher seems to be entitled to rule out any disagreement about what is seen as critical knowledge. In doing so, however, there is a danger that the critical pedagogue can become:

> one who enforces the rules of reason in the classroom – "a series of rules of thought that any ideal rational person might adopt if his/her purpose was to achieve propositions of universal validity." Under these conditions, and given the coded nature of the political agenda of critical pedagogy, only one "political" gesture appears to be available to the critical pedagogue. (Ellsworth, 1992: 96)

The emancipatory authority of the teacher implies the presence of an emancipated teacher, who is able to lead classroom discussion in a real situation. The difficulty with these assumptions about teachers as transformative intellectuals and their emancipatory authority to teach a language of critique is, as Buckingham suggests (1996a: 636), that it is hard to distinguish between emancipatory authority and oppressive authority and between constructive dispute and mindless opposition. In resonse to such criticisms, Giroux himself warns that regardless of how politically or ideologically correct a teacher's voice may be, it can be destructive for students if it is imposed on them or if it is used to silence them (Giroux, 1997: 142). However, this warning seems to serve only to confuse teachers

in interpreting the double message of critical pedagogy: on the one hand, teachers are told not to impose their emancipatory voice on students, while on the other they are told not to confirm the student's voice, in case it might reproduce dominant ideologies such as sexism or racism.

This dilemma seems to come from the very assumption that teachers are the emancipated, who have 'mastered' a language of critique. However, such a 'master discourse', as feminists term it, hardly seems to exist, because *in reality* the teacher's discourse is always only *partial*. Writing of her position as a teacher, Ellsworth structures (1992: 99) reflects that her own experiences with and access to multiple and sophisticated strategies for interpreting and interrupting sexism in white middle-class contexts do not provide her with a ready-made analysis of or language for understanding her own implication in racist.

In response to such criticisms, Giroux (1994, 1997) admits that even in his own classroom there was in fact a set of traditional pedagogical relations such as male dominance and teacher authority. He also admits that he noticed that students were quite intimidated by the language of critical theory. Then, Giroux explains how he tried to reorganise his own teaching around a series of writing assignments in order to solve such problems. Yet, in his classroom, the aim of critical pedagogy still remains, which is to 'remove all traces of [students'] own socially and historically constructed voices' and to 'rewrite their own

experiences and perceptions through an engagement with various texts, ideological

positions, and theories' (Giroux, 1994: 137-140).

Following his reassertion of the aims of critical pedagogy, Giroux describes how he

applied 'border writing', as he terms it, in his own classroom, and attempts to offer some

practical suggestions to teachers. First, he asserts that schools are sites of conflicts and

contestation, and that pedagogy is an oppositional rather than a merely a dominating

practice. Then he stresses that students need to create social relations in the classroom to

produce and appropriate knowledge as part of an ongoing struggle. Then, he requires

students to form groups for collective discussion and writing, and invites them to add

more readings to the texts that he has assigned.

For students' discussion and writing, the teacher reminds them of three qualifications: first,

students' writings should articulate their discussion; second, students should create the

conditions for a safe space for each other; and finally, they should integrate the theoretical

discourses taken up in the class of an analysis of popular culture (Giroux, 1994: 136-138).

As a result of this border writing, Giroux argues that students were able to learn from each

other's diverse positions and thus to cross borders:

> To decenter the power in the classroom, to challenge disciplinary borders, to create a
>
> borderland where new hybridized identities might emerge, to take up in a

problematizing way the relationship between language and experience, and to

appropriate knowledge as part of a broader effort at self-definition and ethical

responsibility. Border writing in this case became a type of hybridized, border literacy,

a form of cultural production and pedagogical practice where otherness becomes

comprehensible, collective memory rewrites the narratives of insurgent social

movements, students travel between diverse theoretical and cultural zones of difference

and in doing so generate a space where new intersections between identity and culture

emerge. (Giroux, 1994: 140)

Giroux seems to believe that the teacher's power can be decentered, simply by changing

the teaching methods from teacher-led lectures and seminars to student-led writing

assignments. Furthermore, he seems to believe that teachers can create a safe space for

dialogue despite the students' conflicting positions and interests, simply by asking

students to do so. Thus, he repeatedly emphasises how wonderfully his students overcame

the limits of the discourses which they brought from their own experiences, and thus

achieved new 'hybridised' identities.

However, it is still hard to believe that students can suddenly become honest with each

other in the classroom and reveal their diverse and frequently conflicting interests and

positions, when they hardly know if they can trust each other. While Giroux never

explains what and how students might have actually learned, he seems simply to take

students' ability to speak the theory and language that he has given them as evidence of them achieving new identities. Thus, it seems that he has never thought that his students might have simply produced what he wanted to see from them, in order to get good marks.

As a student, my own experience of producing such critical writing also makes me doubt whether students would necessarily be able to cross any borders by doing so. As a postgraduate student in South Korea several years ago, I took a course on 'Educational Anthropology'. The teacher suggested that this course should be run based on the students' free discussion about the readings that he suggested as well as on their own writing projects. The readings were fairly diverse and included articles from the American journal *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* and Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour*. The teacher asked the students to write their own individual life history within the contexts of the South Korean educational system in the light of the issues raised by the readings, particularly thinking about how the individual student's educational history might explain the social structure of South Korean schooling.  He also suggested that the students should voluntarily bring in the work-in-progress of this writing assignment so that the whole class could discuss it.

Contrary to the teacher's expectations, only a few students brought in their work-in-progress to the classroom throughout the semester. No female students presented their life history in the classroom and only a few male students tried to explain their own

educational history in relation to the male-centred ideology or the 'examination-war' in South Korea (Cf. Cho, 1995). But all these too familiar and too broad accounts hardly impressed the teacher. While the teacher seemed to think that the students did not work hard enough to bring their work-in-progress to the classroom, I was struggling with myself, wondering whether or not I should present my own story in this public space. On the one hand, I felt that I should do it at least in order to impress the teacher with the more localised and interesting female student's story. But on the other hand, I was not sure if I could share my writing, which involved my personal stories, with people that I did not know very well, because I was frightened of the consequences.

In fact, writing about my educational history involved recollecting several memories that I had tried to forget, due to their painful nature. When I was attending high school in the 1980s, it was a common practice to elect the best grade student as the 'leader student'. The role of a leader student was to mediate communication between teachers and the rest of the students. Although the practice is now changing, teachers used to encourage the best grade student in a group to become a leader student as a kind of role model for the other students. When I was a high school student, it was also common for middle class parents to form a voluntary financial support group for the schools. In this case, it was also common for the mother of the leader student to become a representative of the support group and to support teachers in many ways. Therefore, it was quite natural that the

relationships between teachers and students were affected by whether or not the students' parents were involved in the support group.

All these facts were related to the lack of government funding for schools, which forced parents to spend extra money; and to the assumptions about good students and their roles in the particular historical context of the South Korean educational system during the 1980s. Under these circumstances, my position as the best grade student whose parents unfortunately could not afford extra money for the voluntary support group was always double-edged. Being the best grade student, I was almost automatically expected to become a leader student throughout my high school days, which meant that my mother would become the representative of the support group. But my father's failure in his business and my mother's long-term depression, which was not a socially acceptable disease, made it difficult for them even to join the group. My mother's exclusion from the support group made my position as a leader student quite uncomfortable and somehow impacted on my relationships with the other classmates.

Perhaps I should have presented this story of mine as a critical analysis of the Korean educational system, at least to impress the teacher. However, I was not sure what I could possibly get from sharing this kind of story with other people in the classroom. Some of the students in the classroom might have been in quite a privileged position in their high school days because of their parents' participation in such a voluntary support group, and

then perhaps my story might have enabled them to reflect on their high school days more critically. Or perhaps some of them might have gone through even more difficult situations than I had. What if they accused me of exaggerating my miserable experience, without necessarily trying to understand how I felt? All these possibilities made me hesitate to bring my work-in-progress to the classroom and thus I ended up submitting my final report to the teacher at the end of the semester. As recollecting my life history had involved reminding myself of the painful memory of being excluded, I had expected the teacher to give at least some personal feedback on my writing. However, all he did was to mark 'A' on my writing, without any feedback. His failure to respond to such emotional investment of mine gave me reason to believe that open dialogue in the public space of the classroom was simply a myth.

Thus far, I have discussed the issues raised by the discourses of critical pedagogy in terms of its assumptions about the presence of a ready-made critical teacher and a language of critique which might guarantee rationalistic dialogue between the diverse positions of the students. Based on my own experience as a student, I have also discussed the problems with border writing as a classroom practice. In the following section, I would like to take further the discussion of media analysis as a practice of critical pedagogy.

## 1.3. Criticisms of media analysis as a practice of critical pedagogy

As Buckingham (1996a) suggests, the critical pedagogues' turn to popular culture is a double move. On the one hand, critical pedagogues seem to regard their analysis of the media as an extension of the broader project of critical pedagogy. On the other hand, they often argue that the analysis of the media needs to be a specific object of educational study within schools and universities (Buckingham, 1996a: 638). In both cases, the practice of media analysis is regarded as a form of cultural politics either in or outside the classroom.

According to Giroux, the mission of critical pedagogues as transformative intellectuals is extended to other 'cultural workers', who include not only artists, writers and media producers but also people working in professions such as 'law, social work, architecture, medicine, theology, education, and literature' (Giroux, 1992: 5). Following this broader definition of cultural workers, Giroux emphasises the pedagogic dimension of cultural work, in terms of the process of creating symbolic representations and the practices within which they are engaged.

According to Giroux, the teacher as a cultural worker needs to be engaged in the politics of meaning. In this formulation, teachers are given the responsibility of cultural critics, who are working on three dimensions: firstly, textual, aural, and visual representations, which are organised and regulated within particular institutional arrangements; secondly, the production of meaning in relation to affective investments and the production of

pleasure; and thirdly, how students are inscribed in and take up different 'affective economies' (Giroux, 1992: 5). These three dimensions of cultural analysis apparently rephrase the discourses by which critical pedagogy is informed – the discourses of production, the discourse of textual analysis and the discourse of lived cultures – as discussed earlier. While the first dimension (the production of meaning within particular institutions) can be the strategic framework for cultural analysis, just as the discourse of production functions as such for critical pedagogy, the second and the third dimensions are the main sites for struggle for meaning.

In this respect, Giroux argues that popular culture, in particular, needs to become a serious object of study in the official curriculum, 'either as a distinct object of study within particular academic discipline such as media studies or by drawing upon the resources it produces for engaging various aspects of the official curriculum' (Giroux, 1992: 31). This means that the teacher as cultural critic is now required to apply their language of critique to the analysis of popular culture and students' lived cultures. Labeled as 'demystification', 'ideology critique', 'deconstruction', 'reconstruction', 'resistance', 'critical literacy', 'critical media literacy' and so on, critical pedagogy is conceived as a way of giving students analytical tools so that they can 'deconstruct' the dominant ideologies embodied in any form of text, and 'reconstruct' meanings as active producers (Giroux, 1992, 1997; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; McLaren & Giroux, 1995; McLaren & Hammer, 1995; Sholle & Denski, 1995; Hammer, 1995).

According to Sholle and Denski, 'critical media literacy' is a critical tool with which traditionally marginalised and excluded groups may acquire critical agency and speak their voice. To do so, critical media literacy must aim not only to demystify dominant ideology and its reproduction of existing social inequalities but also to reconstruct meanings.

> Like critical pedagogy, a critical literacy of media must focus its energies toward the opening up of new spaces from within which traditionally marginalized and excluded voices may speak. Our approach to both the contemporary mass media and media education is straightforward; the structures of media production, and the corresponding educational structures within which the creators of media products are trained, may be approached as sets of complex social practices which (to varying degrees) either serve to reproduce existing social inequalities or serve to overcome these inequalities in support of an emancipatory democracy. (Sholle & Denski, 1995: 7)

Theoretically, it seems that this theory of reconstruction of meanings is informed by Stuart Hall's theoretical 'encoding/decoding' model (Hall, 1980). However, critical pedagogues seem to emphasise almost exclusively what Hall calls an 'oppositional code'. According to Hall, what are called distortions or misunderstandings arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange. In other words,

'decodings do not follow inevitably from encodings' (Hall, 1980: 136). Following this,

Hall suggests that there are three hypothetical positions of decoding: the 'dominant-

hegemonic' position; the 'negotiated' code or position; and finally an 'oppositional' code.

In this hypothesis, Hall argues that 'oppositional' readers can 'detotalise' the message in

the preferred code in order to 'retotalise' the message within some alternative framework

of reference. This hypothesis helps to deconstruct the common-sense notion of

misunderstanding by providing a theory of 'systematically distorted communication'.

Nevertheless, adopting Hall's theoretical framework, the pedagogues of critical media

literacy seem to validate their own resistant reading almost as the only proper

reconstruction of the dominant ideologies and to refuse to address the negotiated positions

that media audiences might take up and the reasons why they might do so. In this respect,

as Buckingham rightly points out, the critical pedagogues have almost entirely ignored the

more audience-oriented approaches to cultural studies (Buckingham, 1996a: 641), which I

will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3.

The analysis of the media as the de- and reconstruction of meanings can be well illustrated

by Giroux and Simon's analysis of the film, *Dirty Dancing* (Giroux & Simon, 1989).

Based on a view of meaning as a sociocultural construction, Giroux and Simon suggest

that the reading of a text should begin with the readers' investments in the text and the

implications of the meanings and pleasures that they find from the text. They try to

explain how their own investments in the film might lead to certain constructions of its

meaning. Starting with the description of how they grew up within and against the grain of very different class relations, Giroux and Simon move on to their own reconstruction of the film as the 'formation of youth within a material and social set of contradictory and conflicting practices'. To these critics, the film is reconstructed as a text dealing with the 'questions of class and sexism, culture and privilege' which come together in a 'tapestry' of social relations (Giroux & Simon, 1989: 20). Thus, they argue that in this film,

[The main character] Baby's lived relation to the working-class people she engages is mediated by a dual investment mobilized by both the subject position she takes up within the discourse of liberalism *and* the popular cultural forms of working-class life within which she experiences the pleasures of the body. The point of emphasis here is the importance of popular cultural forms in constituting the identities which influence how we engage new challenges and construct new experiences. (Giroux & Simon, 1989: 23, Giroux & Simon's *italics*)

In this way, Giroux and Simon try to demonstrate how critical agents can intervene in the reconstruction of the meanings of popular cultural forms, by using their critical knowledge and a language of critique. They are however, far from being explicit about the kinds of method that they are using in this critical analysis. It is implied that this particular version or reconstruction of the meanings of the film comes from their own resistance to dominant ideologies such as classism, sexism and the condemnation of popular culture and from

their language of critique, which has apparently been developed from their own childhood experiences. In this way, they seem to reduce the reconstruction of meanings to the political correctness of the critics.

Unfortunately, critical pedagogues such as Giroux and Simon do not seem to be concerned with the diverse meanings that *student audiences* might construct from such a text. Despite their emphasis on the lived experiences and investments of readers as the basis of the reconstruction of meanings, a great many critical pedagogues do not seem to be interested in exploring how and in which contexts students might produce meanings from a particular film in relation to their own lived cultures. Instead, the critical pedagogues seem to suggest that *their own particular version* of the meanings of the film is the only successful reconstruction. As Buckingham succinctly suggests, despite the rhetorical emphasis on self-reflexivity, critical pedagogues do not seem to reflect on *their own positions* as critics and the analytical tools that they use (Buckingham, 1996a).

To illustrate this point, it is worth noting that my own reading of the film, *Dirty Dancing* as a teenage girl was somewhat different from the meanings that Giroux and Simon assert. In early 1988, at the age of 16, I watched the film in a cinema in Seoul, South Korea, with my twin sister. To me, the most important meaning of the film was related to the *contexts* rather than the content of the film itself, in that I was accompanying my twin sister who was a huge fan of Patrick Swayze, the male star of the film. Unfortunately, the film was

then classified adults only; therefore, going to see the film as teenage girls meant running

the risk of being picked up by adults, and I had to share the risk with my sister. To look

like older girls, we wore make-up and uncomfortable high heels for the first time, which

enhanced our excitement in our secret entrance to an adults' world. Therefore, to me,

passing through the entrance of the cinema and watching the film meant a lot more than

the film itself. The great music and exciting dance in the film with the enjoyable romantic

plot seemed like an additional reward for my courage in doing something for and with my

sister.


However, unfortunately, having no systematic knowledge of the socioeconomic realities

in the United States, I (as that 16 year old girl) was not able to interpret the film as a

middle class girl's experience of identity politics, as Giroux and Simon described. Yet I

still believe that the experience of watching the film held a range of meanings for me and

that somehow I was able to learn that a film classified for adults only was in fact not very

dangerous to a teenage girl like me. Furthermore, as a teenage girl (rather than a thirty-

something male academic) I was certainly closer to the target audience for the film. When

Giroux and Simon somewhat arrogantly claim that their particular version of reading is

almost the only critical reconstruction of the meanings of the film, they do not seem to

take account of the potential meanings and pleasures of the teenage audience. Therefore,

this analysis of *Dirty Dancing* as a successful example of the reconstruction of meanings

in media analysis seems to demonstrate not so much the critical pedagogues' critical

media literacy as their inability to understand meanings as ones *situated* in readers' own

sociocultural contexts.

Thus far, I have discussed the issues raised by critical media analysis within the discourse

of critical pedagogy. While the procedures of media analysis are emphasised and

successful examples of reconstruction of meanings as resistance are demonstrated,

students' own investments and the contexts of their reading do not seem to be emphasised

as much as critical pedagogues' own investments. Thus, the discourses of critical

pedagogy do not seem to explain clearly how students might become empowered or

liberated through the analysis of the media.

While I shall explore further the issues raised in this chapter about the discourses of

critical pedagogy in relation to my own research in later chapters, I want to discuss the

question of empowerment particularly in relation to the pedagogy of media education in

the next chapter. By reviewing teachers' handbooks, particularly focusing on

recommendations about the pedagogy of media education, I shall examine what

empowerment might actually mean in three different approaches to media education –

'critical analysis', 'youth work' and 'training' – which inform the classroom practices that

I focus on later in this thesis.

# Chapter 2.

# Media education as 'empowerment':

# three models and some criticisms

In the previous chapter, I examined the discourses of critical pedagogy, focusing on how

they define the concept of empowerment in relation to the role of the teacher. Building on

that discussion, the aim of this chapter is to try to specify what kinds of skills and

knowledge are offered in different models of media education, in order to enable students

to become literate as both 'readers' and 'writers' of media texts. Focusing on the

pedagogic processes offered particularly in handbooks for teachers, I shall review three

different models of media education, which can be identified as 'critical media analysis';

'youth work' (or 'media production as self-expression'); and 'media production training'.

Critical media analysis is one of the major aims of media education in school and it is

concerned with what critical pedagogues term critical media literacy – that is, particularly

with the reading aspect of media education. While (as I shall discuss below) this approach

focuses on the *negative* aspects of the media in reproducing dominant ideologies, the

youth work approach seeks to exploit the *positive* aspects of media production as a means

through which young people can express an 'alternative voice'. Meanwhile, the media

production training approach focuses on the writing aspect of media education, without

necessarily relating to critical literacy. Although, as I shall discuss, this approach had been

widely criticised by exponents of both the critical analysis and youth work approaches,

due to changes in government policy for education and youth provision (particularly in the

U.K. context), it has been increasingly integrated into media education.

While I shall discuss the changing conditions of media education which make its practice

a hybrid form of these different models, I will outline three rather schematic, pure versions

of media education that will inform the analytical framework of my research.

## 2.1. The 'critical media analysis' approach

The most influential advocate of the critical media analysis approach is Len Masterman.

Here, I want to review his argument for media education as an influential example of this

approach, focusing on the rationale and the pedagogy that he proposes.

In his first book published in 1980, Masterman argues for the study of the specific

medium of television (Masterman, 1980), although the main points of this approach are

applied to other forms of media in a later book (Masterman, 1985). Masterman's choice of

television as the central medium for study is to do with his pedagogic concern, which is

that media education should respond to the 'direct viewing experiences of pupils'

(Masterman, 1980: 2). This is developed from his somewhat negative experience of

teaching film to 'low-stream disenchanted secondary school pupil[s]', an experience which he argues is shared by the film teachers of that time. He argues that film is 'far more remote' from students than television in that his students hardly went to the cinema and their experience of films was gained almost exclusively through watching television. He also argues that Film Studies became just another subject in the school curriculum through its institutionalisation and thus it was 'far from being the liberating, radicalising experience' for students who are bringing to the classroom 'alienating attitudes and expectations from outside'. Clearly, Masterman's pedagogic concerns are based on his political project of trying to empower what he terms low-stream disenchanted students by providing them with a 'liberating, radicalising experience'.

In line with this emphasis on relevance, Masterman emphasises that the study of the media (television, in particular) should start from students' concrete experiences of media products. According to Masterman, one of the difficulties for media teachers of that time was to find a coherent way to teach a range of media such as film, television, radio, music, the press, and advertising under the umbrella discipline of Media Studies. The prevalent way to deal with this problem was to look at the media as industries, focusing on their structures of ownership and control. However, Masterman criticises this industry approach to the media on the grounds that it is 'information-laden rather than question-oriented', and thus ends up losing students' interest. Masterman tries to find a way in which, beginning from their familiar experiences of the media, students could look at the media

as a 'consciousness industry' rather than as industries in general. Thus, he proposes textual analysis of the media, as follows:

> What the television teacher can do is to work outwards from the concrete television images themselves towards a recognition of and feeling for – if not always a precise understanding of – the institutional and industrial contexts within which they are manufactured. This process begins with a reading of the total communication of the television image and an exploration of the values implicit within it, and ends with speculation upon four questions. Who is producing the images? For whose consumption? For what possible purposes? and What alternative images are thereby excluded? (Masterman, 1980: 6-7)

The notion of the non-transparency of television images as the focus for studying the medium is based on Barthes' notion of 'myth' as 'depoliticised speech' (Barthes, 1972). As a kind of myth, which transforms ideological representations into natural ones, television images are regarded as a 'flow of information' communicated to us through a mediating process. Therefore, Masterman argues that the study of television should focus on 'the constructed nature of the representations projected', in order to make explicit their 'suppressed ideological functions' (Masterman, 1980: 9).

In order to learn how to decipher the hidden meanings of television images, students are required to observe and describe the images that they see at a 'denotative' level and then interpret them at their 'connotative' and 'ideological' levels:

> The sphere of ideology is one which pupils will approach as the final stage of a three-level process of analysis. The teachers' first task is to encourage his (*sic*) pupils to generate from images descriptions of what they see at a *denotative* level. This is, it is suggested, may be achieved by increasing awareness of the multiplicity of ways in which television images communicate their meanings. Secondly, he (*sic*) may encourage pupil *interpretation* by drawing attention to the *connotative* levels of meaning in cultural images and objects. What does each denotative quality *suggest*? What associations do that colour, that shape, that size, that material have? Discussion, at first free-flowing and open-ended, will gradually become less so as definite patterns and clusters of associations become evident and the group move into interpretation at the *third* level, that of *ideology,* 'the final connotation of the totality of connotations of the sign, as Umberto Eco has described it. (Masterman, 1980: 10, Masterman's *italics*)

In this mode of enquiry, it is argued that students will come to understand 'core concepts' such as ideology via the textual analysis of television programmes. This procedure is later applied to other forms of media as well, and thus this 'local analysis' is proposed as the means by which media education can achieve the primary objective of developing 'general

critical abilities and an understanding of general principles' (Masterman, 1985: 25).

Masterman argues that this analytical model should involve no aesthetic value judgements of any media text. Although he insists that media educators might still need to learn from the 'anti-utilitarian spirit' and 'anti-capitalism and rejection of market values' of the Leavisite view, Masterman argues against the discriminatory approach to the media, on the grounds that its view of the mass media as agents of 'cultural decline' (e.g., Leavis & Thompson, 1933) attacks 'students' preferences' in favour of an elitist notion of literary value. While this criticism of the Leavisite perspective on the media is intended to protect from potential criticism the taste of working class students, as I shall discuss later, it results in the exclusion of any personal discourse in favour of ideological judgements of the media.

Masterman is also against the view of the media as popular art forms (Hall & Whannel, 1964), the view that is concerned with making aesthetic value judgements *within* the media. Unlike the Leavisite view of the media, he argues, this approach was in fact put forward by teachers who actually liked some popular cultural forms. However, Masterman still identifies it with the Leavisite discriminatory approach, insofar as:

The evaluation of newer media forms by what were actually quite traditional aesthetic criteria too often meant that 'discrimination' could be simply equated with a preference

for the rather *serious* media tastes of middle-class teachers rather than the genuine

*popular* tastes of their pupils. (Masterman, 1985: 54, Masterman's *italics*)

Masterman argues that the view of the media as popular art forms would also inevitably discriminate against 'those aspects of popular culture which are valued and have a potent influence among large numbers of pupils' and that students, without 'authority or an acceptable language code' to defend their cultural preferences, would remain silent in the classroom (Masterman, 1980: 18). To avoid such a situation, Masterman suggests that teachers should encourage students to 'make statements which seem to them to have some validity, *irrespective of their own personal feelings and tastes*' (Masterman, 1980: 20, my *italics*).

Masterman's idea of demystification, which he sees as the primary aim of textual analysis, is informed by Paolo Freire's notion of conscientization, which means 'an awareness of one's own political situation and a recognition that far from being a given which must be accommodated to, reality is negotiable, the result of human choices and decisions which should be subject to scrutiny, criticisms, intervention and change' (Freire, 1972; Masterman, 1980: 25). The most important aspect of this approach is defined as the critical interaction of the mind of the student and the material, which Masterman later terms critical autonomy. As such, media education is chosen as a way of enabling students to demystify the dominant ideology of the society that is seen to be underlying media texts.

This approach clearly has much in common with the discourses of critical pedagogy discussed in the previous chapter. According to Masterman, the process of achieving this aim is through students' own analysis of the media rather than through the teacher' instruction. Within this framework, the role of the teacher is defined as a 'senior colleague', who is older and more experienced in analysis rather than as an expert who will make all the important decisions and through whom all communications will pass (Masterman, 1980: 28), just as (as discussed in the previous chapter) the teacher of critical pedagogy is required not to 'impose' their own voice on the students.

Thus far, I have discussed the rationale and pedagogy of the critical analysis approach. Now I am going to look at how this analytical model might apply to classroom practice, by examining one of Masterman's own examples: the analysis of a television programme, *Top of the Pops* (Masterman, 1980). According to Masterman, the rationale for the choice of this programme is its relevance to students' experience, but the personal tastes of both teacher and students should be bracketed off. Therefore, his students were required to watch a video-recording of the show and to give a list of the objects they saw. The things noted at a denotative level by the group included 'fashionable clothes', 'maxi-skirts', 'girls', 'breasts', 'spotlights', 'flashing lights', 'darkness', 'big house', 'fast car' and 'young people'. These were written on the blackboard. Then, students were required to interpret these signs at a connotative level, for example:

'Girls'; 'breast': If the girls watch the programme for a kind of informal social education, then boys – if this group is typical – watch it primarily for its depiction of girls, whose sexuality is continually emphasised by camera positioning which accentuates their breasts and thighs. (…) Girls, in spite of their dancing, serve an almost purely decorative and passive function.

'Young people': It is a show for and about young people. Like most obvious iconographic features it is easy to miss; yet once observed it raises problems. How is 'youth' defined by the programme? To be young in this sense is to exist butterfly-like in an a-causal world to which one has a totally passive relationship. (Masterman, 1980: 64)

Following these discussions, the students conclude that 'people and actions simply exist divorced from any real function' in this kind of show and thus they seem to exist in a 'world of inactivity and impotence' (Masterman, 1980: 66). From Masterman's summary of the classroom discussion quoted above, it is difficult to grasp how students reach these conclusions, how teachers are engaged with their discussion, and exactly how the students discuss the programme. However, the desirable outcome of this approach seems clear, particularly in an example of students' writing, which Masterman considers good:

As well as being for entertainment 'Top of the Pops' is used as an information service of the latest news on what records are available, it is a kind of shop window. This

programme also sells fashion and hairstyles, much teenage fashion can be attributed to what is picked up from the programme. (…) First of all we are given a run down on the most popular goods selling at the moment. Each record is given a number and space of time. This happens to the beat of a tune playing. We are greeted with 'Good evening Britain' by a Disc Jockey, a master of word and wit. He (*sic*) gives verbal details on the charts and we get down to business, a free sample of a cross section of best selling music. (…) On the whole the programme stands for everything that is up to date to teenagers. (from a student, Simon Byron's writing, Masterman, 1980: 66-67)

To Masterman, this student is seen to demonstrate his critical understanding of the programme through textual analysis in terms of the iconography of young people and the commercialism of its ideology. By excluding his own personal feelings and experiences as a teenager and making no value judgements of the programme in terms of quality, this student is seen to have achieved critical autonomy from the media.

However, it is difficult to regard this student's writing as a demonstration of his critical analysis of the TV programme. This writing is clearly describing elements of commercialism but this does not necessarily reflect a critical understanding of this phenomenon. In fact, insofar as the student's writing is a mere factual description of the show, there seems to be a gap between the conclusion Masterman argues was made in the classroom and the student's description of the show in terms of the depth of understanding.

Perhaps in this case, therefore, it seems to be the teacher's *wish* to recognise the successful outcome of the approach which lent the writing additional meaning, which the student might not necessarily have intended.

## 2.1.1. Criticisms of the 'demystification' approach

Despite the political empowerment that this kind of approach might aim at, a number of problems have been raised. The first problem comes from its exclusion of personal experience from the process of reading and learning about the media. In a widely cited article, Judith Williamson raises a serious question particularly about this issue, based on her own experience of teaching a mixed group about the representation of women in the media (Williamson, 1981/2). In an exemplary scene in the classroom, the teacher and students are studying girls' magazines, focusing on the codes and conventions in which girls' lives, expectations and romance are dealt with. In the classroom where girls' personal experiences of reading these things were not discussed, the boys seemed to feel more comfortable with the topic, thinking that girls were stupid enough to read these stories and images, which were, to them, obviously unrealistic and trashy. In this way, ironically, the girls apparently become the target of the boys' critical discourse. Arguing that the analytical model, which appears to be objective, was actually allowing the boys to justify their sexist views, Williamson clearly objects to the approach, saying that:

It is not enough just to analyse the media. Students can know the history of TV

backwards and 'deconstruct' an entire TV programme but still think the people who

watch it are stupid. Unless you can find any analogous situation in their own experience,

and make it problematic for them, they will never really grasp the ideological relation

between 'text' and 'reader'. (Williamson, 1981/2; 84)

While Williamson argues that the problem with the critical analysis approach lies in not

discussing personal experience of the media in the classroom, as I shall discuss in Chapter

5, my own research shows that the problem is actually in the particular *ways* in which

personal discourses are allowed to enter into the classroom.

The second problem with the analytical approach relating to this issue is how ideology is

understood. As Williamson suggests, ideology in the analytical model seems to be

regarded as what other people think, and thus the 'only possible explanation for why *they*

[others] believe such "lies" or "propaganda" is that *they* are stupid' (Williamson, 1981/2:

85, my *italics*). Here again, this echoes the way in which the discourse of critical pedagogy

effectively distinguishes (critical) 'us' from (uncritical) 'them' (see Chapter 1). This arises

because in Masterman's approach, ideology is regarded as something that inherently lies in

media texts and controls the readers' consciousness without consideration of how the

audience in real situations might respond to the texts and their ideological meanings, as

Buckingham points out (Buckingham 1986). (I shall discuss further how audience research

might explain the relationship between the media and the audience in Chapter 3 in relation to my own theoretical positions to teaching and learning in media education.)

Thirdly, the role of the teacher suggested in this model is seen to be problematic. As Buckingham notes, there appears to be a contradiction between the 'non-hierarchical' and *student-centred* pedagogy promoted in this model *and* its emphasis on the systematic procedure of analysis by which the students are seen to overcome their false consciousness (Buckingham, 1986: 85). One of the fairly obvious problems here would be how teachers, without being authoritarian, could persuade students that particular images were based on mystification. What if students do not regard certain images as ideological, when the teacher does? In reality, as a possessor of the skills of demystification, the teacher seems to assume a sense of rightness: as Williamson suggests, '*because* they teach (…) in a situation where whatever they say is going to be "right" since they have the power as a teacher' (Williamson, 1981/2: 87, Williamson's *italics*). (See also my discussion of the position of the emancipatory teacher in Chapter 1.) Thus the position of the teacher, as Buckingham argues, seems frequently to remain unquestioned insofar as their perspectives are assumed to be properly 'critical' and therefore their power can be justified as a form of emancipatory authority (Buckingham, 1996a). However, as Buckingham suggests, students' responses to the lefty teacher's politically correct discourse can be fairly predictable:

Once students have recognised you as such, they may either choose to play the game (in which case Media Studies becomes the lesson in which they say lots of ideologically sound things) or refuse to do so (in which case they say things they may or may not believe, simply to annoy you and thereby amuse themselves). Neither strategy necessarily involves them in re-thinking, or indeed in even formulating, their own position. (Buckingham, 1986: 91-92)

Lastly, the status of practical work in the analytical model is seen to be problematic. While the critical analysis model almost exclusively emphasises the reading aspect of media learning, practical media production seems to be marginalised. From Masterman's perspective, the purpose of practical work is merely to help students to understand media texts as constructed (rather than natural) by giving them first-hand experience of the construction process from the inside. Production activities run the risk of students emulating professional media and falling into the 'technicist trap' (Masterman, 1985: 26). By limiting the purpose of practical media production only to deconstruction, however, the analytical model seems to run the risk of 'emphasising theoretical concerns at the expense of the students' motivation to produce their own messages' (Buckingham, 1987a: 34). I shall discuss this further in relation to Masterman's criticisms of the approaches to media production both as students' self-expression and as training skills later in this chapter.

I have explored several criticisms of the analytical approach to media education. In my view, the problems raised by this approach seem to come precisely from its assumptions about the media as the site where dominant ideologies are reproduced. Without being concerned with the ways in which the audience might engage with the media in their own lives, this *text-centred* approach emphasises that, in order to become critical, students should decipher dominant ideologies which are thought to exist in media texts. As we saw in the example of a student's writing about *Top of the Pops*, a successful student seems to be required to follow a particular analytical procedure to identify the 'underlying ideology', without necessarily reflecting on how he or she might engage with the programme as a member of an audience. In this case, the teacher seems to be less concerned with whether this kind of learning might have changed the ways that students might watch the programme or indeed why the audience of the particular television programme might watch it anyway, despite the ideological implications. Going back to the example of the discussion about *Top of the Pops* in Masterman's classroom, it is difficult to know whether the students might have changed their view of the programme as a result of critical analysis or whether they might have enjoyed watching it regardless of their analysis.

In terms of the relationships between teachers and students, this text-centred approach seems to be based on a simple dichotomy between these two groups both in terms of their class backgrounds and cultural preferences. The teacher is described, in Masterman's

model, to be middle class, somehow aligned with high cultural values, whereas the students are thought to be working class, aligned with popular cultural values. While this assumption is not given any real evidence to support it, it seems to be the grounds for excluding any discussion about aesthetic value judgements of the media in order to prevent the teacher from attacking students' personal preferences (Masterman, 1980, 1985). In my view, this assumption seems to reduce cultural values to the class background of people who make particular judgements and to see teachers and students each as a *homogenous* group.

As I shall discuss in relation to my own research in Chapter 5, this approach offers a particular version of critical discourse that legitimises particular ways in which the teacher and the students can talk about the media in the classroom in order to be seen as critical beings. In the process, *the* 'official critical discourse' positions the teacher and the students in particular ways and effectively controls the entrance of 'personal discourses' into the Media Studies arena. Therefore, there seems to be a danger that the text-centred approach, which makes the students focus on the ideological dimension of media texts, ends up alienating the students' own personal experiences of the media, which, ironically, may not necessarily be fundamentally different from the teacher's own.

In summary, the discourse of empowerment in the critical analysis model of media education aims to turn students into media critics who can demystify the ideology of the

media. In order to achieve this aim, the pedagogic process seems to privilege an analytical

procedure for critical reading of the media, which puts aside any personal experiences of

the students as well as the creative aspects of media production. Despite the aim of

empowering students to analyse dominant ideologies in society beyond the media, this

approach does not seem to offer clear grounds for judging whether or not students taught

in this way have in fact become more critical. As I shall indicate in Chapter 5, this

rationalistic, analytical model apparently causes some tensions between the critical teacher

and supposedly uncritical students in the real situation of the classroom. This issue will be

addressed in relation to my own observation of classroom practice, where the personal

discourses of both teacher and students constantly intervene in the *rationalistic* analysis of

the media, thereby disrupting *the* official critical discourse.


## 2.2. The 'youth work' approach ('media production as self-expression')

While the critical analysis approach has been developed in formal education, particularly

in the subject of Media Studies, another approach, which takes the view of media

education as a means to express the 'alternative' voice of young people, has been

developed mostly in youth and community work. While the former approach focuses on

*negative* aspects of the media, the latter seeks to exploit its *positive* aspects. This second

approach recognises the popularity of the media among young people and the potential of

media production as a significant means of education and communication.

Early work in this approach such as the book *Videology and Utopia* was written against

the background of cultural movements in Europe in the late 1960s (Willener *et al*, 1976).

The authors celebrate the potential of portable video equipment as a new medium of that

time: they believed that it would bring about a 'new type of revitalizing social action'

differentiated from 'elitist forms of social work'. Their idea is based on their critical view

of mainstream media such as television, which are seen to be 'dependent in the highest

degree on the established technological and *ideological* system' (Willener *et al*, 1976: 132,

my *italics*). In this respect, these authors clearly share the view of the media adopted by

exponents of the critical analysis approach. However, they advocate the new medium of

video as a 'cultural animator', which could bring about:

> a non-manipulative catalytic process that facilitates awareness, expression, and
>
> communication within and between individuals and groups, by providing human and
>
> material resources without seeking to impose external aims, standards or content.
>
> (Willener *et al*, 1976: 153)

Tony Dowmunt's *Video with Young People* is a book which exemplifies this approach and

describes the uses of video in work with young people in informal settings such as

youthclubs or playschemes (Dowmunt, 1980). Discussing this book in detail as an

example of the youth work type of media production, I would like to look at the

philosophy and pedagogic process of this approach.

According to Dowmunt, the emphasis in this kind of work is on 'enabling young people to

do *what they want* to with video', and on 'providing techniques and structures which will

help them to do that' (Dowmunt, 1980: 1-6). A number of reasons for using video are

suggested: first, video is becoming cheaper to buy and simpler to use, and thus available

for ordinary people, not just those who work professionally in the mainstream media

industry. Secondly, because it is also easy to learn how to operate video and quick to see

the result after filming, young people can work without the intimidation of having to learn

complicated skills; and thereby get a sense of achievement more quickly. Thirdly, because

young people are excited about its 'magic and glamour', video can be a good medium

with which young people can express themselves with less inhibition than in words or

with paint. Furthermore, more active involvement with video can help young people to

develop a more 'questioning attitude' towards what they see every night at home. Lastly,

video work, which is defined as essentially a group activity involving a number of roles to

be played both behind and in front of the camera, requires young people to be aware of

responsibilities both for themselves and others in a group. Viewed in this manner, video

can help them to develop a sense of themselves as an interdependent group. Thus, the use

of video in youth work is justified, based on the popularity of the medium amongst young

people and its educational significance for their 'personal and group development'. Now I am going to analyse the pedagogic process of this approach, by looking at some examples taken from Dowmunt's own discussion of practice.

When introducing the equipment, the adult worker is required to establish a good 'three cornered relationship' between themselves, the equipment and the young people (Dowmunt, 1980: 14). As in student-centred teaching, young people's needs and interests are considered more important than the adult worker's perspectives or the equipment itself. Thus the adult worker is advised not to overprotect the equipment but to allow young people to take responsibilities for it. Instead of conventional instruction in technical skills, 'learning by doing' is suggested as a good way of giving young people more confidence. Various games and exercises are recommended in order to teach technical skills in informal and playful ways; this is also believed to bring a group together and even break down some barriers between adult workers and young people.

Following the introduction, the adult worker is advised to encourage young people to come up with their own ideas that they want to try out. At this stage, it is preferable not to show other people's work even when young people do not suggest any ideas. Again, to encourage them to invent stories, interesting games are recommended, which will also enable the whole group to participate in planning. To form the basis of a story as the

content of production, young people are encouraged to express their 'personal experiences', as in the following example:

The idea is to get each young person to say something in turn, and to keep the pace up by having the rest of the group clap twice in between turns. You could start by going round saying something fairly trivial like what you had for breakfast that morning then move on to something closer to the theme that you want to develop. For instance, if it is on unemployment with a group of unemployed teenagers, have them say what jobs they wanted when they were kids; or on romance, have them say something sexual that happened to them before the age of eight. (Dowmunt, 1980: 30)

In addition, young people need to learn that television is not an open 'window on the world' by doing some games about television itself. Although they may start video work fascinated by the 'magic and glamour' of television, young people still need to learn that images on the screen come from particular points of view and selected aspects of what's going on in the world. One of the games recommended here is the 'news story game':

Split the group into two. One group invents a news story: they could be pickets at factory gates, or victims and rescue workers at an air disaster (using overturned chairs and tables to simulate the crashed plane, maybe). Have them work out their story in detail, without letting the other group hear what they're planning. The others then work

as a TV news team, investigating the story and videotaping a short piece on it. When you play it back, the first group can discuss how well they think they have been represented, and whether they feel that the tape is an accurate and complete picture of what happened to them. (Dowmunt, 1980: 33)

After learning this basic knowledge about the equipment and understanding that television images come from a particular point of view, young people are ready to film. At this stage, they can use video as a way of exploring and learning about their community and 'maybe even changing aspects of the world'. In a successful example of this kind of work, a group of young people was drawn into a project about the estate in their community. Starting with the fascination of doing some video work, they ended up making a tape on the 'lack of play space' in their area. Furthermore, after playing their tape to local council officers, they were eventually able to 'change their world' by being given a room in which to meet on the estate (Dowmunt, 1980: 38).

After finishing video work, collective viewing and discussion about the content of the video work are recommended. For this, the selection both of the materials and the viewing patterns are important. Preferable materials for viewing are videos made by community or youth groups or in educational settings, because the nature of the information that young people get from this kind of video is thought to appeal to them more than that from mainstream television programmes. In terms of viewing patterns, young people are

required to control when to play and stop the videotape for discussion, rather than following the television schedule. In a successful example described by Dowmunt, students who watched a videotape about 'violence at football matches' made by a group of school children, turned out to be more able to talk about their personal involvement and feelings on the subject than when they watched a BBC *Panorama* programme about the same subject (Dowmunt, 1980: 46).

Thus far, I have discussed the pedagogic process of media production, particularly with video, in youth and community work. In this supposedly *student-centred* approach, young people are encouraged to express their personal experiences and feelings about themselves and their community, participating in various group activities designed to be interesting. The aim of this kind of learning is to foster young people's personal and group development, and thereby to make them become *critical citizens*, who can understand the issues in their community, with confidence gained through the production process. These criteria seem to be recognised in a statement by a youth worker about a video project on housing in their area, as follows:

They are all a great deal *more knowledgeable* now about housing in Islington and how the situation affects them than they were when the project started. They have all gained in *confidence* considerably from interviewing so-called experts who they would not in the past have come in contact with. A great deal of *confidence* has resulted from the

technical skills learnt in operating the equipment, and a quite thorough *political and*

*social analysis* has resulted from their researches into the paradoxes of homelessness in

the welfare state. The group is now quite stable and intend to take tapes on this and

other topics around to school, youth clubs and tenants meetings. (Dowmunt, 1980: 38,

my *italics*)


## 2.2.1. Criticisms of the self-expression approach


While the youth work approach is based on the importance of using media production for

young people's personal and social development, there have been criticisms of this type of

media learning, particularly about the student-centred approach, and the emphasis on

making young people 'do what they want'. As an advocate of the critical analysis

approach, Bob Ferguson (1981) argues that this pedagogy often results in 'one or two

children dominating the rest of the group, who become carriers of hardboard clipboards of

indeterminate purpose' rather than every student in a group production becoming

confident about handling the equipment. In relation to this, he also argues that this

approach has a danger of removing intellectually demanding activity in favour of young

people's interests in the medium. As such, his criticism is also directed at the ways in

which the youth work approach does not necessarily make young people challenge the

norms of (video) production, as follows:

Notions of creativity have done much to damage education's capacity to generate change. (…) It is the semi-spontaneous outpouring of intense feeling. (…) It is quite essential for the teaching of media studies to move away from such notions of creativity and concentrate on the *construction* of meaning. Practical work in media studies is about making meaning and understanding how one has done it. It can be taught and practised. It does not exclude passion or depth of feeling, but it does include rationality, analysis and the desire to learn. (Ferguson, 1981: 42, Ferguson's *italics*)

In order to base practical work on intellectual analysis, Ferguson suggests that practical work should highlight a form of construction usually accepted unquestioningly as the norm. In this alternative practical work, students are required to manipulate televisual or filmic language for a *specific purpose*, 'not to express oneself, but to manufacture a meaning through the conscious manipulation of production techniques and norms', and to engage in systematic 'rule-breaking' (Ferguson, 1981: 46, Ferguson's *italics*). As such, this criticism also applies to the 'media production training' approach, which will be discussed below. Like Masterman, who almost dismisses practical work in itself in favour of its use for 'first-hand' deconstruction activity (Masterman, 1985), Ferguson argues that practical work should focus on challenging the conventions of media production.

Ferguson's emphasis on the media as manufactured (rather than natural) seems to come from the Godardian approach to filmmaking, which is based on a critique of realist effects

in film and television production (Thompson & Bordwell, 1994). Here, continuity editing, for instance, which is used to link shots seamlessly both temporally and spatially, is critiqued in terms of its ideological effect of giving the audience the impression of reality by concealing the process by which the particular reality is constructed. Therefore, Godard challenges the norm of continuity editing and inserts jump cuts, which are usually avoided in mainstream film and television production, in order to make the audience conscious of the fact that they are making sense of particular meanings constructed by a particular filmmaker. However, this perspective on practical work seems to ignore one of the most important reasons why students might choose to learn about media production in the first place – their wish to learn how to communicate with the media – as Buckingham rightly points out (Buckingham, 1987a). In relation to this, the narrow emphasis on learning about rule-breaking seems also to ignore the fact that students need to learn the norms of media production in order to use them for their own purposes, as I shall discuss in Chapter 7, in relation to my own research.

On the other hand, Furguson's critique of 'creativity' seems to be related to a sociological perspective on art, which is opposed to the understanding of art as a matter of the individual genius's artistic talent, isolated from specific sociocultural institutions and contexts. However, his view seems to go to the opposite extreme, denying the fact that any individual text is produced by the engagement of a particular producer's personal and social *subjectivity*. In fact, the idea of the 'death of the author' put forward by theorists

such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault does not deny the existence of a biological *person* who produces a text, but seeks to explain how a text might be constructed socially and culturally (Barthes, 1977; Foucault; 1984). Rather than seeing a text as something constructed by a dialogue between the subjectivity of its producer, which itself is constructed in a dialogue between inner selves and the outer world (Bakhtin, 1981), Ferguson seems only to see a text as a fixed *structure* to be deconstructed. In addition, Ferguson's fundamental rejection of expression itself, which is based on the negative experience of his own teaching, appears to deny young people's aesthetic relationship with the popular media and its educational potential.

In contrast to Ferguson's rejection of the aesthetic approach, Paul Willis tries to theorise a new aesthetics of popular culture, which focuses on how young people might make meanings from popular media culture (Willis, 1990). In an attempt to overcome the dichotomy between arts and culture, and to recognise 'symbolic creativity' in young people's creative relation with popular cultural forms such as music, fashion, magazines, television and other popular media, he tries to reconceptualise what he terms 'cultural competence'. As such, Willis argues for the need for a more positive approach to recognising young people's symbolic creativity, which is based on their relation with popular media rather than the traditional form of Arts.

Ferguson's criticism of the approach to media education as a means for young people to express their views and creativity can be seen as a reflection of a broader critique of the romanticisation of working class youth's expression as something genuine. Based on his own teaching experience, Ferguson argues that practical work frequently became a male dominated activity in which female students were often excluded or featured in a manner which might reinforce 'dominant sexual stereotypes' (Ferguson, 1981: 42). Likewise, Sefton-Green also points out the same problem with the broader project of seeking to provide working class youth with a voice, an approach which tends to romanticise the experience of working class students, and to assume that it can easily be politicised (Sefton-Green, 1995: 87). (See the Milson-Fairbairn report (DES, 1969) and the Thompson report (DES, 1982), for the broader context of youth work as social and political education.)

In this respect, Dowmunt and Ferguson seem to adopt quite contrary views regarding the potential of politicising urban youth. On the one hand, young people in youth clubs are seen to have personal or social problems such as 'troubles with their parents' or 'unemployment' (Dowmunt, 1980), and thus, in some ways, to be in need of education. As such, media production seems to be used as a useful means of addressing these problems due to the popularity of the media amongst young people, and thus to possess the power to make them express their experiences and feelings with less intimidation and in more powerful ways. Owing to this power of the media, youth workers in Dowmunt's book

seem to have no problem with undertaking somewhat difficult tasks of building these young people's confidence, despite the young people's existing personal and social problems: educating these young people in this way seems comparatively unproblematic. In contrast, the young people described by Ferguson are totally different: they are described as having problems such as 'lack of discipline' and their 'male-dominated culture', and thus are thought to be almost impossible to educate by making them express what they want.

Yet in both accounts, young people seem to be seen as a *homogeneous* group, either as ones who can be easily politicised or ones who remain as troublemakers. Completely missing in both cases is a sense of how young people might perceive the pedagogy itself. Clearly, the adult worker's educational values are likely to generate particular responses from young people, just like the critical analysis approach might do in school. Without considering how and why young people might conform to or resist the adult worker's discourse, the versions of young people assumed by Dowmunt and Ferguson both seem highly *essentialist*. This issue of pedagogy will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 6, in relation to my own observation of young people who were working with video in an informal environment.

Another pedagogic issue that has been raised here is to do with video work as a group activity. While group activity has been seen as a means of promoting young people's

personal and social development by making them work in a team, we need to consider

how young people with different experiences or levels of understanding about media

production might learn together. The implicit assumption in Dowmunt's approach, for

example, seems to be that young people bring almost no knowledge of the equipment and

thus that they can build confidence by being able to operate it only with the basic

knowledge given to them. While this might have been justified in the 1970s, such a view

is no longer plausible now. In reality, young people today often possess considerable

knowledge about the media, both from their own viewing and practical experience of

production. Thus it does not seem easy to know if and how young people could gain

confidence by learning about the equipment in this way. Furthermore, without being

provided with *grounds for negotiation* both in terms of ideas and production methods, one

or two young people who might be more knowledgeable about the media equipment could

happen to dominate the work of the group. This issue will also be addressed further in

Chapter 7, based on my own observation.

Thus far, I have discussed the rationale and the pedagogy of media learning in youth work

and the debates raised by critiques of it. Empowerment in this approach seems to mean

making young people *critical citizens* by enabling them to express their personal

experiences through the process of media production. While there seems to have been a

degree of romanticisation of working class youth's experiences in this approach,

knowledge about media equipment and techniques seems to be introduced primarily as a

means of building their confidence and social skills. However, the apparent *faith* in young people's self-guided personal and group development, which this approach reflects, is possibly misguided. This issue will be addressed in a later chapter in relation to my own observation.

## 2.3. Media production 'training' approach

Practical production in media education has been seen mostly as a means to an end: either as a means of learning a critical metalanguage or as a means of expressing young people's experiences. As such, teaching practical production as an *end in itself* seems to have been put aside as an area of professional training for future *media producers*. In fact, amongst Media Studies teachers, there has even been a fear of what Masterman call technicist trap (Masterman, 1985), a view that 'concentrating on technical skills will displace critical practice and restrict knowledge and awareness' (Alvarado & Bradshaw, 1992).

However, due to the changes in government policies and practices in education and in youth work (in the U.K.) since the mid 1980s, which have tried to develop connections between education, training and employment, media education has been pushed to rethink the relationships between theoretical study and practical production, and between the traditional youth work approach and the training approach. Therefore, I shall firstly

outline the social and historical context where such changes have occurred, before moving

on to an analysis of the pedagogic process of the training approach. Then, since I have

already laid out the criticisms of the media production training approach from a more

critical perspective in the previous section, I shall discuss some of the critical

interventions in the opportunities offered by the training schemes.


## 2.3.1. Changing contexts of media education


The central changes in this 'shift to vocationalism' can broadly be understood in terms of

the dual aims of bridging the gaps between academic and vocational education as well as

between education/training and employment. This is reflected in a series of government

reports, such as *Working Together-Education and Training* (1986), *Review of Vocational

Qualifications* (1986), and *Education and Training for the Twenty-first Century* (1991)

and in the earlier introduction of the 'Technical and Vocational Education Initiatives

(TVEI)' in 1983, which sought to reshape the education curriculum to include vocational

elements in order to make education more relevant to the world of work and, supposedly,

to ease the transition from school to work. To strengthen links between

industries/employers and schools, a 'Compact' scheme was introduced, within which

students were to attend 'work placements' and teachers are involved in 'work-shadowing

exercises', and employers were given the opportunity to engage with the educational

curriculum. Such arguments for changes in academic education are also reflected in the

widely influential document, *Excellence in Schools* (D*f*EE, 1997: 62) in that the

government continues to promote work-related learning for 14–16 year olds, who have

become 'disaffected with the school system and a traditional curriculum'. This means, for

media education, as Alvarado and Bradshaw suggest (Alvarado & Bradshaw, 1992), that

the more theoretical aspect of Media Studies could be combined with a technical skills

learning component.

During the 1980s, new pre-vocational media courses in TVEI schemes emerged, which

promoted the notion of 'active, student-centred learning', and hence student production (Cf.

Buckingham, 1990: 11; Buckingham, Grahame & Sefton-Green, 1995: 4). While there was

very small element of critical study of the media in these schemes, practical media

production by students was the major part of the courses. Meanwhile, there have been also

clear attempts to achieve a balance between theory and practice, both in new Media

Studies curricula at GCSE and A-level and in media education in general, particularly

within the subject of English (Cf. Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; 130-131). While the

main purpose of practical work here is still to demonstrate critical understanding of the

media, students are also encouraged 'to familiarise themselves with media technologies'

and 'to engage with media technologies in inventive and imaginative ways' (e.g., OCR,

1998: 2).

The British Film Institute's *Curriculum Statements* both for primary and secondary school

also identify media technologies as one of the key areas of media education, alongside more theoretical areas such as 'media agencies', 'media categories', 'media language', 'media audience' and 'media representation' (Bazalgette, 1989: 8; Bowker, 1991: 6). The English and Media Centre's curriculum for Media in English also reflects this balance between theoretical understanding and practical work (Grahame, 1991). Finally, the recent report, *Making Movies Matter* (Film Education Working Group, 1999) also recognises production competence as one of the key points of what is termed as 'cineliteracy', although it is limited to the field of film education rather than the broader field of media education.

While the vocational emphasis on educational policy has made the relationship between theoretical and practical aspects of media education more complex, by bringing changes into the school curriculum and syllabuses as such, it has also impacted on the youth work approach to media education in terms of the emphasis on providing youth with opportunities for training skills. While the youth work approach was traditionally defined as social and political education for 'disaffected' young people during the 1970s and 1980s (DES, 1969; DES, 1982) it has been increasingly concerned, since the early 1990s, with ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to learn the skills that they need to make a success of their adult lives (Cf. Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). Reflecting such changes, a recent government initiative, 'Connexions', for instance, proposes a 'graduation certificate', which aims for all young people to have qualifications by the age

of 19 through education and training as well as interpersonal skills and voluntary work (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; DfEE, 2001). In this context, the youth work approach seems to have become more closely related to education and training than in the past, in the sense that it increasingly emphasises that young people should learn skills and get qualifications. (I shall discuss this further in relation to my own case study of a youth media project in Chapter 6.)

While such vocational initiatives have been discussed by critics mostly on the level of *educational policy*, particularly in terms of the link between education and employment (e.g., Jones, 1989; Moore, 1984), discussion of their pedagogic implications for media education does not seem to have moved beyond the criticism of technicism, as I discussed earlier. Meanwhile, due to the advent of new video and computer technologies, which have become much easier for young people to use, there have been various kinds of handbooks or guidebooks published. The content of these books – which can also be read for the purpose of self-study – is mostly in the form of instructions on how to use the equipment and how to apply production methods for practical work. These books seem to have been used by media teachers and instructors, or read by media students themselves, in order to cover the technical side of media learning. To specify the *implicit* pedagogy in this approach, I would like to look at one typical example of this kind of book.

## 2.3.2. The implicit pedagogy of the 'media production training' approach

*Practical Media: A Guide to Production Techniques* (Dimbleby *et al*, 1994) is written for students studying A-level Media and Communication Studies and those on GNVQ Media courses. By illustrating key techniques with photographs and diagrams, it aims to show how to plan and make audio/visual productions with various media, such as photography, audio tapes and radio, slide/tape sequences, video, and desktop publishing and graphics. Each chapter contains, first, a brief history of the development and uses of a specific medium and then secondly, a specific type of equipment and its parts and functions, illustrated with photographs and diagrams. In the section on video and television production, for example, the parts and functions of the camcorder are explained, followed by instructions on how to set up the camera and to operate it. A typical example is as follows:

Focusing – Focusing seems to create the most difficulty for inexperienced camera operators, and you should never rely on autofocus. With autofocus, the camera will often focus on the wrong subject, or will oscillate between different objects, creating annoying and amateurish shots. The correct way to ensure perfect focus is to zoom fully into the subject (by using the telephoto setting of the lens) before pressing the record button. The focus ring should then be turned so that the picture looks pin sharp in the viewfinder. Once this has been done, you can reframe the shot (by zooming out),

and the subject will remain in sharp focus. Of course, if you need to change focus

while the camera is recording, then it will not be possible to use this technique. It is a

good idea to practice focusing on moving objects as much as possible before actually

filming anything important. This can be done by setting the camera up by the side of a

road (ensuring you and the equipment are in a safe place), and trying to keep cars

moving towards you in focus for as long as possible. This is not easy, so once you have

mastered this you should have no problem focusing in the future. (*ibid*: 122)

The sentences starting with 'you' seem to address the readers directly, assuming them to

be students. Students addressed by you are taught how to focus on objects while they are

being introduced to various technical terms relating to the activity, such as 'autofocus' and

'viewfinder'. Then, the rules to get a specific effect, for example of focusing on a subject,

are introduced with some useful advice: there are things that they 'should' or 'should not'

do. The overall aim is to avoid shots that are 'annoying' and 'amateurish' – although how

these things are identified is taken for granted.

In similar ways, students are taught basic shots used in television, such as 'close up',

'medium close up', 'three quarter shot' and 'long shot', and rules for 'shot composition',

as follows:

Composition – Unlike the human eye, a camera records everything impartially. It is up to the camera operator to select the important parts of the view, and compose the shot accordingly to show their importance. For example, when setting up a shot of a person, the eyeline should be in the top third of the picture, and you should allow a slight gap above the head (otherwise known as 'headroom'). 'Speaking space' should always be given in front of a person, unless they are talking directly to the camera. Similarly, a moving subject should have 'walking space' into which it can move. Good composition of the picture will greatly enhance the overall quality of the final production. As a general rule, make sure you fill the frame at all times. However, don't over do it – remember to give your subject background room to 'breathe'. (Dimbleby *et al*, 1994: 125)

Here again, there are *rules* to be followed in order to compose shots. A camera operator is advised to select a particular point of view because otherwise the camera will record everything impartially. This seems to be introduced as a objective rule which follows the conventions of visual communication on the television screen. In contrast, such a phenomenon would be discussed by advocates of critical analysis in terms of its ideological significance.

Group work is also introduced, although this is seen not as a means of encouraging the students' group development, but rather as a kind of simulation of professional work

experience. Here individual students are given their specific tasks as a member of the crew and are advised to do their own tasks only, not to disrupt others' and thus to enable the production to run smoothly. For instance, the 'director/producer' is defined as:

> responsible for the overall artistic quality of the production. S/he watches the three preview screens and not the script. The director should be able to remember the script well enough to know when a cut or cue is to be made. S/he then instructs the vision mixer to execute the cut and must let the camera operators know when they are to change angle. H/she is also responsible for instigating any music or lighting cues.
>
> (Dimbleby *et al*, 1994: 139)

The roles of the other members of the crew are also specified in their hierarchical relationships. For instance, a production assistant is defined usually as the director's assistant, whose job is to 'follow the script carefully and announce the shot numbers to provide an early warning as to which camera/shot is required next'. The vision mixer is to be instructed by the director/producer, and thus to 'make all cuts from camera to camera'. An extract taken from the control room is suggested to show their relationships, as follows:

| Production assistant | Director | Vision mixer |
|---|---|---|
| 'Shot 13; camera 3 next.' | | Prepares to cut to camera 3. |
| 'Shot 14; camera 1 next | 'Cut.' | Cuts to camera 3. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| in position C.' | | Prepares to cut to camera 1. |
| | 'Keep it steady camera 1… | Cuts to camera 1. |
| | A bit tighter 1 … | |
| | Coming to you. Cut.' | |
| 'Shot 15; camera 2 next, | | Prepares to mix camera 2. |
| it's a mix. Camera 3, | | |
| you've released to go to | | |
| position B.' | | |

(Dimbleby *et al*, 1994: 139)

Once students become comfortable with the techniques of the equipment and their own roles in a group, they are required to move on to learn about the basic conventions of television productions, such as interviews, as follows:

When recording an interview, there is no need to show the interviewer during the interview itself. Instead, concentrate on the most important person: the interviewee. Use plenty of close ups of them (generally depicting head, shoulders and some chest) to avoid making the viewer feel distanced. Always position the interviewer directly next to the camera and ensure that the interviewer looks towards her/him. Never film an interview from the side, as the resulting pictures will be awkward to watch. (…)

(Dimbleby *et al*, 1994: 147-148)

These technical conventions of television interviews are based on assumptions about how audience members might feel about what they see on a television screen – for example, what will make the viewer 'feel distanced' or be 'awkward to watch'. However, the

process of decision-making about the ideas of the interviews themselves, such as who they are going to interview for what reasons, and what kind of questions they will ask, are not considered in any detail here.

At the end of the chapter, a simple case study is suggested as a summary of the points made about video and television production. A successful example is taken from a student's production: a copy of a classic Renault car advertisement from the late 1980s. (Dimbelby *et al*, *ibid*: 176-8) In this example, a TV commercial is given to a student to 'copy' the content and follow the procedures of a video production as a way of practising the techniques used in the advert. In this *test* production, the student carefully follows the production methods step by step from the beginning of writing a treatment to the final stage of editing, and in this process, the student is able to use relevant technical terms. Preparation for shooting involves some administrative procedures such as getting permission for using a particular location and booking the equipment. All these procedures are planned and organised by the student, the director/producer, who recruits actors and members of crew such as a camera operator. Post-production involves some technical procedures including 'dumping' the original footage from the Hi-8 onto two U-Matic SP tapes before editing, and then dumping the edited version from U-Matic SP to VHS tape, after editing. Having followed all these techniques and procedures, the student is deemed to have learnt how to make a successful video.

Thus far, I have discussed the *implicit* pedagogy of media production training and the criticisms of it. The pedagogy of this approach can be identified as a matter of teaching the *rules* to operate the media equipment and techniques, and the production procedures to follow, while the content of the production or young people's personal and group development do not seem to be a major concern. Thus the discourse of empowerment in this kind of pedagogy seems to involve enabling students to become *media producers* and thereby to find employment in the media industries.

## 2.3.3. 'Critical' intervention in the 'training' approach

In the previous section, I have identified the kinds of learning that are seen as legitimate in this practical media approach. The priorities of learning seem to be on following the rules of operating the equipment, production methods and procedures. Despite its usefulness as a way of learning about media technology and production procedures, however, this skill-based *instruction* has been heavily criticised, particularly by advocates of the critical analysis approach to media education. It is often seen as a form of technicism, which is understood to reproduce the dominant ideology by emulating professional products (Ferguson, 1981; Masterman, 1985). Under pressure from the government's vocational initiatives in the mid-1980s, radical media teachers seemed to be worried about the possibility that media education might be given very little space apart from the demonstration of practical skills (Stafford, 1983).

At least in its pure form, the approach to skill-based learning seems quite problematic, in that it seems to be concerned only with the *form* of communication, rather than with the *content*. This approach also seems problematic in that it seems less concerned with group dynamics and learning. The descriptions of the roles of the crew in this approach might give an idea of how people work in a TV studio. However, this description of the professional environment might not necessarily be appropriate to the situation of students who have to learn how to operate the camera or how to edit a video, and who would have to work in a group with limited resources. These issues will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7 in relation to my own observation.

However, a certain attitude seems to have sprung up amongst academics to 'dismiss anything that smacks of vocationalism without a second thought', as Stafford suggests (Stafford, 1993). Most criticisms of vocationalism appear to be focused on the policy level of linking education, training and employment, particularly in the link between education/training and employment in the media industries (Alvarado & Bradshaw, 1992). Nevertheless, some media teachers have tried to find 'tactics' to exploit the development in youth training, from a more critical and cultural perspective, and thus to provide a form of popular education beginning with basic skills but leading on to more useful knowledge.

An important example is the Cockpit Arts Workshop, which offered photography projects

for early school-leavers (mostly young working class people) in a pre-vocational course (Dewdney & Lister, 1988). The courses seek to exploit the opportunities to teach media production skills (of photography) from a Cultural Studies point of view, in order to enable young people to explore their own identities. Another example of this kind of project can be found in Phil Cohen's *Really Useful Knowledge* (1990), which describes a critical intervention in these vocational education initiatives. Coming from a Cultural Studies background, Cohen recognises that the expansion of the cultural industries is the only major source of job creation for young people in the inner city. As such, he and his colleagues run photography courses combining the traditional 'apprenticeship' model with the 'subversive' approaches of Media Studies – that is, critical analysis of the media. These courses are aimed at working class school leavers (the same target as the Cockpit Arts Workshop), in order to make them employable based on the skills they would gain in the course.

In pedagogic terms, such a combination of the different approaches means that classroom practice is informed by the competing, and potentially conflicting aims of youth work (providing young people 'at risk' with a kind of social and political education) and training (teaching production skills). In such cases, a problem seems to arise when the teacher has to work with students who often 'do not seem to know what to take photographs of', or to 'have anything they wanted to photograph', as Dewdney and Lister suggest (Dewdney & Lister, 1988). As such, the teacher seems to find it difficult to make them do something

that the teacher regards as meaningful, without making them feel like they are doing further school work. This problem needs to be considered in relation to imposing the teacher's agenda both in terms of making the students critical citizens and media producers while applying the student-centred approach in the sense that teachers are required to make students 'do what they want'. I shall discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 6, in relation to my own research in a youth media project.

Finally, the training approach also needs to be considered in relation to the issue of media literacy. The writing aspect of media education has inevitably become more important in recent years, particularly considering that changing technologies have made it possible for some young people to learn about media production both at home and in school, as discussed earlier. Reflecting this, Stafford argues, in his teacher's guide to media technology, *Hands-On* (1993), that the aim of media education should be to empower students to become media literate by developing the capacity both to read and to write the whole range of media texts (Stafford, 1993: 5).

Criticising reading-centred media education, which focuses on the ideological dimension of the media (as discussed earlier), Stafford argues that students need to explore how media technology is used to create meaning, and therefore that they should be able to discuss visual and aural texts in terms of 'shapes, textures and colours' as well as subject content. Teaching media literacy in this way is regarded as empowerment in the sense that

it offers 'equal access to the power to communicate', and thereby an 'equal opportunity to

develop creative talents' (Stafford, 1993: 149). He points out that in earlier approaches to

media education, there was a lack of understanding of production methods and of the

requirement for preparation which makes creativity possible (Stafford, 1993; 146). In this

respect, he disagrees with code-breaking and oppositional practice that is preferred by the

advocates of the critical analysis approach such as Len Masterman and Bob Ferguson,

arguing that such an approach pays little attention to the production methods that students

need to know in order to write with media technology.


Stafford's thoughts on teaching about media technologies are developed in his more recent

report about nonlinear editing (Stafford, 1995). By looking at the implications of the new

editing technologies in education and training, he argues more strongly for media literacy.

According to him, nonlinear editing, which is based on storing text, still/moving images

and sound as digital information, makes it much easier for more students to learn about the

editing process, as well as making the division of labour much easier. It also allows the

editor to make visual judgements rather than just using mechanical skills. Emphasising that

the editor's task is to create meaning through the application of skill, knowledge and

understanding, he argues that editing is a crucial element of visual literacy and media

literacy more broadly. As such, he suggests that the reading and writing of images actually

be linked in the process of editing, considering that editing requires skills in reading

images to enable selection and sequencing. From my own observation, media students

seem to want to learn how to produce media products in a more professional environment, without necessarily linking the practice with their employment in the media industries, perhaps because they would like to learn how to *communicate* in audio-visual ways more effectively. This will be also discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to my own research.

## 2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the models of pedagogy which are implied in different approaches to media education in a rather schematic way. In their pure versions, the 'critical media analysis' model aims to make students media *critics* by giving them a theoretical power to analyse media texts critically, whereas the 'media production training' model aims to make students media *producers* by giving them more practical, and thus technological power to produce media products. In contrast, the 'media production as self-expression' model tries to offer a different kind of power, i.e. *personal and social development*, by encouraging young people to produce media in a group.

Historically, these three different models of media education have been developed in separate routes and different educational sites. Broadly speaking, critical media analysis, which emphasises the reading side of media literacy has been developed mostly in academic education, while media production training, which emphasises the writing side of media literacy has been developed mostly in the pre-vocational context, while media

production as self-expression has been developed mostly in youth and community work.

However, the reality of the practice of media education seems to have become more complex than what is described in the 'pure' versions, particularly because of changes in government policies on education and youth work, as well as developments in media technologies themselves. I have briefly discussed these changes and their pedagogic implications, drawing on some classroom research, which describes one form of critical intervention in the training context, and outlining a new perspective on media literacy which particularly emphasises the writing aspect.

Building on this, the next chapter will try to theorise teaching and learning in media education, based on the recent changes in thinking in terms of media and cultural theory and of media education over the last twenty years. Of particular importance here is the development of audience research and the situative perspective on learning. By exploring the implications both of audience research and of situative learning theory, I shall try to theorise teaching and learning in media education as a situated and negotiated process.

# Chapter 3.

# Theorising teaching and learning in media education:
# the situative perspective

In the previous chapter, I mapped out three different models of media education, focusing on the pedagogic processes of the 'pure' versions, which are recommended in teachers' handbooks. In doing so, I examined the kinds of knowledge and skills legitimised in each model in relation to the ideal outcome of learning, such as media critics, critical citizens and media producers. These pedagogic models inform the various classroom practices of media education that I shall discuss in later chapters. Building on this, this chapter lays out my own theoretical positions on teaching and learning about media education, as a way of exploring the complexity of the issue of empowerment.

The review of the pedagogy of media education discussed in the previous chapter suggests that we need to rethink the concept of empowerment in relation to what and how students might actually *learn*, rather than assuming that they are automatically empowered by what and how the teacher might *teach*. In order to do so, it seems necessary that we need to begin by considering what students already know about the media; and therefore, the project of rethinking empowerment needs to begin with an understanding of children and young people as media audiences as well as learners. This chapter firstly tries to bring together two distinctive areas of study: audience research, which has focused on how

audiences might make meanings from media texts, and situative learning theory, which has explored how students might learn in relation to their identity construction beyond formal learning situations. Although this thesis is not directly concerned with the process of young people's identity construction in relation to their use of the media, I shall explore the pedagogic implications of these new perspectives on media learning.

The situative perspective on media learning as an active and social meaning making process, which arises when we consider media learners as audiences, requires us to rethink how the teacher could and should mediate between the knowledge and abilities that students already have and ones that they should learn. However, this perspective needs to be considered in relation to the role of the teacher in order to realise more realistically the implications for a more learner-centred, and thus more dialogic pedagogy. Therefore, I shall discuss how the key concepts of situative learning theory such as 'communities of practice' need to be reconsidered in relation to the role of the teacher who facilitates the learners' 'legitimate peripheral participation' in the practice and takes into account their voices in the process.

## 3.1. From 'powerful texts' to 'active audiences':
### the educational implications of audience research

While many theoretical discussions about children and young people's relationship with the media have been characteristically dualistic, emphasising either the 'power of the media' or the 'power of the audience', the past two decades has seen the increase of the latter in a range of fields of research. However, this view of children and young people as active audiences of the media rather than passive victims of their bad effects has developed somewhat differently within two distinctive research paradigms: developmental psychology, particularly the constructivist or cognitive perspective, and cultural studies.

## 3.1.1. Developmental psychology and children as 'active' audiences

Developmental psychologists have argued that children's understanding of the media improves as they grow up and develop cognitive abilities (Chandler, 1997). Informed by the Piagetian perspective, researchers have attempted to specify, for example, the particular ages at which children might develop their abilities to distinguish between what is real and what is not on television (e.g., Noble, 1975).

An example of such research (which is based on three experimental studies investigating 3-4 year old children's perception about the television images) finds that 3 year old children assume that television images are 'solid', 'physically-present' objects – they tended to agree that a bowl of popcorn shown on television would spill if the television set were turned upside down –, whereas 4 year olds do not (Flavell *et al*, 1990). Such findings lead

to the development of a hypothesis about the early development of children's

understanding about realism on television: children around the age of 3 gradually learn that

television images are different from real objects in the world, and they become capable of

distinguishing television images from their referents when they reach the age of 4. Similar

research (which is based on a smaller but more intensive longitudinal study) also finds that

between the age of 3 and 4 children begin to recognise that the world shown on television

does not exist in reality (Jaglom & Gardner, 1981a, 1981b).


These studies of the development of children's understanding of realism on television have

been followed by a range of studies which have tried to specify the ages at which children

might develop criteria for making judgements about the constructedness of television

images (Chandler, 1997). For instance, in his influential research based on a questionnaire

study of 153 children between 4 and 12 years old, Hawkins (1977) argues that children

develop various dimensions of 'perceived reality' in relation to television programmes.

More specifically, he argues that children develop what he terms the 'Magic Window'

dimension, which is defined as the 'degree to which children believe they are viewing

either ongoing life or fictional drama', and thereby that they tend to perceive fictional

television increasingly as less real as they reach about 8 years old. Hawkins's research has

been followed by a range of studies drawing on both experimental and interview-based

research, which try to identify the criteria that inform children's judgements about realism

in television images as they grow older, such as 'physical actuality', 'possibility',

'probability', 'formal features of the medium' (Kelly, 1981; Morison *et al*, 1981; Dorr, 1983; Fitch *et al*, 1993)

Such research findings in the field of developmental psychology confirm that children develop more complex and sophisticated judgements about television images as they grow older, although the psychologists have not yet reached an agreement about the exact age at which children might develop the criteria for judging the constructedness of television images. The research findings have effectively challenged the traditional view of children as somehow 'vulnerable to the influence of television (and the media more broadly) due to children's inability to distinguish between television and reality', a view which has been widely expressed by both 'effects' theory and in public debate, particularly in relation to the issue of screen violence (Buckingham, 2000a: 108).

However, despite its significant contribution to a view of children and young people as 'active' meaning makers, the psychological approach seems to have failed to address the *social* and *emotional* aspects of media use. It has seen children's television viewing, for instance, fundamentally as a matter of the *cognitive* process of individual children and young people, who are seen to be abstracted from any social and historical contexts. This is problematic, in terms of its pedagogic implications, particularly because it implicitly emphasises adults' and teachers' view of media use as the *norm*.

In fact, most such research is based on laboratory experiments, which are part of the same methodology employed by 'effects' research. This approach aims to measure an activity such as television viewing via a series of variables which are assessed in isolation from their social contexts in terms both of the research and of the subjects themselves (Buckingham, 2000a: 109). Therefore, the view of children as 'active meaning makers' in this paradigm seems to be based on a *rationalistic* and *individualistic* notion of the child, which implicitly emphasises adult norms of media use.

## 3.1.2. Cultural Studies and children as 'social' audiences

The view of children and young people as a *socially* active audience has developed within Media and Cultural Studies, within a different historical and social context from that of developmental psychology. The dominant paradigm of Media and Cultural Studies in the 1970s and 1980s was the 'oppositional' approach to the media and popular culture, emphasising their ideological dimension (Turner, 1996). As discussed in the previous chapter, this has impacted on the view of media education as a fundamentally political project, whose central aim is defined as making young people have critical autonomy from the media (Masterman, 1980, 1985). In broad terms, the underlying assumptions of this perspective are that the meanings of the media are *contained in texts*, and that young people are the passive receivers of such messages. In this respect, media education has been regarded as a way of protecting young people from the bad effects of the media.

However, since the mid 1980s, audience research in Media and Cultural Studies has seen significant shifts in thinking about the relationship between the media and the audience. Attention has begun to focus on how the meaning of media texts might be *constructed* in relation to readers' social experiences and positions (as compared to the emphasis within developmental psychology on individual children's cognitive development). In other words, the development of audience research has effectively challenged the text-centred approach, by changing the view of media audiences from *'inscribed' readers* in media texts towards *'real' audiences* living in real social relations and contexts. The first piece of empirical research within this new Cultural Studies paradigm was David Morley's book, *The 'Nationwide' Audience* (1980). Although this research is not directly about children and young people, its implications need some discussion, because of its significant impact on the new perspective on the relationship between children and young people and the media.

Morley set out to test Hall's 'encoding/decoding model' (Hall, 1980), which proposes three hypothetical reading positions: 'preferred', 'negotiated' and 'oppositional'. He conducted qualitative interviews (unlike developmental psychologists whose research is based on laboratory experiments or surveys) with different groups of people from different educational and social backgrounds and identified how these audiences might accept, negotiate or reject the messages produced by the chosen television programme, *Nationwide*.

The '*Nationwide*' study suffers from a potentially misleading form of class determinism, as Morley himself acknowledged (Morley, 1981). Nevertheless, this pioneering study is regarded as an important turning point for the research paradigm, from a form of textual determinism towards the study of audiences as socially active, and potentially critical meaning makers (Moores, 1993). As such, this research has been followed by a series of empirical audience studies, which have investigated real audiences as active readers both of factual programmes (e.g. Lewis, 1985; Richardson & Corner, 1986; Corner, Richardson & Fenton, 1991) and soap operas (e.g. Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Buckingham, 1987b; Liebes & Katz, 1990); audiences within particular viewing contexts (e.g. Lull, 1981; Morley, 1986; Morley and Silverstone, 1990); and audiences belonging to particular cultural communities (e.g. Lewis, 1992; Jenkins, 1993; Jenkins & Tulloch, 1995; Harris & Alexander, 1998).

Within this new paradigm, there has been a significant development in research on children and young people as media audiences (e.g., Hodge & Tripp, 1986; Buckingham, 1987b, 1993, 1996b; Willis, 1990; Barker & Brooks, 1998). In seeking to challenge the 'common sense' view of children and young people as 'vulnerable victims' of the messages of media texts, discussed earlier, most of this research has indirectly addressed questions about media education. While there is perhaps a danger here of replacing this view of children and young people with a view of them as simply 'wise' and 'liberated' audiences (Buckingham, 1993: 18), these studies have found that children and young

people are active meaning makers not only in terms of cognitive but also in terms of *social* readings of media texts. In their pleasurable uses of media, child audiences are trying to define their own social positions, drawing on their own cultural knowledge and competence.

For instance, Bob Hodge and David Tripp's pioneering book, *Children and Television* (1986) found that children's responses to television can be different from adults', but that such responses are typically complex cognitive and *social* acts, which involve 'creating and using meanings in children's own lives, for their own purposes' (Hodge & Tripp, 1986: 3). Based on the comparison between the adult researchers' semiotic analysis of the children's television cartoon, *Fangface*, and the children's own reading of the programme, the authors argue that, for instance, children's understanding of myth or genre is different from adults' reading, because the former is a part of the process of their development and learning, which are both cognitive and social. Therefore, Hodge and Tripp argue that:

> The hours of what many parents think is 'wasted time' that go into the normal child's viewing development can be seen in this account, *to build up a kind of cultural knowledge* which, if it is active in new learning, will also affect attitudes *based upon the kind of social understanding*. (Hodge & Tripp, 1986: 52, my *italics*)

Unlike developmental psychologists who might limit the meaning of children's television viewing to the *cognitive* process, Hodge and Tripp focus on the meaning of children's television viewing as a process of building up cultural knowledge and social understanding as well as their cognitive development. In doing so, they also draw attention to the *discursive* processes through which children construct the meaning of a television programme. For instance, they emphasise that children's interpretation of a cartoon needs to be considered in relation to the children's own social position and their relations with others, particularly considering that (in their research) their talk about television takes place in the company of other children and adult interviewers. According to them children's talk tends to draw on two types of narratives: 'parataxis' which is a structure of a 'this and that' variety, and 'hypotaxis', which is a structure with subordinate elements, as follows:

> In the peer group, consistently with the loose relationship indicated by parataxis, the children much less often directly disagree with the meanings of others, though that does not mean that they agree strongly, either. What goes on in the peer group discussions is akin to what Piaget called 'collective monologue', in which children communicate their own meanings but do not react to what others say, or expect others to react to what they say. In the interview the group is held together in a hypotactic structure dominated by the interviewer, but this imposed cohesion goes along with a much greater tendency to notice conflict and disagreement. As with

hypotactic structures of speech, so also with negatives, children in interview

situations are likely to internalize this form in their own speech, stating both sides of

an issue. The interview is characterized by overt conflict, internal and external,

compared to the tolerance and consensus of peer group discussion. In this *struggle for*

*meaning* there are two main options: either silence and self-suppression, or hypotaxis,

the creation of powerful, adult-oriented meanings which exist contradictorily,

alongside other kinds of meaning. (Hodge & Tripp, 1986: 146, my *italics*)


The research finds that the children disagreed more with their peers' narratives as they

tried to internalise the adult's hypotactic structure of speech, which sought a more

cohesive narrative than the paratactic structure in which they tended to speak. This means

that what is seen as a process of cognitive development – a more coherent narrative

construction – cannot be considered in isolation from the social interaction between the

children and the adult interviewer as well as between the children themselves. The

pedagogic implication of this research seems to point to the importance of considering the

social, *discursive* process of the learning situation in media education, particularly in

relation to the role of the teacher who is bound to impose the legitimate way of talking

about the media. In Chapter 4, I shall discuss the discursive process of classroom practice

in more detail in relation to my theoretical and analytical perspectives.

Similarly emphasising the discursive perspective, Buckingham argues that children's and young people's judgements about genre and representation as well as their retelling of television programmes, for example, are closely related to the ongoing construction of their own identities (Buckingham, 2000a). Far from being an individuals' cognitive and rationalistic process, young people's judgements about the meaning of the media are seen as social, emotional and negotiated processes (Buckingham, 1987b, 1993, 1996b). Alongside these studies based on discourse analysis, more ethnographic research has also found that young people construct the meanings of media within the dynamics of the family and peer groups (e.g. Gillespie, 1995) or within the particular fan culture (e.g. Jenkins, 1993) as well as within the power relationship between researchers and child audiences.

Thus far, I have discussed how research within the paradigm of Cultural Studies has developed a new perspective on children and young people as *socially active* 'meaning makers'. The perspective of Cultural Studies emphasises the *social*, *discursive*, *emotional* and *negotiated* nature of children's relationship with the media, unlike the cognitive and rationalistic emphasis of developmental psychology. In pedagogic terms, therefore, audience research in Cultural Studies implies the need for a new approach to media education by focusing on the cultural and social aspects of children's relationship with the media, and thereby challenging a view of children and young people as 'vulnerable victims' of powerful media.

The question is, then, how the existing knowledge and understanding of young people as media *audiences* might be related in practice to their media *learning* in the classroom context. Interestingly, the view of children and young people as active meaning makers in developmental psychology and in Media and Cultural Studies seems to coincide with the recent development of constructivist and situative learning theory within education. Therefore, in the following section, I will explore how this form of learning theory might be used in theorising media learning.

## 3. 2. From 'curriculum' to 'learning':

### the implications of situative learning theory for media education

In recent years, a new perspective on learning has developed amongst educators and educational researchers, under the banner of constructivism. By regarding learning as a meaning making process on the part of the learner rather than a process of transmission of knowledge by the teacher, constructivism has drawn attention to a need to focus on how students *learn* rather than how teachers should *instruct*. Constructivism does not represent a single, coherent perspective on learning, however: the different and even conflicting perspectives within constructivism have developed under terms such as 'radical constructivism', 'social constructivism' and the more anthropological approach of

'situative learning'. Discussing the implications of these different versions of
constructivism, I would like to explore a more *learner-centred* and *social* perspective on
media learning.

### 3.2.1. Radical constructivism, social constructivism and media learning: the cognitive trap

It has been widely agreed that there have been two fundamentally different perspectives
on learning within constructivism: while the Piagetian perspective emphasises learning as
an individual, cognitive process, the Vygotskyan perspective stresses learning as a social
and cultural process (e.g. Phillips, 1995; Fox, 1996; Salomon & Almog, 1998; Oldfather
*et al*, 1999; Terwel, 1999). Indebted to the Piagetian perspective on learning as the
internalisation of knowledge within an *individual* learner's mind (Piaget, 1980), von
Glasersfeld, the main advocate of radical constructivism, emphasises each individual
students' responsibility for building their own understanding of knowledge in a particular
subject they study. According to him, teachers cannot assume that all students will receive
the same set of understandings of knowledge provided by their teaching:

> In work with children or young students who are not yet accustomed to the perceptual
> and conceptual habits and constraints in a particular discipline, this discrepancy can be
> a serious stumbling block. All too frequently a 'fact' or a relation that seems perfectly

obvious to the teacher is not even seen by the student. (von Glasersfled, 1995: 179)

Radical constructivist teachers are required to move on from their misleading view of students' misconceptions, which implies that there is a standard set of correct conceptions that all students need to learn (Phillips, 1995: 10).

Perhaps, this argument for a more learner-centred approach may not be seen as particularly radical in the contemporary British school context, where progressivism or the learner-centred approach has been implemented in everyday classroom practice since the 1960s (although there has recently been a significant move back to a more traditional pedagogy). However, this learner-centred approach of radical constructivism seems to be seen as very radical in the context of the 'crisis' of American schooling where this theory originates.

Von Glasersfeld describes the contemporary 'crisis' of American education as the 'meaninglessness' of school learning (von Glasersfeld, 1995: 177). It is argued that students are sitting in the classroom 'only to pass exams', without necessarily finding it useful or meaningful to learn school subjects. Students are expected to listen to the teachers' dictation, rather than being engaged in the knowledge being taught; hence they may fail to recognise why such knowledge might be useful. In this respect, the claims of

radical constructivism can be seen as radical or even revolutionary in the particular social and historical context of the crisis of education in the States.

A similar crisis of education has been discussed in South Korea in terms such as the 'classroom crisis' or even the 'breakdown of schooling' (Pak *et al*, 2000; Cho, 2000). As I discussed in the Preface, this was partly the reason why I became interested in media education, in my search for a form of education which could be more meaningful to students. In this social context, constructivist learning theory has attracted teachers and educational researchers as an alternative vision for classroom practice, in the sense that it somehow challenges the traditional form of 'dictation-oriented' pedagogy, which has lost students' interest (Kang, 1999).

However, there seems to be a significant limitation in the arguments of radical constructivism, which prevents it from being far more radical. On the one hand, radical constructivism is indebted to Piaget's learning theory, which views learning solely as the internalisation process within an individual child's mind. Yet on the other, it clearly recognises learning as the process of engaging in public knowledge – that is, knowledge of particular disciplines in the context of schooling (Phillips, 1995). As such, its emphasis is limited to a reminder of the need to offer individual guidance and activities for individual students, in order to help them to find their learning more meaningful and interesting.

The problem is that it does not seem to be very clear what radical constructivist teachers are expected to do when their students might have a misconception about particular ways of understanding – that is, if the students' understanding is clearly considered wrong in the given discipline. Although the teachers are told, in principle, that they should bear in mind that their students might not necessarily understand particular knowledge from what is regarded as the correct conception, *in practice* there seems to be little space for the students to challenge received knowledge with their own understandings, which might not necessarily fit in the given discipline but nevertheless might contribute to the production of knowledge, in the way that academics might do.

The possible conflict between *individual* conceptualisation and *public* knowledge has hardly been an issue amongst radical constructivists, perhaps because the approach has originated and mainly been applied in mathematics and science education, where knowledge might be seen as more objective than in the teaching of humanities and social sciences, where the status of normal science, as Kuhn terms it (Kuhn, 1970), might be more subject to question and challenge. In this respect, radical constructivism has been widely criticised in terms of its fundamental neglect of knowledge as a social construction and of the socio-cultural aspect of learning (Ernest, 1996: 81).

In radical constructivism, the concept of learning seems to be fundamentally *individualistic* and *rationalistic*, just like the individualistic notion of the child within

cognitive psychology. Just as developmental psychology emphasises that children become more and more rational in terms of their understanding of realism on television, for instance, as they grow older (or become adults), and thus effectively neglects the social and emotional aspects of their television viewing, radical constructivism emphasises almost exculsively the individual learner's conceptual learning, and thereby neglects the social process of learning, both in terms of the learners' engagement with socially given knowledge and in the social space of the classroom.

In contrast to the Piagetian and radical constructivist notion of learning as an individual process, Vygotsky emphasises the importance of children's *interaction with other people* in terms of its contribution to their learning. Indebted to Vygotsky, social constructivism takes the view of learning as a social process of 'sense-making' rather than an individual process of the acquisition of knowledge that exists somewhere outside the learner (Oldfather *et al*, 1999: 8-9). Despite its recognition of the social aspect of learning, Vygotsky's theory is problematic at least for two reasons. Firstly, it is concerned almost exclusively with the 'mental development' of children, which is actually not so far from the Piagetian emphasis on children's development as a cognitive process. More importantly, it does not consider a significant question about what might be regarded as 'scientific concepts', which children's mental development is thought to achieve.

Vygotsky disagrees with Piaget because the latter he assumes that development and instruction (or teaching) are entirely separate and thus the function of instruction is merely to 'introduce adult ways of thinking, which conflict with the child's own and eventually supplant them' (Vygotsky, 1962: 117). Trying to explain the role of the teacher as developing what children potentially know (rather than imposing what they do not know), Vygotsky suggests that children's interaction with adults and more capable peers (particularly through schooling) is a significant factor contributing to children's learning, in that it intervenes in what is termed the 'zone of proximal development' of children.

As the key concept of Vygotsky's theory, the zone of proximal development means the 'distance between *actual* development level as determined by independent problem solving [of children] and the level of *potential* development as determined through problem solving under the guidance of or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978: 86, my *italics*). As such, he defines the zone of proximal development as the location of 'psychological functions' that 'have not yet matured but *are in the process of maturation*, which will mature tomorrow but are currently in an *embryonic state*' (*ibid*: 86, my *italics*). While this concept effectively implies the importance of the role of the teacher in terms of intervening in children's development – what Bruner terms 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1985) – rather than expecting them to develop naturally, it has also provided a rationale for group activities in terms of facilitating learning with the help of more knowledgeable others (Cf. Bennett, 1994: 52).

However, the almost exclusive emphasis of Vygotsky's theory on learning as mental development does not seem to take into account how children with different levels of knowledge and understanding might socially and emotionally interact each other in a group and thus how they might actually benefit from each other. Particularly considering that Vygotsky's theory values schooling in terms of providing children with a systematic way of learning, it seems quite problematic that it is not concerned with the power/knowledge relationships between more knowledgeable students and their less knowledgeable peers who work in the same group. Considering that the idea of scaffolding by more knowledgeable students is related to the role of the teacher, it is also problematic that his theory does not pay attention to the power/knowledge relationship between the teacher and the students in the social context of the classroom. (This issue will be discussed in more detail in relation to my own research in later chapters.)

This problem is also related to the fundamental issue of what might constitute 'scientific concepts', which Vygotsky regards as the outcome of children's mental development. According to him, students get to develop (perhaps more effectively through the help of the teacher and more capable peers) their 'everyday concepts' into 'scientific concepts'. However, he does not explain who might legitimise particular concepts as 'scientific' and how such concepts might be constituted in particular disciplines or school subjects. Without considering that scientific concepts are bound to be constructed socially,

culturally and historically in relation to the *social interests* of the people who are in a position to claim the 'truth' about the world, Vygotsky seems to suggest that scientific concepts are *given* rather than *constructed* (Phillips, 1995).

Combined with cultural anthropological studies of the differences between language learning in different social and cultural groups (e.g., Heath, 1983), social constructivists such as Oldfather argue that Vygotsky's emphasis on learning as the encounter between students' everyday concepts and scientific concepts provides a ground for promoting multiculturalism in the classroom. For example,

> The hot debate surrounding the Ebonics issue in Oakland examplifies ways that issues of language, culture, and power play out within public schools. This debate also illustrates that a holistic view of social constructivism must take into account students' languages and cultures. Educators are then forced to acknowledge that their work extends into the political realm. To their students, teachers represent authority concerning what counts for knowledge and whose knowledge counts. When teachers fail to acknowledge students' worlds the students are likely to feel alienated or even invisible. (Oldfather *et al*, 1999: 12)

In this way, social constructivism addresses the *socio-cultural* dimension of learning and tries to recognise multiple constructions of reality which students with different social and

sociocultural backgrounds and experiences might bring into the classroom. In this respect,

social constructivism seems to move beyond the Vygotskyan theory which it is indebted to,

and calls for a more democratic and multicultural classroom, in which the teacher should

respect the students' multiple perspectives on reality in order to give them a sense of

'ownership of knowing' (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994: 145).

However, social constructivism seems to be trapped in the same dilemma, which the

Vygotskyan theory suffers from, in terms of the view of the role of the teacher that it

suggests. In my view, there seems to be a contradiction between the emphasis in the

Vygotskyan and social constructivist view on promoting a democratic and learner-centred

classroom culture, and the emphasis on the systematic and organised intervention of the

teacher in terms of scaffolding the students' everyday concepts into scientific concepts. In

the real situation of the classroom, this can lead the teacher to choose between two

contradictory perspectives on knowledge: a *relativist* view (considering that every

student's perspective should be validated) or an *authoritarian* view (considering that the

teacher has to teach what is regarded as 'scientific'). In both cases, the problem springs

from a lack of consideration of the power/knowledge relationship in the classroom and

imagines a fundamentally asocial classroom where there are no conflicts between

members of the class.

Apart from the broader issue of the power/knowledge relationship, two more important issues can be raised about the Vygotskyan theory of learning, particularly in relation to media education in school. The first issue is related to the prioritisation of metalanguage or scientific concepts. Buckingham suggests that:

> To a certain extent, we might consider children's existing understanding of the media as a body of 'spontaneous' concepts. While these concepts will develop as they mature, gradually becoming more generalized and systematic, media education offers a body of 'scientific' concepts which will enable them to think, and to use language, in a much more conscious and deliberate way. The aim of media education, then, is not merely to enable children to 'read' –or make sense of – media texts, or to enable them to 'write' their own: it must also enable them to reflect systematically on the processes of reading and writing themselves, to understand and to analyze their own activity as readers and writers. (Buckingham, 1990: 219)

As such, the notion of scientific and everyday concepts seems to explain the role of the media teacher in terms of teaching the grammar or metalanguage of the media in order to develop students' existing knowledge. However, the problem is that it is not clear whether the distinction between everyday or spontaneous and scientific concepts is simply a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 150). In this respect, Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue that there is a danger that

learning academic discourse could be merely a matter of accumulating cultural capital

(which is institutionally and socially validated through the examination system) rather than

offering benefits in terms of cognitive development. The Vygotskyan approach seems

ultimately to fail to question the social status of these different types of concepts (or, more

accurately, discourses), and thus effectively neglects to consider that certain types of

knowledge and discourse are privileged in the social contexts and relationships of the

classroom. I shall discuss this issue in Chapters 4 and 5, in particular, in relation to my

own research.


The second problem is related to the fundamental emphasis of the Vygotskyan theory on

the *cognitive* development of children, which results in prioritising *rationalistic*

understanding about the media at the expense of other aspects such as students' *social*

engagement with and *emotional* investments in the media (see my discussion of audience

research earlier in this chapter). Combined with the emphasis on the role of verbal

language in the development of the child's mental functions, this can result in dichotomies

between 'abstract' and 'concrete' knowledge, which somehow privilege the former.

Particularly in media education, as Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue, this means that

the value of practical production can be limited to its contribution to the development of

conceptual understanding of the media (Buckingham, 1990: 220-221). The rationalistic

approach which emphasises the cognitive development of students can result in neglecting

the importance of students' social engagement with and emotional investments in the

media, which are significant in audiences' meaning making processes as well as privileging rationalistic analysis of the media over practical production.

I have discussed how radical and social constructivism have changed the focus of the educational agenda by defining learning as a construction of knowledge on the part of the learner rather than a transmission of knowledge by the teacher. I have also discussed the differences between the two perspectives: in radical constructivism, learning is seen to occur in an individual learner's mind, whereas in social constructivism, learning is seen to occur in the social relationships between the learner and more capable adults or peers. However, in my view, both in radical and social constructivism, learning still seems to be viewed as the result of teaching, insofar as there is no question about *what might constitute the legitimate knowledge* that the students are required to learn. Without recognising that knowledge is fundamentally a *social construction* and therefore that it is inevitably tied to *social interests*, both perspectives seem to imagine an *asocial* classroom where only safe and confident dialogues can take place without any conflicts between different views or different types of knowledge. While both perspectives may in theory distinguish the knowledge constructed by the student from the knowledge transmitted by the teacher, they do not provide a way of understanding how learning can take place in a social process in which the learner can *renegotiate* knowledge.

## 3.2.2. Media learning as 'situated learning':

beyond the cognitive perspective

The situative perspective on learning, which has developed following Lave and Wenger's pioneering book, *Situated Learning* (1991) seems to provide a number of significant ways of rethinking (media) learning, beyond the limitations of both radical and social constructivism. Although their theory of learning is also indebted to Vygotsky in terms of the view of learning as a socio-cultural process, Lave and Wenger's theory moves beyond its almost exclusive emphasis on the cognitive aspect of learning as well as the view of knowledge as given.

From the situative perspective on learning, learners are regarded as 'new comers' (to a 'community of practice'), who come to gain particular knowledge and abilities which are recognised as competence by the particular community, and thereby to become members. A community of practice is defined as any social configuration where a certain competence that the members have is recognisable (Wenger, 1998: 5). The school and workplace are good examples of communities of practice, in that there are particular types of knowledge and abilities which the members must have in order to perform the practice concerned.

In this theory, a 'learning curriculum' is distinguished from a 'teaching curriculum': a learning curriculum is a 'field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed *from the perspective of learners'*, whereas a 'teaching curriculum' is thought to be 'constructed for

the *instruction* of newcomers' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 97, my *italics*). Here, learning is

termed 'legitimate peripheral participation', which refers to the learners' (or newcomers')

access to the potential curriculum (more broadly), which is created by a particular

community of practice. According to Lave and Wenger, there is no central or complete

participation, insofar as all participation is assumed to be 'peripheral', which is thought to

lead, *over time*, to full participation in the learning curriculum. In this respect, peripherality

is viewed as not a negative but *positive* term, whose antonyms are unrelatedness or

irrelevance (rather than central or complete) (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 36-37).


The distinction between a learning curriculum and a teaching curriculum is significant

because it takes the view that learners (or newcomers) construct their own meanings in the

process of becoming members of the community of practice, negotiating the existing

knowledge and abilities recognised as competence in the teaching curriculum. This means

that there can be differences between newcomers and old-timers (both individually and

collectively) in the community of practice, in terms of the ways in which they engage with

the particular competence. As such, the ways in which teaching and learning are linked is

seen not as cause and effect but as resources and negotiation (Wenger, 1998: 266). This

idea leads to an understanding of how knowledge is both reproduced and changed within

the community of practice, a notion of knowledge as a social construction.


In school, teaching particular knowledge and abilities as competence involves the

codification into a reified subject matter: for instance, grammatical categories are used in order to teach language. 'Reification' of knowledge and abilities is intended to help learning in that the general rules created as such can make the learners' access to the practice easier. However, it can be an obstacle to performing the actual practice insofar as there is a danger that it may create the illusion of a simple, direct, unproblematic relation between the learners and the practice concerned, as a result of decontextualisation from the concrete, situated context of the practice (Wenger, 1998: 265). Therefore, learning a particular competence requires learners to participate in the practice and thereby to *negotiate* the meaning through their own experience. In this respect, Lave and Wenger suggest:

> Knowing a general rule by itself in no way assures that any generality it may carry is enabled in the specific circumstances in which it is relevant. In this sense, any "power of abstraction" is thoroughly situated, in the lives of persons and in the culture that makes it possible. On the other hand, the world carries its own structure so that specificity always implies generality and in this sense generality is not to be assimilated to abstraction. (…) The generality of any form of knowledge always lies in the *power to renegotiate the meaning of the past and future in constructing the meaning of present circumstances*. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 34, my *italics*)

Clearly, from the situative learning perspective, learning is thought to take place not

merely by identifying *reified* knowledge and abilities as competence but also through

*participating* in the practice based on learners' own experience. In this respect, gaining

competence in the process of becoming members of particular communities of practice is

regarded as legitimate peripheral participation. In other words, learning is not entirely a

matter of reproduction of given knowledge but a process of making sense of it by learners,

which might include a process of questioning the *given*. Therefore, the process of learning

is seen as a matter of gaining identities as members of communities of practice (in the

sense of belonging to the community). This necessarily involves *negotiability* of

competence (Wenger, 1998: 214-221), which is seen in this social theory of learning as

conflicting by nature.


The distinction between learning curriculum and teaching curriculum also seems useful in

the move beyond the limitations of the Vygotskyan perspective. The emphasis on students'

mental or cognitive development within the Vygotskyan perspective effectively prioritises

learning a metalanguage about the media or a body of scientific concepts, without

questioning what might be considered scientific and thus *legitimate* knowledge. In contrast,

from a situated learning point of view, *in principle*, media students (who are newcomers)

are able to negotiate and renegotiate the meanings of the metalanguage which have been

recognised as competence in the community of media *critics*. This principle needs to be

considered in terms of theorising media learning, particularly considering that the object of

study (the media), as well as the methods one might use to study media criticism, changes

rapidly.

However, as Lave and Wenger suggest, there can be significant differences between the

ways school Media Studies students participate in and give meaning to their activity and

the way Media Studies academics do, because:

> The actual reproducing community of practice, within which school children learn
>
> about [Media Studies], is not the community of [Media Studies academics] but the
>
> community of schooled adults. Children are introduced into the latter community (and
>
> *its humble relation with the former community*) during their school years. The
>
> reproduction cycles of the [Media Studies academics'] community starts much later,
>
> possibly only in graduate school. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 99, my *italics*)

The difference between media learning in school and in the academic community needs to

be considered in relation to the degree of reification which is carried out in the form of

curriculum and textbooks, for instance, and how students' participation in the actual

practice of media criticism, for instance, takes place. I shall discuss this issue in Chapter 5

in relation to how students learn to become 'media critics'.

The issue of negotiability of competence also needs to be considered in relation to the

practice of media production. Indeed, from the situative perspective, productive activity

and theoretical understanding are not separate or even separable, but directly interrelated.

As Lave and Wenger suggest, understanding the technology of practice is not merely

learning to use tools, but it is a 'way to connect to the history of the practice and to

participate more directly in its cultural life' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 101). In media

education, this means that learning media technology and techniques for production is not

just a matter of learning to use the equipment such as cameras or computers, but also a

matter of engaging in the conventions as particular socio-historical practices of

constructing images on screen. (See Chapter 2 for my discussion of the training approach.)

Taking Lave and Wenger's example (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 103), we can see the outside

of a building from the inside despite the presence of a window, because the window is

*invisible* to us (i.e., we do not pay attention to the window) while we are seeing things

through the window. However, we would possibly pay attention to how the window affects

our vision of the things we want to see through it (i.e., the window is *visible* to us), if for

example it is not clean. Likewise, we can watch a film or television programme without

necessarily recognising the particular techniques by which the film is made (i.e., the

techniques are *invisible* to us). However, if we problematise how we are affected by the

realities constructed by the film, the techniques used in making the particular film may

become *visible* to us. One of the examples of making the film techniques *visible* to the

audience is the use of a jump cut (by film makers such as Godard), which is intended to

make the audience conscious of the reality on screen as *constructed* (See Chapter 2).

When it is applied to media education, this notion of the visibility and invisibility of mediating technologies can lead us to the recognition of the importance of learning about particular production techniques as particular *social practices* which are used in order to *communicate* with audiences in particular ways. This also implies that, through the process of learning about particular technical conventions as social practices which are recognised as 'competence' within the community of film making, learners need to be able to negotiate the meaning of the practice, depending on their own purposes. I shall discuss this issue in Chapter 7 in more detail in relation to my own research.

This notion of negotiability leads to another significant aspect of the situative perspective: it allows us to consider learning as a process in which learners construct their identities (particularly in the sense of becoming members of particular communities). In other words, learning is seen as a matter of developing a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of the practice rather than 'receiving a body of factual knowledge about the world' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 33). This view effectively challenges the cognitive perspective on learning (which was discussed earlier) in which knowledge is seen almost as property to be acquired, in the sense that learners are required to gain reified knowledge. Criticising the typical way of teaching algorithms in school, for instance, Greeno argues that we need to take the view of learning as situated because:

it shows that *if a goal of education is for students to reason successfully in their everyday activities outside of school*, school mathematics in their everyday programs that are limited to teaching algorithmic skills do not reach important aspects of those reasoning activities. (Greeno, 1996: 7, my *italics*)

In media education, this would suggest that learning theoretical concepts such as representation should contribute to the ways in which the students *actually* think critically in their own lives, rather than to just acquiring the analytical skills, which might only be legitimate or meaningful in specific pedagogic situations. The question is then whether and how much the given approach of media education can allow students to negotiate with what it means to become critical. I shall discuss this issue in more detail in relation to my own research in later chapters.

There seem to be limitations in the ways in which school Media Studies students can negotiate the meaning of 'competence'. Due to the particular institutional context of schooling, there is a difference between the ways in which Media Studies academics and school Media Studies students might engage with the community of practice (for instance, media criticism). Such limitation seems similarly to be applied to the difference between the ways in which media practitioners (as members of the film making community, for instance) and young media learners might engage with the practice of media production, due to the particular context in which young people might learn. Taking an example from

my own research, in order to emphasise the differences between the different stages of

production such as planning, filming and editing, the teacher often taught production

methods and procedures in particular ways, which might not be applied in the real situation

of television production. In this case, reified knowledge – for instance, the fact that the

order of shots is different in different stages of film making compared with how it is

presented to the audience – was taught by intentionally distorting the natural order in

which a television interview, for example, may take place in the real situation (see Chapter

6 for further discussion).

The differences between the actual practices of media practitioners and young media

learners as well as between Media Studies academics and school Media Studies students

means that we need to consider that at least three communities of practice that school

media students might engage with: the community of academic Media Studies (e.g., media

critics), the community of media practitioners (e.g., film makers), and the community of

the learning context (school or youth project).

Considering these communities of practice from the situative perspective allows us to

rethink the role of the media training approach and the teaching of practical work in media

education in general. In fact, there has been what Michael Young terms (Young, 1998) a

'stratification of knowledge' in the curriculum through the division between academic

education and vocational training in which education in the subject-based curriculum has

been privileged above training in work-related skills. Within such stratification, as

Engestrom points out (Engestrom, 1994), far less attention has been paid to work-related

learning. This division between education and training has not been unique to the practice

of media education, and hence relatively little attention has been paid to a more positive

meaning of the media training approach. In this respect, the situative perspective on

learning seems to provide a positive way of considering the training approach within media

education by validating it as one of the important ways of providing students with access

to a relevant community of practice, rather than an approach whose meaning can be limited

only to its contribution to the teaching of metalanguage.

Thus far, I have discussed the perspective of situated learning and its implications for

media education. Its focus on a learning curriculum, which is seen to be constructed by

learners' legitimate peripheral participation, and which might be different from a teaching

curriculum created by the old-timers (including teachers), seems to open up a new

perspective on learning as a process of *negotiating* and *renegotiating* the meanings of

knowledge in the process of constructing learners' identities as members of the community.

I have also discussed how this new perspective can provide ways of rethinking the kind of

empowerment that media education might offer for the students in relation to the

negotiability of competence, for example, for practices of media criticism and production.

As such, the situative perspective on learning seems to connect with the implications of

recent developments in audience research (which was discussed earlier in this chapter), in

that it regards the meaning of knowledge and abilities taught in media education as *constructed* through *negotiation*.

Without disagreeing with these challenging and exciting perspectives provided by this social theory of learning, however, there seem to be at least two limitations to its scope. Firstly, as Terwell suggests (Terwell, 1999), while this perspective on learning can be insightful in terms of rethinking the relationship between teaching and learning, it does not necessarily offer any *practical* guidelines to the teacher in terms of how to teach in order to realise the implications of the situative perspective on learning in their own concrete classroom contexts. Secondly, given the differences between the actual communities of practice (for criticism and production, for instance) and the communities of the learning context (such as schools and youth projects), the ways in which to connect these communities remain unspecified. While the situative perspective in media education, in particular, emphasises a need to consider the complex ways that media students engage with the various communities of practice, it does not seem to account for the complex way in which the *teacher* (as a mediator between the learning community and the actual communities of practice) might be positioned in terms of the knowledge and abilities that they can offer for the students.

Terwell suggests that one possible solution to this might be that the teacher should participate actively in educational research and, in doing so, establish connections between

the different communities (Terwell, 1999). In media education, this might mean that the media teacher should become connected to at least three knowledge-producing communities – those of academic Media Studies, media production and educational research. However, this solution can be seen only as a new demand on the teacher, insofar as it is not clear how the teacher can *realistically* become connected to these communities, considering their own institutional position in the learning community. I shall discuss this issue in relation to my own case studies in school and in a youth project in later chapters.

Despite such limitations, situative theory provides us with a more thoroughly social and cultural perspective on learning (compared with social constructivism), by drawing attention to how the meaning of knowledge and abilities in relation to a community of practice might be negotiated and thus reconstructed by the participation of the members of the community. Building on the points that I have made thus far, I now want to try to theorise teaching and learning in media education from the situative perspective, based on some previous classroom-based research.

## 3.3. Towards a theory of situated teaching and learning in media education

A situative perspective on learning takes the view that learners construct their own learning

curriculum in the process of their own meaning making, which might not necessarily

match with the teaching curriculum provided by a community of practice. In this respect,

such a view inevitably brings out crucial issues: how learners might actually negotiate and

reconstruct the meaning of the given knowledge legitimised as competence in a particular

community of practice; how the students' own existing understanding and experiences

might be taken into account in doing so; and what might be the role of the teacher in terms

of mediating between given knowledge and practice and the students' own understanding

and experiences.

These issues seem compounded in media education in particular, insofar as popular culture

is considered as a key area which provides teachers with a way of starting from where the

students are, and thus engaging with the students' own culture:

> Researchers studying culture understand the power of popular culture to shape student
>
> images of the society around them and of their upcoming lives as adults. Teachers
>
> who wish to elicit student voices could find no better pathways for engaging those
>
> voices than the material culture and the content of rituals and patterns of friendship,
>
> dress, music, and other accounterments of student life as windows on student worlds.
>
> (Lincoln, 1995: 92)

As such, media education is often believed to be *inherently* dialogic, because of the fact

that it deals with popular culture, which is assumed to be closely related to students' own

culture. However, this is complicated by the fact that media education is also based on a

body of knowledge, which forms a potential curriculum, just as in other educational

subjects. Thus, there are likely to be gaps and tensions between this given, legitimate

knowledge and the students' own understanding and experiences; and it seems important

to understand how the learning curriculum might be constructed in media education

through the tension and dialogue between the teaching curriculum and the students' own

experiences.


## 3.3.1. Learning as negotiation of meaning


While a situative perspective enables us to see a teaching curriculum as socially and

historically constructed by a community of practice, and thus as subject to change by the

participation of the members of the community, it does not necessarily mean that a

teaching curriculum is totally meaningless to learners.  Indeed, a community of practice

cannot exist without a teaching curriculum, which is designed to give the members

recognisable competence, which is legitimate in the community, and by which the

members construct their identities or develop their sense of belonging to it (Wenger, 1998:

137). The crucial aspect of the situative perspective is, however, that given knowledge is

subject to *negotiation*.

As Wenger argues, meaning arises out of a process of negotiation that combines both reification and participation. Here, participation means the 'social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises' (such as our experience of tasting wine), and reification means the 'process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into "thingness"' (such as a specialist wine-tasting vocabulary). According to Wenger, reification, which might characterise a teaching curriculum, has a double edge: it enables us to experience and to understand the world in a particular way because of its succinctness and its focusing effect, but it can also become a *substitute* for a deep understanding of and commitment to what it stands for. (Wenger, 1998: 51-71) Therefore, while we need to be careful about the use of reification in constructing meaning, a certain degree of reification seems necessary and useful for learning purposes.

In media education, this perspective on learning as a process of negotiation of meaning both through reification and through participation seems to provide us with a way of understanding the interplay between the analytical concepts used in media criticism, for instance, and students' own experiences and understandings of the media. Certainly, there is a danger that learning academic concepts can be merely a matter of 'expanding students' vocabulary' if they do not also provide a different *kind* of understanding about the media, as discussed earlier. Nevertheless, learning the language of analytical concepts can enable students to understand the media in a particular way, which can be a ground for them to

construct their own meaning, insofar as this knowledge may provide *a space for negotiation*.

In this respect, as discussed below, it is significant that situative learning theory recognises the 'negotiability of the repertoire' of a community of practice as one of the 'regimes of competence' which the members of a community of practice are expected to achieve. Here, learning is seen to occur through the interplay between competence and experience:

> Sometimes, our experience must align itself with a regime of competence. This is what happens to newcomers to a practice. In order to achieve the competence defined by a community, they transform their experience until it fits within the regime. But old-timers, too, need to catch up as the practice evolves. Imagine that one or more members have had some experience that currently falls outside the regime of competence of a community to which they belong – for instance, because there are no words for it or because it puts the enterprise in question. As a way of asserting their membership, they may very well attempt to change the community's regime so that it includes their experience. Toward this end, they have to negotiate its meaning with their community of practice. (Wenger, 1998: 138)

Clearly, there might be an issue of how much the media classroom could allow its participants to negotiate with legitimate competence and thus develop new practices of the

community. Therefore, while creating a tension between experience and competence could be a process by which learning is potentially enhanced, or potentially impaired, as Wenger argues, this seems to be the area in which the teacher needs to play a crucial role. In the following two sections, based on some classroom research, I shall explore how media learning might be constructed in relation to competence and experience.

## 3.3.2. Media learning and gaining 'competence': the issue of a 'teaching curriculum'

As I have discussed earlier, particular ways of learning about the media in particular learning contexts can be identified. One of the dominant approaches in school is critical analysis of the media, the aim of which is to make the students media critics, who can decipher the dominant ideology by analysing media texts. However, some crucial questions have been raised about this approach: whether students' ability to produce a particular kind of critical discourse is necessarily an indication that they are actually critical; how the students might *learn* critical discourse; how and whether the students' existing knowledge and experience might be taken into account in producing critical discourse; and fundamentally, what might be considered as critical discourse in the first place. These questions seem to coincide with the situative perspective, insofar as they raise an important question in relation to the aim of media education: whether it is to make students *actually* think critically in their own lives or if it is to have them acquire particular

analytical skills, which might be meaningful only in specific pedagogic situations.

Based on their own classroom research into teaching about advertising, Buckingham, Fraser and Mayman explore these issues (Buckingham, Fraser and Mayman, 1990). They discover that the students draw on a critical discourse in which advertising is seen as 'deceptive and dishonest', but that the students tend to displace the influence of advertising onto other people, rather than reflecting their own experience of viewing it. While there seem to be gaps between the information about advertising that the students regard as important (e.g. 'it costs money to put adverts on television') and that which the teacher regards as important, the students' failure to volunteer the latter information seems to be interpreted as evidence of their ignorance.

It appears that what the research identifies here is a somewhat reified form of media learning, in which the students might find it difficult to *negotiate* what is significant about advertising based on their own understanding and experience of it. As Mica Nava and Orson Nava suggest (Nava & Nava, 1990), young people may be increasingly interested in the aesthetic value of advertising; yet the particular methods used in the media classroom seem to leave little room for such discussion. Therefore, while students' replication of a particular kind of critical discourse which may be legitimised in the classroom as *the* 'official critical discourse' (see Chapter 5), might be read as evidence of good teaching in this approach, if we want to take the students' experiences into account, such a reified form

of competence is problematic.

As I have argued, the critical analysis approach, which is still dominant in media education, is itself not a universally valid but a *socially constructed* approach, which was formed by the particular political, social and cultural agenda of a certain community of Media Studies academics and critics in the 1970s. This particular model of studying the media is based on the implicit assumption that meanings somehow exist in *texts* rather than being produced by *readers*, as discussed earlier. This model also assumes that the process of making meaning can be broken down into a series of constituent parts, which can be read by following decoding procedures (see Chapter 2). In the practice of teaching, it seems to result in a *single* conclusion about the meaning of the text, insofar as the ultimate goal is the 'demystification' of the text. In this case,

> 'Critical analysis' is far from being an open-ended procedure. Many of the 'analytical' questions media teachers ask are 'closed' questions: they are effectively requiring students to identify aspects of the text which teachers themselves have previously defined as important, and thereby to lead to certain predetermined conclusions. 'Analysis' can often degenerate into an exercise in replicating the teacher's reading: alternative readings can be dismissed as subjective or merely 'uncritical'. (Buckingham, Fraser and Mayman, 1990: 34-35)

As I discussed earlier, audience research has challenged exactly this kind of theory of meaning by showing the diversity and complexity of the meanings produced by actual readers of media texts (rather than inscribed readers in the texts). Therefore, this new theory of meaning has effectively challenged the dominant approach of critical media analysis. From this perspective, it seems that the critical analysis approach can lead to the privileging of intellectual, analytical discourses, which are themselves historically and socially constructed, and thereby can lead us to neglect much of the significance of what is taking place in students' learning about popular culture in their own lives. (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 152)

The question is, then, whether and how students might be able to benefit from learning critical discourse. Based on a case study of a series of essays produced by a student for Media Studies, Buckingham and Sefton-Green find that the student uses academic theories in rather useful ways (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 166-183). This research finds that, in an earlier essay that the chosen student produced, he discusses the meaning of stereotyping of the characters in soap opera in quite a complex way, drawing not only on an academic concept (*representation* of a social group such as young women) but also on his general understanding about the genre ('a stereotypical storyline'). In a later essay he produced, the same student uses the theory of continuity editing in order to explain how he tried and tested the theory in his practical work for his own benefit as well as for the teacher. In both cases, the student uses the theoretical concepts in order to *articulate* his

own understanding rather than becoming a mere name-dropper. Considering the potential benefit of learning about academic theory as facilitating a kind of internal dialogue, Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue that:

> The academic discourse offers a way of articulating common sense and popular knowledge which would otherwise remain unknown and indistinct. And one added benefit of using this discourse is that it offers the possibility of joining a particular interpretive community. Thus, to be able to refer to Todorov, or to Bordwell and Thompson, is not just a matter of joining a club of name droppers; it is also a matter of asserting oneself, and validating one's own understandings as intelligently pertinent. (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 179)

This research shows how students can benefit from learning about academic concepts in order to articulate their own experiences; or in other words, how such academic concepts can be *meaningful* to the student. However, this research does not discuss how the academic concepts (as the key competence of the community of academic Media Studies) or the teaching curriculum offered by the teacher might be negotiated and reconstructed by school students. Instead, it focuses on critical discourse as a kind of competence that the students are required to learn. In the next section, based on classroom research into a more production-based approach, I shall discuss how students' own experience about the media might be related to their media learning.

### 3.3.3. Media learning and negotiating with 'experience':

### the issue of a 'learning curriculum'

Drawing on a Cultural Studies perspective, both in the context of youth projects (e.g.

Dewdney & Lister, 1988; Cohen, 1990) and of school-based media education

(Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994), other classroom-based research has tried to get

beyond the problems of the critical analysis approach. In youth projects in particular, the

teachers try to centre their approach on the working class students' experiences of popular

culture in their everyday lives and to encourage them to express their own views through

the media, while they learn how to use media technology (see Chapter 2 for the social and

historical context of such projects). Here, the teachers try to get beyond the traditionally

authoritarian approach of the school teacher, and thus to make the work more relevant and

meaningful for the young working class people who take part. In this respect, this approach

encourages students to construct their own learning curriculum, drawing on their own

experience.

However, insofar as the implicit aim is to 'liberate' young people, the overall political aims

of such work are not entirely different from the aim of the critical media analysis approach

in school. As I discussed in the previous chapter, youth projects have often been closely

linked to ideas of community solidarity and local politics, and contemporary media

production such as photography and video have been regarded as useful communicative tools in such projects (see Chapter 2 on the youth work approach). In this sense, while such projects aim to enable young people to engage with their own experience rather than theoretical discourses, it seems that only a *particular kind* of experience is validated in this approach.

The issue is then whether the kind of experience that is seen to be worth expressing by the teacher is necessarily the one that the students want to express. The teachers in the Cockpit Arts Workshop seem to have wanted to engage only with what was seen as explicitly 'working-class experience' – such as the images of the Chinese immigrant family's past and present – hoping that creating these images would empower the marginalised voice of the young people (Dewdney & Lister, 1988: 99). However, the 'expression' of such experience may not be in the best *interests* of young working-class students themselves, as the teacher may wish. (I shall discuss this issue of the teacher's and the students' voice in relation to my own observation in Chapter 6.) Furthermore, as Buckingham and Sefton-Green suggest, while the idea of 'using images of oneself to tell a story' might excite middle-class teachers interested in young working-class students' culture, it may not be a familiar cultural form to the students themselves (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 96). Perhaps this may be a part of the reason why some students were seen by the teacher as 'having little idea of what to take photographs of', when in fact they might have felt there was little room for negotiation about the meaning of their experience.

Raising the issue of social interests of such projects, Phil Cohen distinguishes between a 'social studies' model and a 'Cultural Studies' model of photography education (Cohen, 1990). According to him, the aim of the social studies model is in turning students into 'social investigators' who can generate a more critical perspective on society. While the students are asked to express their own working-class experience, they are also asked to keep a critical distance from it. For instance, in the work that Cohen describes, the students are required to produce a documentary about the working conditions of work places after visiting them. This research finds that the teachers discovered that their students were able to produce a 'good' documentary with relevant interviews and factual information when they visited a place with a friendly atmosphere, but that they were not able to do so about the working conditions and social relations of another more hostile workplace that they visited. In this latter case, as the research suggests, the students tended to avoid referring to the social relations in the workplace but instead to give rather 'neutral' descriptions of the technical processes taking place in the workplace. Trying to understand why the students produced a relatively meaningless documentary in the latter case, Cohen argues that:

It seemed that holding [the] group within this investigative frame could serve them as a strategy of *dissociation* when it came to looking at some of the more painful realities of working class life and labour. Actual social scientists do not have this problem, because normally the conditions they investigate don't directly touch the

world of middle class professionals. But our students were not in this privileged

position. (Cohen, 1990: 24, Cohen's *italics*)

What the teachers find out here, in the face of the emotional difficulties that they caused
for the students by using this social studies model, is that the critical perspective that they
were trying to teach was in fact driven by the particular *social interests* of middle class
social scientists, which were not shared by the working class students. Therefore, the issue
is how the teacher can help the students to learn something much more meaningful to
themselves, based on their own experience.

In the cultural studies model, which emerged from criticism of the social studies model,
the students are asked to explore the meaning of their own everyday culture by taking
pictures of people and things related to themselves, and to 'play with the signifiers' in
doing so, in order to produce a photomontage or photostory. Interestingly, Cohen finds that
the boys' work is related more to fantasies, whereas the girls' is much more grounded in
'real' images. Therefore, Cohen argues, while the images the students produce may not
necessarily represent who they are, the *social relations and contexts* in which the students
produce such work need to be taken into account as a part of their meaning (Cohen, 1990:
28-32). As this research reveals, the teacher moves beyond the initial teaching curriculum
in order to provide the students with opportunities to explore their own identities in their
own ways.

Likewise, Buckingham and Sefton-Green explore how students might be enabled to produce *their own meaning* through their engagement in given media genres and conventions such as a photostory. Here, Buckingham and Sefton-Green suggest that the social process engaged in the production such as 'dressing up and posing', 'cussing down' the comments of passers-by or even colonising the Headteacher's office for an 'at work' picture, as well as the actual creation of the narrative in which the self is located, provide the students with the pleasure of exploring their identities (particularly in respect of gender and age) within the school context. In this respect, as Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue, such a dynamic cultural and social practice seems essential for the students to express themselves, insofar as this social process can play an important part in terms of constructing the students' own learning curriculum (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 96-98).

The traditional cognitive perspective on learning may not value much of this social process engaged in learning, insofar as it vieww the relationship between teaching and learning as a matter of cause and effect. However, if we regard the relationship between teaching and learning as 'resources' and 'negotiation', as Wenger suggests (Wenger, 1998: 266), such a social process, in which students explore their own identities in a pleasurable way, would be a crucial part of learning. Rethinking the relationship between teaching and learning in this way thus appears to enable us to rethink the concept of empowerment in media

education. This seems to require a change in the pedagogy, from a fundamentally *authoritarian* one in which the teacher imposes what is regarded as good on the students towards a more *situated* pedagogy in which the teacher provides the students with resources with which they can explore the ways in which they engage with the media, both personally and socially, with a place where a new way of knowing can be realised (Wenger, 1998: 215). If we take the latter perspective on pedagogy, media education could play a significant role in providing students with a place where they can negotiate with the given social discourse and conventions (relating to both the reading and the writing aspects), in order to produce their own meanings. In this case, any critical discourse that the teacher wants the students to engage with may be able to play a much more positive role as part of the resources available for them to explore their own ways of making sense of the media and of themselves.

## 3.3.4. Media learning as 'negotiation' and the role of the teacher

While the situative perspective may provide us with a more *social* and *learner-centred* vision for pedagogy of media education, as discussed earlier, this inevitably raises questions about the role of the teacher who can create the space for negotiation in the classroom as a *situated* context. In reality, as Woods suggests, teachers work within societal constraints such as governmental policies, curricula, syllabi, and existing teaching resources such as textbooks, as well as within the institutional constraints of the school

where they work (Woods, 1995: 34). There are also different educational approaches, which inform teachers' practices in particular ways in particular educational contexts such as in schools, youth projects and training institutions, as I discussed in the previous chapter. In many cases, teachers have *little* control over these constraints and thus, they have to accept a set of practices, which they did not create themselves but which they must affirm as if the practices were their own.

Therefore, while teachers might want to care about the students' voices and experiences, they still have to evaluate and assess the students according to particular criteria, which are provided by the particular curriculum they are following. This contradictory position between the individual teacher's wish to be a caring teacher and the societal and institutional constraints, creates sources of tension and uncertainty for teachers, because the teacher is often left to rely only on his or her own personal judgement in the concrete situation of the classroom (Segal, 1998: 203).

While such tensions and uncertainties can be regarded as sources of teachers' critical and reflexive thinking about their own classroom practices, these can also become the sources of *stress*. Making this point, Woods emphasises that among 'stressed out' teachers there are those teachers who are highly committed, vocationally oriented and caring but for whom there is no escape route (Woods, 1989: 1). Following Rollo May's notion of the 'schizoid', which means the 'processes of existentially distancing [oneself] from stressful

conditions in which [one] is involved by developing instrumentalist and technicist modes of relationships within the world', Segal argues that there is a possibility that the most caring and committed teacher can ironically become the schizoid, 'caring non-caring teacher' in order to avoid stress (Segal, 1998: 205). Therefore, it is important to consider what kinds of difficulty and issues can be raised in the classroom, when the teacher tries to take students' voices into account. [1]

While teachers' efforts to take into account students' voices and experiences need to be considered in relation to the social and institutional constraints where teachers are situated, part of the difficulty in implementing a more learner-centred approach may come from the students' own resistance to the approach itself, as Johnston and Nicholls suggest (Johnston & Nicholls, 1995). They imply that in many cases, students think school knowledge should *not* be personally relevant and that teachers should tell them exactly what to learn and how to learn it. In other words, students often bring particular assumptions about what constitutes 'school knowledge' and 'personal knowledge' and what it might mean to know from their own previous experiences.

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[1] Perhaps coincidentally, my own research also finds that the teachers who were seen as more reflexive about their practices, in the sense that they tried to confront some of their dilemmas through talks with an outsider research (me), left the institutions where they worked, shortly after my studies both in the school and in the youth project. While I by no means claim that I provided them with a reason to leave their work, I want to emphasise that these incidents made me consider much more carefully the importance of the position of the teacher in institutional, and situated contexts of teaching and learning.

Therefore, if we want to implement a situative approach in the classroom, we need to examine how a particular way of speaking about and dealiing with the media (or what I would call as 'official discourse') is constituted in the situated classroom context; how this might be related to the kinds of knowledge that are legitimated within particular educational approaches; and how these might position the teacher and the students in particular ways.

## 3.4. Research questions

Drawing on the situative perspectives on teaching and learning discussed in this chapter, this thesis explores the following questions. The first two questions are explored particularly in the first two data chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), considering that these are case studies of the more 'pure' versions of media education: critical analysis, youth work and training approaches. The next three questions are explored particularly in Chapter 7, which is a case study of a school context where theoretical and practical aspects of media education come together, both institutionally and discursively, although the first two questions continue to be explored. The questions are laid out as follows:

1. *The 'teaching curriculum' of media education as critical pedagogy:* What kinds of knowledge and abilities are actually legitimised as 'empowering' students, whether as

*media critics* (in the critical analysis approach), *critical citizens* (in the youth work approach) or *media producers* (in the training approach)? What are the assumptions here about what students 'know' and 'do not know'? To what extent are the knowledge and abilities presented as *reified*? To what extent are the knowledge and abilities allowed to be *negotiable*? Are such knowledge and abilities in fact empowering and if so, how?

2. *The relationship between a 'teaching curriculum' and a 'learning curriculum':* How do the teachers and the students engage with the media in the actual situation of the classroom? How are they situated and positioned in the classroom as teacher and students in relation to the 'official discourse' of the teaching curriculum? When 'personal discourses' (as 'unofficial discourses' of the classroom) both of the teachers and of the students) enter into the classroom, what kinds of tensions arise and what are their implications?

3. *The relationship between 'theory' and 'practice':* How do the students become empowered both as media *critics* (critical readers) and as media *producers* (creative writers) of the media, particularly in a context where theoretical and practical approaches come together? What kinds of knowledge and abilities, both theoretical and practical, are legitimised through teaching genre criticism and making a film trailer, in

particular? How are these two areas related in terms of making students *critical producers*?

4. *Group production for learning from others and as a form of social education:* How do individual students with diverse background knowledge about the media (both theoretical and practical) come to learn and work together in a group? How do they negotiate the differences between them in terms of production? How do they draw on what they have learned about the particular genre in order to negotiate their ideas? How do they become more confident in terms of their personal development? What kinds of tensions arise in the micro power/knowledge relationship between the students working in a same group? How do such group dynamics affect the students' production?

5. *The position and the role of the teacher:* How are teachers positioned in relation to the 'official discourses' which inform their classroom practices? How are they institutionally positioned within their own institutions and in relation to each other? How do their institutional positions and working relations affect their classroom practices? How do teachers with different kinds of knowledge (theoretical and practical) work together in order to empower the students both as media *critics* and as media *producers*? What are their roles in terms of the implicit pedagogy of group production?

The next chapter discusses how I conducted three case studies in order to explore these questions and explains my theoretical and analytical perspectives in analysing the data presented in the following three chapters.

# Chapter 4.

# Methodology

This chapter provides an account of how I conducted the research; it also discusses the theoretical perspectives and analytical procedures drawn on for the data analysis. The 'interpretive, ethnographic' paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) within which my research was conducted raises the question of the position of the researcher both as an observer/participant in the research context and as an interpreter of the data gathered. In the case of my research, this issue needs to be discussed particularly in relation to the fact that I am a Korean researcher studying British media educational practices. My unique position needs some discussion not only in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of being an outsider to the sphere of social practice that I studied, but also in terms of the dilemmas of researching *others'* educational experiences, which, driven by the post-colonial perspective on knowledge production which has recently developed in Korean educational research, was my theoretical choice.

## 4.1. Researching *others'* educational experiences

> *A more progressive educational approach might well offer more*
> *opportunities for pupils and teachers to negotiate common curriculum*

*goals, or at least for teachers to incorporate pupils' wider experience and interests into what is taught. But whether such opportunities are taken up, and whether they are successfully incorporated into teaching and learning can be discovered only by observing what goes on in actual classrooms.*

*(Edwards & Mercer, 1987: 2)*

*Korea had never been a colony of a western country, and it was colonised by a neighbouring nation for a relatively short period (1910-1945). Yet, the modern history of Korea has never been free from colonialist cultural structure. (…) The colonialist vestiges persisted in every social institution, because 'colonisation' is not simply a matter of economic/political dimension but also a problem of cultural/psychological dimension. The result is pervasive "otherness", that is, alienation from oneself, looking at oneself from the perspective of other people.*

*(Cho, 1994: 22)*

As I suggested at the end of the previous chapter, the major question pursued in this thesis is how the pedagogic process of media education aimed at 'empowerment' can be implemented in actual situations within the classroom and what kinds of tensions and contradictions might need to be considered there. Pursuing such questions, I wanted to explore how the critical reading approach and the critical/creative writing approach to media education might be implemented in different educational contexts such as schools and youth projects where each approach had been dominant. Subsequently, I wanted to

explore how these two aspects of media education might come together in order to empower students in both ways.

Such questions arose from my own experiences as a teacher and researcher in South Korea. As described in the preface, there have been growing concerns with the innovation of the curriculum for Korean (that is, for mother tongue language education), in terms of reconceptualising literacy as 'multiliteracies' (The New London Group, 1996) including 'media literacy', although the term 'multiliteracies' itself has not been widely used (Kim, 1998; Choi *et al*, 2000; Kim *et al*, 2000). While such writings have tried to provide a rationale and recommendation for media education mainly through theoretical discussion, they tend to draw heavily on *imported* educational theories and practices, without necessarily addressing the particular historical and social contexts where they developed. Reflecting my own research interests in media education, I also hoped to learn from the theories and practices of media education in England particularly because it had been developed in relation to mother tongue education. However, I wanted to do so by looking at media education within the contexts where such theories and practices had been developed.

Similar concerns apply to another orientation of my interest in media education. There have been increasing concerns with 'alternative' forms of education in the context of the 'crisis' of schooling in South Korea, as discussed in the Preface (Cf. Cho, 1995; Pak *et al*,

2000). Despite the different perspectives on its cause and solutions, it has been recognised that there is a wide gap between the ways in which the traditional school curriculum has been taught in Korea and the ways in which young people today may want to learn (Cf. Cho, 2000). In this context, expectations have grown about media education as a form of alternative education, which could open up a space for the teacher to get closer to the culture of young people today, particularly in extra-curricular activities or in youth projects. While such concerns made me conduct part of my research in a youth project, I wanted to do so without celebrating what *others* might do, which many Korean educationalists might regard as *the* model to follow.

As such, my decision to conduct the research on media education in England had complex and somewhat conflicting aims. On the one hand, I ultimately wanted to contribute to the development of media education in Korea by bringing some good practice from England back home. Coming from a country where the slogan of 'development' has been obsessively pursued in every aspect of society, I should confess that I myself was not exceptional: I wanted to learn about new kinds of educational approaches such as media education from more 'advanced', western societies. On the other hand, I wanted to learn without *mythologising* the theories and practices, which themselves should be considered within particular historical and social contexts, as *the* model that Koreans could simply import. Therefore, I wanted to conduct classroom research in England in order to explore whether and how the professed aim of media education as empowerment is implemented

in actual situations within the classroom, as the first quotation from Edwards and Mercer would recommend (Edwards & Mercer, 1987).

In this respect, my choice of conducting research on *others'* educational experiences is driven by a post-colonial perspective on knowledge production which has recently developed in South Korea. As Cho suggests, there has traditionally been an obsession with 'universalistic discourses' among Korean intellectuals. As a feminist and post-colonial theorist whose reflexive writings have been profoundly influential in South Korea, Cho criticises the ways in which, since the modernisation of the country began, Korean intellectuals have produced 'words and texts that do not "click with" nor fit to "us"' (Cho, 1994: 17). While she points out that it is equally dangerous to abandon totally western theoretical concepts just because they originated from other societies, Cho criticises the ways in which western theories have been imported to Korean contexts as if they were universal, master discourses, which resulted in looking at 'us' (Koreans) from *others'* point of view, or more precisely, from the westerners' point of view.

Such self-alienating intellectual practices have been largely unexceptional in educational research in South Korea (Shim, 2001). In fact, being a PhD student studying in a prestigious university in England, I was often commissioned to write about educational practices in England for various research projects conducted in South Korea. For instance, I was invited to write about 'Youth media projects in London' (1999) and 'Teacher

education and promotion in England' (2000) and to consult the report of the 'National

Curriculum in England' (2000) as well as writing articles about recent educational issues

in England as a 'correspondent' for an educational magazine, *Educational Development*.

The commissioners of such research projects had close links with the central or local

government in Korea, in terms of making educational policy or school curriculum or

youth policy. [2] Consequently, my writings were going to impact, if not directly, on

educational policy-making to some degree. This made me feel somewhat ambivalent about

the way I wrote about the subjects. On the one hand, I wanted to present good practices

that I felt Koreans could learn from, in order to provide 'better' education. On the other

hand, I felt somewhat uncomfortable with the potential effects that my writings could

bring about in terms of reinforcing the colonialist discourse of making 'us' (Koreans) look

at ourselves from *others'* perspectives, which I wanted to overcome; although in fact I

always addressed such concerns in my own writings.


The way I chose to confront such a dilemma was to conduct qualitative research on media

classrooms in England as a participant observer. While the meaning of participant

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[2] For instance, 'Youth media projects in London' (1999) was written for the Centre for Youth and Cultural Studies (Yonsei University) and it was presented as part of the consultation paper, *Youth Vision 2020*, for the Seoul Metropolitan Government in South Korea. Subsequently, the Centre for Youth and Cultural Studies was commissioned to run a new youth cultural project, 'HAJA Centre'. 'Teacher education and promotion in England' (2000) was written for KEDI (Korea Educational Development Institute) as a section of *Report on Teacher Education and Promotion in the United States, England, Japan and Singapore*; 'National Curriculum in England' was for KICE (Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation) as a section of *Comparative Study of National Curriculum*. *Educational Development* is published by KEDI. KEDI and KICE function as a Korean equivalent of QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) in England.

observation is not easy to pin down, it can largely be defined as a method used in

ethnographic research, in its more generous sense of 'exploring the nature of particular

social phenomena rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them' (Atkinson &

Hammersley, 1994: 248). This method has been used in order to achieve what Geertz

terms 'thick description', which is 'catching [the insiders'] intentionality and their

interpretations of frequently complex situations, their meaning systems and the *dynamics*

of the interaction' (Geertz, 1973, my *italics*).


Therefore, by positioning myself as a participant observer in unfamiliar situations as a

foreign researcher, I wanted to explore the theories and practices of media education –

which I wanted to learn from– within the historical and social contexts where they had

developed. Experiencing the tensions, which such a method would constantly create for

me, I wanted to make myself reflect throughout the research process on my own position

as a Korean researcher who would ultimately bring the implications of the research back

home.

## 4.2. An outline of the research

> *A case study is a specific instance [such as a child, a clique, a class, a school, and a community] that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. (…) It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Indeed a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together.*
>
> *(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 181)*

In the previous section, I described how my research questions which originated in South Korea made me conduct the research in England. In the light of the questions (that is, exploring how different approaches to media education as empowerment might be implemented in actual situations in the classroom), I carried out my research in three distinct classroom contexts in London between September 1998 and May 1999. Three research sites were selected by theoretical (rather than demographic) sampling in order to look at different approaches to media education in a school context, in a youth project context, and finally in the context of a collaboration between a school and a youth project. In this respect, my research was comprised of three small case studies. Considering that I chose three classroom contexts as cases rather than one particular context and that the nature of my interests is in exploring different pedagogic approaches to media education through the cases rather than the cases as their own, my research can be considered as

what Stake calls 'instrumental', 'collective' case study (Stake, 2000: 437). This research

can also be considered as a 'critical case study' (Rossman & Rallis, 1998: 71), considering

that it aims to provide a critique of existing educational practices in media education,

based on thick description of the chosen cases. Now, in relation to the research questions

explored in each context, I would like to describe how I conducted the research.

Firstly, between September and October 1998, I conducted two separate studies of the

induction courses in a school and in a youth project. The first study, considered in Chapter

5, was a case study of the critical reading approach, focusing on an introduction to the

'critical analysis of the media' in school. The second study, considered in Chapter 6, was a

case study of critical/creative writing approach, focusing on an introduction to television

production in the youth project. The rationale for observing an introduction course in each

site was to examine the ways in which two distinct approaches to media education were

introduced to beginners.

The first study, which focused on the theory and practice of a critical media analysis

approach particularly based on the reading of women's images in women's magazines,

was conducted on the introductory unit of an A-level Media Studies course. The second

study, which focused on the 'hands-on' approach to television production particularly

based on television interviews and drama, was carried out on an introduction course in a

youth television project. While I shall outline the context of each study in more detail in

Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, considering that each study was distinct in terms of the specific research questions explored, here I will describe the general backgrounds of the school and the youth project.

The school considered in Chapter 5 is part of a consortium of Sixth Forms of four local schools in north London. It was fairly mixed in terms of the students' social backgrounds such as class, gender and ethnicity, and it had enjoyed a reputation as one of the most successful Sixth Form consortia in inner London, with more than national-average passes at both A-C and A-E grades in every subject, including Media Studies. [3] However, there were more boys than girls (10 boys and 5 girls) and more white students than Asian and black students (12 white, 2 Asian and 1 black student) in the Year 12 Media Studies group that I observed. This fact was particularly relevant in the context, considering that the subjects discussed included the representation of women and black people in the media.

Two teachers (Judy and Susan) taught the group in separate lessons, following the OCR linear syllabus for Media Studies: Judy taught four periods and Susan taught three periods per week. [4] Both of them were females in their thirties, while Susan was younger than Judy. They planned the overall structure of the lessons together and exchanged their

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[3] For instance, according to the prospectus of the college, the overall percentage pass rate in A-level exams was 61.3% for A-C, and 92.2% for A-E, compared with the national averages 56.5% and 87.8%, respectively, in 1998. Partly due to such successful results, this school was appointed by the Government as a specialist school (Technology College) in 1999.

[4] All names of the teachers and the students are pseudonyms.

experiences in their own lessons but did not teach the group together in the same lessons. Judy trained as both an English and an Media Studies teacher, having done her PGCE in English and Media Studies and her MA in Media Studies, while Susan trained initially as an English teacher and became a Media Studies teacher through in-service training.

While Media Studies had been enjoying growing popularity among the students since it was set up as an A-level subject in the school six years before my research was conducted, it was still being treated as a minor subject in relation to English. There was no Media Studies department in the school, although Judy had a 'responsibility' allowance for Media Studies in the English department as the only one who had an MA in Media Studies (she also had previously worked as a photographer). In this context, the Media Studies teachers were not getting enough support from the school, in terms of ongoing teacher training and the provision of facilities for media production. Considering that such circumstances can be seen as fairly typical of other Media Studies courses in England (Cf. Frazer, 1995; Learmonth & Sayer, 1996; Barrett, 1998; Film Education Working Group, 1999), they seem to raise an important issue, particularly in terms of the position of the Media teachers in relation to the knowledge and skills required for them to teach. Such issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

For the study considered in Chapter 5, I observed lessons for six weeks at the beginning of the A-level Media Studies course, in September and October 1998. I had initially planned

to observe the 'induction unit' only, which was designed to introduce the methods of

textual analysis and practical work over the first four weeks. However, partly because the

amount of the time that the group spent on textual analysis – which was my focus of

observation for the study – was quite limited during the four weeks of the induction unit,

and partly because 'textual analysis' was studied more in depth for the next two weeks as

part of studying women's magazines, I extended my observation a little longer than I had

originally planned.


The classroom practice observed was recorded both in fieldnotes and, whenever possible,

by tape-recorder with consent, and some significant parts were transcribed for analysis.

The relevant handouts given to the students were also gathered to complement the record

of the classroom talk. While the classroom talk was the main data for my research,

considering the nature of my research questions (Silverman, 2000: 825), in order to

contextualise my observations and to understand the teachers' and the students' personal

perceptions of the classroom practice, I also conducted interviews with the teachers and

with the students. The two teachers were interviewed individually, and the students were

interviewed in small single sex groups, bearing in mind the gendered nature of the subjects

that they had studied. On average, each interview took an hour and was tape-recorded for

transcription and analysis. While the discourse-analytic approach that I drew on for data

analysis might emphasise the importance of recording of spoken talk rather than simply

relying on a recollection or report by the researcher of what was said (Wood & Kroger,

2000: 55-56), it was almost impossible to tape-record discussions that I often had with the teachers in more informal contexts. In these cases, I took notes afterwards.

The youth media project considered in Chapter 6 is located in west London. As a non-profit making company, which is a part of a charitable foundation, this youth media project provides 'disadvantaged' young people aged 11-19 with free television production training and opportunities to make their own programmes, which they transmit for 30 minutes every weekday through a community cable television channel. There have been slight changes in their aims (including the definition of disadvantaged young people as their target students) and in their training structure since my research was conducted, which shall be discussed further in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, since its foundation in 1994, the main aim of this project has remained as providing young people with 'hands-on', skill-based training in television production; and this is structured in four different levels – courses, workshops, production opportunities and work placements in the media industry. At the time of the study, 280 young people both from the local area and from other parts of London had joined this project as 'members' by taking the Induction course, although only a small number of the members came back for more training. I wanted to explore the pedagogic process of this youth media project by observing the Induction course, which was the first hands-on experience for most of the members and, for many young people, the only training that they had here.

While there were different types of Induction in terms of the time scale, four-day intensive

courses were most preferred and well attended by school students because they were taken

during half term weeks and vacations. The induction course was made up of two stages:

an exercise in making a television interview programme on the first day and a drama

project for the following three days. While the former was designed to introduce the

concepts, languages, methods and techniques involved in television production through

the pre-production and production processes, the latter was a more intensive project in

which young people could develop these skills (including post-production skills) in a more

integrated way.

For the study considered in Chapter 6, I observed one of the four-day intensive Induction

courses during the half term week in October in 1998. Three teachers taught the Induction

course that I observed and two teachers taught each day's session: Carrie and Paul on the

first day and Carrie and John on the following three days. They taught the students

together in the whole class for the general introduction to television production and for the

evaluation of the students' productions, but they worked separately with one of the two

smaller groups when they were doing the actual production, which was the main part of

the course. Each day's session of the consecutive four days during the half term week

lasted 5 to 6 hours excluding 30 to 40 minute lunch breaks and 10 minute short breaks

during the sessions. During the separate group production, I observed Carrie's group for

the interview exercise and then John's group for the drama project. [5]

Carrie originally trained as a youth worker and was working as an 'outreach worker' in

this project, while John and Paul trained in film and television production and were

working as 'trainers'. By observing Carrie's and John's groups separately, therefore, I

wanted to explore how the hands-on approach was implemented by different teachers who

might have different institutional positions and educational emphases; this will be

discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. In terms of the students involved in the course, there

were 16 students enrolled: 10 students over 16 and 6 students below 16; 9 male and 7

female students; and 10 black, 5 white and 1 Asian student. Such demographic

information about the students will be discussed later, in Chapter 6, when it becomes

relevant to the data analysed.

The classroom practice observed for this second study was also recorded both in fieldnotes

and whenever possible by tape-recorder with consent, and some significant parts were

transcribed for analysis. Relevant documents and resources such as the *Information

Memorandum*, the leaflet distributed to the students, the promotional video of the project,

the Induction course outline, the *Induction Pack*, the outline of the members' core tests

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[5] Therefore, Paul was observed only in the whole class teaching, which he did together with Carrie.

and the materials that the students produced while making the videos were also gathered to complement the record of the classroom talk.

I conducted interviews with the individual teachers (Carrie, Paul and John) after the course was finished. On average, each interview took an hour and was tape-recorded with consent and then transcribed for analysis. I initially planned to interview all of the students enrolled in the course at the end of the course. However, the timetable of the course – which started as early as 10 a.m. and finished as late as 5 or 6 p.m. after long hours of work – and the fact that the course was one-off (rather than regular lessons over a period of time as in school) made it very difficult to have a chance to interview the students after the course was finished. I tried to attend the members' meetings in which regular members discussed their experiences of being involved in the youth project. However, these meetings – which were supposed to be regularly held once a month – were often cancelled without advance notice. While experiencing such difficulties in terms of getting opportunities to meet the students outside the course was personally frustrating, it seemed to reflect the culture of the project itself which appeared to focus more on training than on providing a community for the members. [6] Therefore, I tried to discuss the students' perceptions of the project, based on an interview with a group of five students that I

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[6] Some of the points made in the record of the members meeting held in October 1998 seem to reflect somewhat 'unfriendly' atmosphere of the place, which I myself experienced throughout the research process. Some instances of the extracts include: 'Environment: This was most moaned about and cited that they feel this is a reason many people may not stay on.'; 'Receptionist: When we ring the bell, no one answers. This makes the place seem unwelcoming. ('go away' feel). When calling, it takes too long to be put through.'

conducted during my observation of the Induction course and on two samples of the

records of the members' meeting that I obtained from John in the follow-up meeting with

him, although these circumstances may limit my discussion of the students' perceptions of

the course and the project as a whole.

While I deliberately attempted to focus on issues specific to the more theoretical, reading-

based approach and the more practical, writing-based approach by carrying out these two

separate studies, I ultimately wanted to explore the relationship between the two

approaches. Therefore, I went back to the school where I conducted the first study,

considered in Chapter 5, when the teachers worked together with a local youth project to

help the students with their production. The specific project involved students making a

gangster film trailer as a small group (three small groups in total). By focusing on the

process of practical work, which was informed by theoretical study of the gangster film

genre, I wanted to explore some questions unresolved in the previous studies.

In terms of the teachers involved, Susan taught the same group of students, who were

observed in the study considered in Chapter 5, with Claire (a temporary teacher), who

replaced Judy due to Judy's maternity leave. Judy's absence meant that it was Susan who

was now in charge of the overall project, helping Claire to settle down with the group and

arranging the students' production work with the local youth project, rather than Judy,

who had been in the more responsible position in the study discussed in Chapter 5. Partly

in order to fill the 'gap' created by the absence of Judy, who had more experience of

teaching practical work than Susan, and partly to create a more 'professional' environment

for the students, Susan made an arrangement that the students would work with a 'media

expert' from a local youth media arts project, particularly when they were learning how to

use the media equipment (both for production and post-production), and then evaluating

their production from a 'technical' point of view. Coincidentally, this media expert

happened to be John, whose classroom practice was observed in the second study

considered in Chapter 6. Building on my previous observation of the classroom practice of

both Susan and John in separate contexts, therefore, I wanted to explore how these

teachers with different kinds of knowledge about the media might work together in

seeking to empower the students both theoretically (as critical readers) and practically (as

media producers), and what kind of issues might arise in terms of the teachers' positions

and working relations.

In terms of the time scale of the third study, I observed lessons between early March and

mid May, 1999, excluding the three week Easter holiday in April. The project involved

making a gangster film trailer as a small group and it took approximately eight weeks: five

weeks for pre-production, two intensive days for the shooting (one week), two intensive

days for the editing (one week), and one week for the evaluation. I conducted intensive

observations during the entire period, having chosen one of the three groups as my focus

group, although I observed the other two groups' work processes and collected relevant

data in order to compare them with my focus group. [7]

Apart from observing the production process, I also conducted interviews both with the

three teachers who were involved in the project (Susan, Claire and John) and with the

focus group students. The interviews with the teachers were conducted individually, for

about one hour each, after the project was finished. The interviews with the focus group

students were conducted in two separate single-sex groups (this was partly a result of their

group dynamics, which shall be discussed later in Chapter 7), for about one hour each. All

the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Other data collected

include the handouts given to the students, the subject reviews of the individual students,

questionnaires about the individual students' perceptions of the course (which they filled

out at the end of the course), the students' video productions and their written evaluations.

## 4.3.    Theoretical perspectives and analytical procedures

> *A major problem with Critical Theory is its self-proclaimed commitment*
> *to an emancipatory project posited as a universal value. Foucault's*
> *argument that everything is dangerous is a salutary reminder that*

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[7] I shall discuss the rationale for choosing the particular group as the focus group later in Chapter 7.

*universalising emancipatory discourses may not always have the*
*effect intended.*

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*(Usher, 1996: 25)*

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*Any classroom contains two interpenetrating worlds: the official world*
*of the teacher's agenda, and the unofficial world of the peer culture.*
*Most educational research is interested only in the first, and implicitly*
*assumes the perspective of the teacher. (…) There is an*
*interpenetration of the official and unofficial, legal and illegal parts of*
*the total classroom-speech community. The dilemma for the teacher is*
*now what rules academic objectives should be (…) [and] what rules*
*about talking should be enforced to advance those objectives most*
*effectively.*

<div align="right">

*(Cazden, 1988: 150-152)*

</div>

In the previous section, I described how I conducted the classroom research in three different contexts, observing classroom practices, interviewing the teachers and the students involved and collecting relevant documents and the students' productions. The data gathered in such ways are mainly 'talk' and 'text': talk produced and tape-recorded in the classroom and in the interview situations; and text such as the handouts studied in the classroom and the video productions made by the students. Such methods of data collection are driven by my theoretical perspective that is fundamentally based on the assumption that there is no social phenomena on which can be known separately from its construction as *discourse*.

Broadly speaking, the discursive perspective has two origins: firstly the sociolinguistic perspective on *language as action*, which emphasises what people *do* with their talk and writing, which is influenced by Austin's (1962) theory of 'speech acts'; and, secondly, the Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1979, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1990), which focuses on the *discursive resources* that are *socially constructed* and systematically form the object of which they purport to speak (See Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 6-7; Kress, 1989: 7; Fairclough, 1992: 41; Potter & Wetherell, 1995: 80-83; Willig, 1999: 2; Wood & Kroger, 2000: 4-9). In this respect, the discursive perspective is closely related to what Giddens terms 'structuration' – the process whereby the structural properties of social systems are constituted and reconstituted in the actions of individual agents (Giddens, 1984). As such, social structures, which impose limits on what individuals can do but at the same time enable the agents to do things in particular ways, as Giddens suggests, can be seen to constitute what people do with talk and text.

Following the discursive perspective, I analyse my data in terms of what the teacher and the students *do* with their talk and text, drawing on the discursive resources available to them. This means that I do not analyse classroom discourse as the evidence of individual speakers' 'internal orientations' inherent to their behaviour and identity; nor do I criticise particular episodes from the classroom as examples of 'good practice' or 'bad practice'. Instead, my analysis aims to explore how the teacher and the students are *discursively* positioned in the media classroom; whether the skills and knowledge about the media are

presented as *negotiable*; whether and to what extent the pedagogic process can actually

empower the teacher and the students. In doing so, I ultimately problematise discourses

that seek to define media education as empowerment, as Usher criticises the 'regime of

truth' of Critical Theory (Usher, 1996), rather than restating what Lyotard terms

'performativity' (Lyotard, 1984: 53-54) in the sense of celebrating the professed aims of

such discourses.

At a micro-level of analysis, I examine the ways in which particular approaches to media

education are discursively realised in 'normal' classroom talk (Edwards & Westgate, 1994).

'Normal classroom talk' is seen as the three-move-exchange of 'I–R–E (initiation-reply-

evaluation)', where the teacher becomes the questioner of known information in order to

test the knowledge of the respondents (students) rather than genuinely seeking information

from them (Mehan, 1979). In this distinctive exchange structure, the teacher tends to make

the first and third moves as the transmitter of knowledge, in order to transform the

teacher's lecture into an interactional talk between the teacher and the students (Cazden,

1988: 50). As Cazden metaphorically suggests, the prevalence of the IRE in the classroom

makes classroom talk fundamentally a 'performance' which requires a group of 'actors' to

participate, but in which only one of the actors – the teacher – knows how it is supposed to

be played (Cazden, 1988: 44). As such, 'normal' classroom talk is seen ultimately as the

teacher's 'cued elicitation', where knowledge and understanding are presented as elicited

from students rather than 'imposed' by the teacher, and thus it effectively inculcates

students into a 'predetermined culture of educational knowledge and practice' (Edwards & Mercer, 1987: 143). While such a structure of 'normal' classroom talk may be useful for some educational purposes such as assessing factual information that students must know, as Cazden argues, it is not appropriate for a 'real discussion' in which ideas are explored rather than answers are provided (Cazden, 1988: 54).

By analysing some typical examples of 'normal' classroom discourse from the classrooms that I observed, therefore, I explore the pedagogic processes by which particular kinds of knowledge and skills are legitimised as empowering in certain approaches to media education (See my analyses of Extracts 3 and 4 in Chapter 5 and analyses of Extracts 3-5 in Chapter 6 for further discussions). In doing so, I try to reveal the ways in which the 'official world of the teacher's agenda', or what I will simply term the 'official discourse' of the particular approach to media education excludes other kinds of discourse. On the other hand, I also analyse some significant episodes in which the official discourse seems to be problematised. For instance, I discuss how the official critical discourse of the critical analysis approach might sit together with 'personal discourse' rather uneasily, and how it might effectively control the ways in which personal discourse (both of the teacher and the students) enters into the classroom (See Chapter 5). I also discuss how the dominance of the 'skills-based, hands-on training' discourse effectively prevents the teacher and the students from discussing the content of productions in more genuinely dialogic ways (See Chapter 6). In doing so, I try to problematise the 'official world of the

teacher's agenda' (Cazden, 1988) by examining whether it allows the students to negotiate the kinds of skills and knowledge they will gain about the media (their media 'competence') in the process of becoming members of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) relevant to media education.

In terms of the actual procedure of analysis, I select some significant *episodes* from the classroom events that I observed and analyse them as 'critical incidents'. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison suggest, 'critical incidents' or 'critical events' are 'particular events or occurrences that might typify or illuminate very starkly a particular feature of a teacher's behaviour or teaching style' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 310). Such incidents are critical, although they may be unusual, because they reveal important insights into classroom practices, which are informed by particular discourses. The analyses of such critical incidents are then contextualised and *triangulated* by the analyses of significant documents such as the handouts used in the classroom and by the subsequent accounts of the teachers and of the students. Drawing on such different sources of data, I critically explore the ways in which the dominant discourses of media education define 'proper' and 'improper' ways of talking about the media in the classroom.

Poststructuralist and postmodern theory have asserted the *perspectival* nature of knowledge (Altheide & Johnson, 1998: 294) and the inevitablility of power-knowledge relations (Usher & Edwards, 1994: 90). My own data analysis is not exceptional: my

theoretical perspectives on knowledge as a social construction and teaching and learning

as a process of negotiating competence within communities of practice (See Chapter 3 for

further discussions) ultimately inform my choice of particular episodes (both from the

classroom events and from the interviews) as critical incidents and my interpretations of

them. As such, I do not argue that my analyses are objective, impersonal, value-free truth

about the world, in the sense that they can be independent from the researcher's

perspective in terms both of choosing the objects of the study and of interpreting the data,

as researchers within the 'positivist/empiricist' paradigm might want to achieve (Usher,

1996: 13). Nor do I claim the validity of my research in the sense that my research can be

replicable by other researchers who would have different 'situational identities'

(Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000: 683-686) in their engagement in the different social

and power-knowledge relations of particular events (classrooms and interview situations).


Following the requirements of qualitative inquiry (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 106)

and of the discourse-analytic approach (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 163), however, I tried to

provide as trustworthy and acceptable accounts of the reality as possible. Many have

argued that trustworthiness of qualitative research can be ensured by the researcher's

prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation and 'triangulation' as

requirements for the naturalistic, qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 301). While

my engagement with the participants was not enough to claim my research as ethnography

– in that it did not have the length and intensity that are required for ethnography (Cf.

Gillespie, 1995: 55) and in that there were some practical difficulties, as I will discuss later

in this chapter –, I observed the chosen classroom contexts persistently, engaging with the

participants during the study whenever it was appropriate and possible. In the actual

analysis of the data, I provided detailed transcripts of the classroom events and the

interviews, which were tape-recorded whenever it was possible, in order to provide

'warranting' or justification and grounds for my claims by paying attention to the linguistic

details of the actual conversations, including turn-taking between the teacher and the

students, the tone of their voice and the chosen vocabulary as well as accounting for the

contexts of the particular 'natural' speech events (Cf. Sacks, 1984; Silverman, 2000).

I do not argue that my analyses can be generalisable to other classroom situations exactly

the same way, considering the specificity of the contexts that I studied. However, it can be

said that the classroom practices considered in Chapters 5 and 7 are fairly representative

of the particular approach to media education, considering that they were informed by the

established syllabuses, textbooks and teaching materials which are widely used in schools

rather than being merely the results of the individual teachers' decisions. While it may be

difficult to establish representativeness as such in the case of the youth project considered

in Chapter 6 – unlike in schools, there are no official textbooks or syllabus commonly

used by different youth projects –, I would argue that their practice was well informed by

dominant discourses about youth work and media training, considering that it was

sponsored by diverse and representative groups and that its teaching materials were clearly

informed by the relevant publications (See Chapter 6 for further discussion). As such, I

suggest that the classroom practices in the school and in the youth project that I discuss

can be seen as fairly representative of more general approaches to media education, both

in terms of the teaching strategies and more importantly of the discourses that they are

informed by. The claim for the validity of my research in terms of *discursive*

representativeness shall inform some of my discussions in the conclusion of this thesis,

particularly in relation to the implications of my research that I want to bring back home.

Interpretive, ethnographic researchers have emphasised the importance of reflecting the

'situated identity' of the researcher (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000: 683-686): that is,

the position and status of the researcher in terms of participating in and of interpreting the

social phenomena studied. Accordingly, increasing numbers of qualitative researchers

have sought to establish the validity of their research by emphasising the reflexivity of the

researcher, in terms of accounting for the process of the research and the role of the

researcher both in the research context and in the interpretative process. Bearing this in

mind, I shall try to provide justification and grounds for my claims about the data in the

three data chapters, reflecting my own role as a researcher and interpreter with a personal

voice.

## 4.4. Reflexivity and the learning process

*The aim of methodology (…) is to describe and analyse [the] methods [used], throwing light on their limitations and resources, clarifying their presuppositions and consequences, relating their potentialities to the twilight zone at the frontiers of knowledge. (…) In sum, the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself.*

*(Kaplan, 1964: 23)*

This section provides my own reflection on the research process, focusing on how I entered into the research sites, how I engaged with the people, observing and interviewing them, particularly focusing on my different relations to the four teachers (Judy, Susan, Claire and John), how I perceived my own role in the research processes, and how these might have affected my data collection and interpretation. Thereby, I try to present the classrooms that I studied faithfully and accurately, in order to achieve what Altheide and Johnson term 'analytical realism', which is based on the view that 'the meanings and definitions brought to actual situations are produced through a communication process' (Altheide & Johnson, 1998: 292) with the readers of my research.

My choice of research sites was largely opportunistic in that my contacts with the school and the youth project were dependent on my connections and the availability and willingness of the teachers to have me in their classrooms, although it was also driven by 'theoretical sampling' as I discussed earlier. I first met Judy, who was a teacher in the

school considered in Chapter 5 and subsequently in Chapter 7, in the Institute of Education in November 1997, through one of my fellow students, who was teaching at the school on a part-time basis. Having decided to conduct classroom research in England, I was then looking for a teacher who had been teaching both English and Media Studies, because part of my interest as a researcher was in the issues that a teacher of mother tongue language might encounter in teaching about the media. Being a non-British student, I also needed to find a teacher who was willing to allow me to be in her or his classroom over a period of time, helping me to settle down in the British school environment. Judy was sympathetic to my broad interests in media education as a teacher of Korean and thus let me into her classroom. Later she told me that the school was then preparing for the OFSTED inspection, and thus she felt that an outsider's questions about her teaching would help her with the preparation. I started going to the school in late November 1997, observing Judy's Year 12 and Year 13 Media Studies classes, trying out interviews with her and with her students, and reformulating my research questions in order to make them more relevant to the actual classroom context.

To the eyes of a non-British person – who had arrived in London just a few months before – most of the school circumstances looked very different from the one in South Korea, including the arrangement of tables and chairs in the classroom. [8] Therefore, at this stage

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[8] In the school where I conducted my research, the students usually sat at a table as small groups, which would make it easier to do group activities or discussions, whereas in Korean schools the students usually sat individually in a row (although they would rearrange their individual tables in a circle when they would work in a group, considering that small group activities had been recently

of my pilot study, my position was more of a 'complete observer', who just started

fieldwork in a totally new setting (Gold, 1958). In this respect, I was like one of the

anthropologists from the very early history of field work, whose field research involved a

'field trip of one or two years, working in the native language, "cut off" from contacts

with [the home country] in order to live as a member of the community under study', as

Burgess describes (Burgess, 1984: 13), except that I came to England from another part of

the world, had already heard and read a lot about England and did not carry 'racial'

preconceptions.

Such circumstances meant that I did not have much 'tacit knowledge' (Altheide &

Johnson, 1998: 298-301) at the beginning of my field research, although it gradually

increased as my research proceeded. Therefore, the ways in which I came to meet Judy

seemed to have made Judy perceive me mostly as a non-British friend, whom she should

help to be 'saturated' in the English educational system, although she was also a subject of

my research. Consequently, although she was more personal in general conversations with

me, Judy seemed to feel that she should talk to me about her teaching more with the

*official* teacher's voice as she might do to OFSTED inspectors or to other one-off visitors,

and less with a personal voice.

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encouraged). The difference of the arrangement of the tables as such seems to be important in that
it may signify the kinds of pedagogy preferred in the different social contexts.

On the other hand, I met Susan, who was to teach the new Year 12 group with Judy in the following academic year, after I had become more familiar with the school environment, having finished the pilot study. I was then more confident about my position as a researcher with a better organised research plan and more specific questions. I wanted to observe Susan's class as well as Judy's, considering that they were going to 'share' the same group of students. I introduced myself to Susan as a 'PhD student' from the Institute of Education, explaining broadly about my research interests: I told her that I was interested in the ways in which teacher and students might be placed in relation to knowledge about the media in the classroom. Susan seemed to perceive me as a researcher, who might ask some 'challenging' questions about the way she was teaching, but at the same time as someone with whom she could consult, considering that she was keen on hearing about my perception of her lessons.

Therefore, we frequently had conversations about some interesting moments from her class, although I tried not to pass my instant judgements on to her. And as my research progressed, she became more of a participant in my research than Judy, in the sense that she had a greater desire to reflect about her own teaching through my presence in her classroom. Susan later told me in our informal conversation that she felt like looking at part of her watching herself when she was looking at me in the classroom. She seemed to gradually come to perceive me as a new friend to whom she could comfortably talk even about some delicate issues relating to her working relationship with Judy that she found it

difficult to address (See Chapter 5 for further discussion). [9] In this context, drawing a line between my role as a researcher and a friend was not easy, although Susan considerately suggested that we should not be 'too friendly' in order for me to keep critical distance from her as a subject of my study.

The different ways in which I engaged with the two teachers seemed to have generated different kinds of qualities in the interviews, although I did not intend to do so. As a matter of fact, I asked Judy and Susan largely similar questions in the interviews and tried not to be 'too friendly' to either of them. However, the different ways in which they engaged with me seemed to make my interviews with Susan more like informal conversations between two people who shared similar concerns, whereas the ones with Judy were more like formal interviews between an outsider and a representative of the school. From the discourse-analytic perspective on the interview as a symbolic interaction between two or more parties (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 172; Miller & Glassner, 1997: 100; Potter, 1997: 149), it seemed natural that the differences between the two teachers in terms of their perception of my role were reflected in the different quality of their interviews. Therefore, I would like to emphasise that it was not my view that Susan was a

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[9] I by no means imply that Susan found it difficult to approach or communicate with Judy at a personal level. In fact, they were in a very pleasant and respectful relationship. Perhaps their good personal relationship might have made it difficult for them to address some of the problems with their *institutional positions* in relation to Media Studies teaching within the English department, considering that they both somehow knew that institutional change would not be very easy nor come soon.

more reflexive teacher than Judy, just because Judy might be seen to speak with a more official voice compared with Susan's more personal voice.

Whereas my initial contact with the school considered in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 was through my personal contacts, the one with the youth television project, considered in Chapter 6, was more formal. I came to know about the project through the recommendation of my supervisor, David Buckingham, who had previously visited the project. In the letter that I sent to Margaret, the director of the project, I wrote that I wanted to learn about their project, explaining that my research would be fed into my PhD thesis as well as the consultant paper for a new youth project in South Korea that I was preparing at that time. This paper (mentioned earlier in this chapter) was 'Youth Projects in London', which was commissioned by the Centre for Youth and Cultural Studies, Yonsei University in South Korea (Jeong, 1999). The director and the other staff showed a deep interest in my letter and invited me to conduct my research with them. On my first visit in early July 1998, I met Margaret and John. Following this, my major contacts were with John.

It seemed that Margaret allowed me to conduct the research, partly because she felt that the purpose of my research itself recognised their project as internationally significant, particularly considering that their case was going to be an exemplar for a similar project in another country. While their perception of my research as such made my access to the

research site easier and made me feel welcomed at the beginning of the research, it appeared, in addition, to make many of the staff talk to me with the official voice, as Judy did in the school.

While gaining access to the research site was relatively easy, the actual process of conducting the research in the youth project was not so smooth. In fact, it was quite difficult even to contact the staff by telephone and email throughout the process of my study, simply because there was often no receptionist (partly due to the lack of funding to employ one) or because the computer network was often broken down, all of which I found out later on. Having to wait for a reply for weeks without knowing about such circumstances was emotionally frustrating because it made me feel rejected. Frequent cancellation of the course without advance notice and of members' meetings that I was supposed to observe also made me feel disappointed, which might have psychologically affected my research.

On the other hand, such experiences seemed to be representative of how the project actually operated. For instance, due to the lack of space in the building, there was no café or meeting space just for the young people, which meant that the staff had to share their working space with the young people. Such circumstances seemed to make it difficult for the young people – not to mention me as an outsider – to hang around in the space, which was officially defined as a working space. As I mentioned earlier, one of the samples of

the record of the members' meeting pointed to this 'unwelcoming' atmosphere as one of the major reasons why many members did not come back to the project after completing the Induction course. Therefore, the difficulty that I experienced in terms of meeting young people there seemed to show that the project focused more on recruiting new 'members' and offering training courses rather than on providing a 'cultural refuge' where existing members might come on their own (See Chapter 6 for further discussion).

In this context, my research became largely opportunistic. John invited me to observe one of the four-day intensive induction courses nearly three months after we first met, but he gave me notice of this only three days before the course started. This meant that I did not have enough time to be introduced to another teacher, Carrie, who was going to teach the course with John, considering that the notice was given just before the weekend. Then, on arrival on the first day of the course, I found out that John was not going to teach on that day due to other engagements. In these circumstances, I was put in a somewhat awkward position of having to observe people to whom I was a total stranger. Such circumstances made me conduct my study there almost as a 'complete observer' rather than as a 'participant observer', considering that I could not build 'rapport' with the people whom I observed before I began my research.

Despite the lack of rapport-building with Carrie, the interview with her, which took place over dinner in a nearby café a week after the course was finished, was unexpectedly more

productive than my more frequent conversations and interviews with John, with whom I had contacts over the following year, partly because he became involved in my third study considered in Chapter 7. While the interview with Carrie began as a more formal interview, in which the outsider-interviewer would ask general questions and the interviewee as a representative of the organisation would provide the official discourse as the answer, it developed into more of a conversation between two people who might share similar concerns. Significantly, the qualitative change of the interview from a more formal interview into a more informal conversation was made when Carrie took over the right to question – which would normally belong to the researcher – and asked me to tell her about my own view of the class that I observed.

While I was taken aback by her sudden question and the change in her tone, which seemed to indicate her annoyance to some degree with having to repeat what was written in an official document, I felt that I should share some of my observations in order to continue the interview. After I told her that I was intrigued by one of the critical moments from her class and described the event rather than evaluating it, she began to talk more personally about her own position in the youth project, by explaining how she felt about the reason why the particular event happened (See Chapter 6 for further discussion). Then, the rest of the conversation became rather more interesting and significant in the sense that she was not just repeating what was written in an official document. She later told me that my presence in her class gave her an opportunity to reflect on the routine practice that she had

repeated, as Susan told me in the school considered in Chapter 5. In this instance, Carrie's request to tell her how I observed her class seemed to be a kind of 'test' to find out whether I could be trusted to share her concerns.

As such, there was a difference between the ways in which I related to Susan and to Carrie on the one hand and the ways in which I related to Judy and to John on the other hand; although this was not intentional. However, such a difference seemed to come not so much from the lack of opportunity to interact more personally with Judy and with John as from the fact that I felt that I could not do so. In fact, I spent more time with Judy and with John than I did with Susan and with Carrie, in terms both of the length and of the frequency of our meetings. This meant that I had more opportunities and time to establish rapport with Judy and with John than with the others. However, the 'naturalistic' observation, which I drew on in order to obtain 'naturally occurring talk' (Potter, 1997: 148) in the classroom, seemed to have made me remain as a 'participant as observer' rather than as an 'observer as participant' (Adler & Adler, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 1998: 137). This was related to the fact that my research was not originally designed as an action research project in the sense that my research was not intended to improve the teachers' practices directly as a result of my observation and feedback (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 162; Elliot, 1991: 69; Hopkins, 1993: 1). In this case, Susan's and Carrie's perception of my role as a kind of collaborator to help them with their reflection on their routine classroom

practice seemed to have made our interviews more personal and interactional, whereas my interviews with Judy and with John, and with the students that I observed, were less so.

My engagement with the students was relatively straightforward in the studies considered in Chapters 5 and 6, considering that I was almost a complete observer to them. In both contexts, I was introduced as a Korean PhD student from the Institute of Education, interested in media education in Britain. In the school, I interviewed the students outside the classroom, often in the library and talked with them more informally, for instance before lessons began or between the periods. Although I reminded them of my status as a researcher whenever they asked me, they seemed to think that I was aiming to become a proper teacher after spending some time as a student-teacher (they often asked me if I wanted to teach in the same school the following year). Similarly, in the youth project considered in Chapter 6, the students seemed to think that I was one of the volunteers who were helping the 'trainers' and the students with their discussions and productions, although I was mostly busy in making notes. My position as an observer made me distant from the ongoing small group activities both in the school and in the youth project. In this case, the students seemed to gradually understand that I was told not to be actively engaged with their discussions but only to observe them.

While I remained largely as an observer in the study considered in Chapter 7, I became relatively more personally engaged with a group of five students that I chose as my focus

group, considering that the project was a group production which took place both in and outside the classroom. I tried not to intervene in the students' work, although it was often difficult when students wanted to hear my opinions about their ideas. In fact, it was very hard for me to be invisible to them, in that I was present even when they were arguing with each other. One student told me in a follow-up interview that he thought that I might be their teachers' 'spy' at first and feared that I might report my observations to the teachers, as he saw me starting to make notes whenever they started arguing with each other. However, despite the somewhat uneasy feelings that they might have experienced throughout my observation, they allowed me to join them even when they were meeting outside the lesson and were willing to talk to me. Then, they seemed to gradually trust me when they found that my observations were not passed on to the teachers. I was only hoping that if there was any impact of my observation, it would have been a constructive one, as the students told me that they felt that they benefited from being observed by an adult as it made them concentrate more rather than spend too long arguing.

## 4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an account of research, my theoretical and analytical perspectives and reflections on my own role as the researcher and interpreter. In doing so, I have tried to show how my research questions which originated from my previous

experiences in Korea fed into the classroom research in England; how I was engaged in

the research situations and with the people that I observed and interviewed; and some of

the limitations within which my research was conducted. I also tried to provide an account

of how my research was actually conducted, reflecting my own 'situated identity' and to

make explicit the analytical procedures that I followed in analysing the data gathered,

given the theoretical and methodological choices that I made. Now I shall provide more

detailed accounts of the case studies in the following three chapters, focusing on how I

apply such theoretical and analytical perspectives to the data analysis in order to explore

the research questions outlined in the previous chapter.

# Chapter 5.

# Becoming 'critical': doing 'critical media analysis'

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the 'critical analysis' approach to media education. Given that the aim of the analytical approach is to make students more 'critical' about the media, as discussed in Chapter 2, the objective of this chapter is to explore how such an approach might actually be implemented in the classroom. What kinds of knowledge are validated in this approach? How do the teacher and the students engage with this particular way of understanding the media? How does the approach provide the students with meaningful knowledge about the media, in terms of making them critical?

As discussed in Chapter 3, the recent development of audience research within the tradition of Cultural Studies has taken the view that the meanings of media texts are socially constructed and negotiated by audiences rather than inherently existing in the texts themselves. From the perspective of audience research, children and young people as audiences often make sense of the media through discursive processes, for instance, through talking with their peers and adults about particular television programmes they watch. Such discursive processes are *social* in nature, in that the meanings of talk are not

separable from the speakers' social positions and the social relations in the particular

context in which the talk takes place, as well as in the society more broadly (Cf. Hodge &

Tripp, 1986; Buckingham, 1993). Talk about the media in learning situations such as in

the Media Studies classroom is no exception to such *discursive* and social processes, but it

is further complicated by the particular way of studying the media and the

power/knowledge relationship between the teacher and the students. Therefore, it is

important to consider two separate, although intertwined, *discursive* positions of speakers

in the Media Studies classroom: as teachers and students and as audiences.

Situative learning theory takes the view that knowledge can be considered as a kind of

competence that members of 'communities of practice' share and, in this respect, that

learning can be regarded as a process of gaining competence recognised in the particular

communities of practice by participating not only in the learning situation but also in the

practice more broadly (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). From the perspective of this

social theory of learning, competence is *socially constructed* and constantly *negotiated* by

the members of the communities of practice and therefore it is subject to change (Lave &

Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). School knowledge is no exception to negotiability: it is

socially constructed and, in principle, it should be renegotiated by the learners' lived

experiences. Therefore, in the case of the study of a critical analysis approach, it is

important to consider what kinds of competence the students need to learn in order to

participate in the practice of media critics, and whether and how such competence is

presented as *negotiable* in the sense that it provides them with opportunities to reflect upon their existing personal experiences of the media.

In order to explore these questions, I examine classroom talk gathered during a case study of an A-level Media Studies classroom in which the students were taught how to analyse critically the representation of women in women's magazines. I have already dealt with the background and context of this case study in Chapter 4. Focusing on the pedagogic process of the classroom talk, I examine the *discursive* process in which a particular kind of critical discourse might be legitimised as what I would call *the* 'official critical discourse'; and I explore how this official critical discourse positions the teacher and the students discursively in particular ways, as well as the kinds of tensions that might arise as a result in the social context of the classroom. Drawing on interviews with the teachers, I also explore the ways in which the official critical discourse is and can be institutionally reproduced in the particular Media Studies classroom that I observed. In doing so, I ultimately try to explore whether the critical analysis approach would be useful in terms of helping the students to have genuinely *dialogic* discussions about the meanings of media texts based on their own lived experiences as audiences.

## 5.2. *The* 'official critical discourse': problems with the relationship between textual analysis and ideological judgement

As discussed in Chapter 2, the critical analysis approach is based on an assumption that

the media are the means through which the dominant ideology of the society is transmitted,

and aims to examine critically the 'hidden' meanings of the media. By implication, the

teacher who teaches the students how to analyse the media critically by following a

particular analytical procedure, i.e., semiotic analysis, is regarded as an emancipator who

can make the students become critical about the media and about the dominant ideology

that the media transmit. The analytical procedure is seen to involve three stages of

analysis: identifying *denotations* of media texts (i.e., describing the images which appear

in media texts), interpreting their *connotations*, and then linking such description and

interpretation of the images to *ideology* (Masterman, 1980: 10).

Reflecting this approach, the Media Studies syllabus used by the school that I observed

requires the students to demonstrate 'skills in analysis of media products' as part of their

assessment (OCR, 1998: 2). Accordingly, the textbook used by the school provides theory

and examples of semiotic analysis, as developed by Roland Barthes, suggesting a way of

deciphering the dominant meaning or the 'preferred reading' of given media texts by

emphasising close reading of 'visual codes', 'conventions', and 'narrative codes' as a

method of 'deconstructing' the meaning-making process (See O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 80-

82). Clearly, the textbook takes account of a pluralist view, which sees the media as

reflecting 'a range of interest groups and points of view', rather than insisting on the view

of the media as being narrowly ideological (*ibid*: 119). It also suggests that, *in principle*,

media texts always have a number of potential meanings rather than one fixed one, given

that readers may produce different meanings depending on their social positions and in

their different situated contexts of reading. *In practice*, however, it still seems to focus, as

the main object of the critical analysis, not so much on polysemic texts (or what Barthes

calls '*open* texts') as on '*closed* texts', which by definition direct the audience towards one

particular meaning, i.e., the dominant reading.

Particularly focusing on the analysis of women's magazines, which was going to be

continued in the next unit of study and informed by the syllabus and the textbook, the

induction unit of the Media Studies course that I observed was aimed at developing skills

of critical analysis. The question raised here is then how students are actually taught to

discover the ideological meaning of media texts in the classroom, and in relation to this,

whether the discovery of the ideological meaning is in fact the automatic result of a

supposedly *seamless* process of semiotic, textual analysis, as the critical analysis approach

might suggest. Interestingly, as I shall discuss, my own observation of classroom practice

tells a different story.

In fact, in the classroom that I observed, critical analysis was taught as two interrelated,

but separate processes: *textual analysis* of visual codes and the *ideological judgement* of

the text. As such, the first part of the induction unit was comprised of a series of exercises

in analysing photographic images: analyses of the visual codes such as the choice of

subject (e.g., age, gender, codes of dress, facial expression, gesture or pose, actions), the

background to the portrait including objects or artefacts, and camera techniques employed

(e.g., distance from subject, camera angle, lighting, the address of the shot). The handout

given to the students explains that such visual codes are systems of rules that members of

a particular community have in common. Accordingly, as the first stage of critical analysis,

the students spent some time learning how to analyse visual codes. However, it is

suggested that critical analysis or 'deconstruction' of visual images is different from a

mere reading: the aim here is to reveal the set of ideological assumptions behind such

images. Susan, the teacher, emphasises the 'critical distance' that the students need to take

when they analyse media texts – for instance, the front covers of women's magazines – as

follows:


[Extract 5-1]

   1. We're gonna move into looking at, umm … you've been doing a lot of content analysis

   2. – going through magazines, looking at the INSIDES of them, seeing what's happening on

   3. the inside. Now we're going to TAKE A STEP BACK and to look at the first thing you

   4. see when you walk into newsagents – the covers, OK? What is going on in the way that the

   5. covers have been put together? And this all comes back to the idea of something that's

   6. called 'REPRESENTATION', which is a key term, a key word. And we're gonna look at

   7. a lot of it over the next few weeks. You're gonna need to start using it yourselves and

   8. understand what it means, OK?

Here, the teacher suggests that the students need to take a different position from being a supposedly *uncritical* audience of magazines, who may just 'walk into newsagents' to buy and read them without necessarily 'analysing' them (2-4). As such, the students are required to 'take a step back' (3) from the 'inside' of the magazines. Then, she introduces the term representation as an analytical concept, which is thought to make the students see the media differently as *critics*. In this way, the teacher distinguishes the kinds of knowledge about the media that are legitimate for critical analysis from the ones which are not validated in the approach. Such distinctions seem to be related to underlying assumption about what the students might *know* and *do not know* yet about the media. On the one hand, it is assumed that the students know about the media, insofar as they know about the 'insides' (2) or the content of the magazines. On the other hand, it is assumed that the students do not know about the media, insofar as they do not yet know how to discuss the media using analytical concepts such as representation (6). Therefore, the teacher emphasises that the students need to start 'using it [the critical concept] yourselves' (7) and 'understand what it means' (8). In this way, the students are encouraged to position themselves in a particular way, i.e., as media critics (rather than as audiences), by learning the concept (representation), which is thought to enable them to take a critical distance from how they may engage with the media uncritically in their everyday lives.

Then how might critical analysis of the media actually be done? And, in the process, how might concepts such as representation guide textual analysis of the media, for instance, the analysis of the covers of women's magazines? In the following extract, another teacher Judy tries to clarify how critical analysis can be done in practice by commenting on the students' homework on textual analysis of the front cover of a recent issue of *Marie-Claire*:

[Extract 5-2]

1. Umm … One of the things I really found – the main weakness of the most people's
2. analysis of magazines they're asked to do was that ... there was TOO MUCH description
3. but not enough ANALYSIS of umm … whatever it was. And NOBODY, very few people
4. – I think when you're asked, "What is your target audience?", "Who is the target audience
5. of this magazine?" – , MOST people were incredibly VAGUE about what their target
6. audience was. So, for example, most people go, "Women aged between – I don't know –
7. 20-25", something like that. Umm …you didn't talk about the INTERESTS of those
8. women. I'm sure the worksheet said that what might their interests be. You didn't talk
9. about social class of the women that your magazine was aimed at. And very often a lot of
10. the points that you made didn't necessarily point to the fact you might come up with in
11. the conclusion that, you know, your target audience was women aged 20-25. You
12. didn't actually really BACK that point UP. You just sort of JUMPED OUT OF
13. NOWHERE. You didn't jump out of the fact that, for example, there are a lot of
14. articles about women pulling men or going to clubs or being interested in sex which all
15. suggests [their target audience is] a younger audience than, you know, kind of [the
16. target audience of] the mass weekly that are more interested in families. So, I'm
17. tempted to feel that there was a logical gap in the kind of conclusions you drew on –
18. and many of you didn't even bother drawing the conclusions. I can only assume that

19. EITHER A – you didn't read the worksheet properly OR B – you didn't understand the

20. worksheet when you read it. I'm not sure which. Or C – you misunderstood the worksheet

21. and thought that it was OK for you just to write, "The target audience is women", in

22. terms of "I don't know" sort of, which  was too VAGUE, you know. When I say – when

23. the worksheet says, "What are their interests?", we really mean, "What kind of things

24. they're doing over the weekends?" And the second thing was, which goes back

25. to something Miss Mullaney [Susan] was talking about. Miss Mullaney was talking

26. about DOMINANT IDEAS in the last lesson, is that right?


In this extract, Judy begins by telling the students, as Susan did in Extract 5-1, that a mere

description of magazines is not a proper analysis: 'there was too much description but not

enough analysis' (2-3). Then, the teacher reminds the students that what the 'worksheet

said' (8) was to analyse the 'target audience' (4) of the given media text (a cover of a

magazine), focusing on their 'social class' (9) and their 'interests' (7). She also

emphasises that the students need to 'back up' (12) their argument about the target

audience with actual details of the content of the given media text, thinking about 'what

kind of things [the target audience] are doing over the weekends' (23-24), for instance.

Then, she points out that another problem with most of the students' analysis was that they

did not successfully link such analysis of the content to the 'dominant ideas' (26) that the

given media text might produce  – here, she draws attention to the fact that some students

did not 'even bother to draw conclusions' (18) –, and then moves on to remind them of the

concept of dominant ideology and of its importance in terms of analysing the media. [10] In

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[10] I did not include more of the continuing classroom talk simply because it was too long and thus a
summary would be more effective for this discussion.

doing so, the teacher implies that the analysis of the content (as well as visual codes and conventions) of the magazine cover can fill the 'logical gap' (17) between a mere description (what most of the students did) and the conclusion to be drawn (the ideological meaning of the text).

In this way, the teacher seems to tell the students that the reason why they did not do critical analysis properly is because of their lack of attention to the 'worksheet' (23) and to the previous lesson (24-26). In this case, such a remark on a 'management level', as Kerry terms it (Kerry, 1982: 84), which calls for a 'good students' attitude' in a somewhat cynical – although humorous – tone, seems in effect to mystify and simplify the method of critical analysis. It is as if the students could discover the ideological meaning of the magazine quite mechanistically, if they followed the analytical procedure properly. In this case, the remark reasserts the teacher's authority in the power/knowledge relationship with the students by drawing the students' attention in the classroom, when she moves back on to a 'concept level' of talk (as Kerry terms it), in which it is suggested, by implication, that the ideology of the magazine would naturally come out of the analysis of the target audience (24-26).

However, the ultimate goal of critical analysis – the discovery of the ideological meaning of the media – does not in fact seem to emerge as a natural result of the analysis of the front covers of magazines, for example, from the analysis of the visual codes of the picture

of the model and the captions presenting what is inside the magazine. *In practice*, the ideology of women's magazines was taught in a more direct way, by studying a particular critical discourse, namely that of academic research on women's magazines. As indicated earlier, the main purpose of the above talk (Extract 5-2) was to emphasise that the analysis of the media should lead to a discussion of the ideology that the given media texts would (re-)produce. In this respect, it is significant that the above talk (Extract 5-2) lead to a reading of Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines* (1987), as a way of studying the ideological meanings of women's magazines. In doing so, it seems that the teacher was effectively positioned as the speaker of a particular critical discourse, which she did not question.

In the classroom, for example, the teacher read through Janice Winship's analysis of the ideology of *Women's Own*, as an 'ideological juggling act concerning marriage' in which 'the institution of marriage is not questioned but only individual behaviours within it', despite the modernisation of the magazine's looks and editorial tone (Winship, 1987). This argument was read through line by line, interrupted only by teacher-initiated questions for comprehension, such as 'What does the last sentence mean?' or 'Is the writer, Janice Winship in favour of marriage, do you think?'. Such queries focusing almost only on the comprehension of the reading, lead by closed questions (in the sense that they request specific, limited answers), seemed to imply in effect that the students should appropriate such a criticism of women's magazines as *the* critical discourse.

What is significant here is that the dominance of *the* critical discourse in the classroom

and its overemphasis on the dominant ideology of the media seems to effectively prevent

the teacher and the students from discussing any more positive role that women's

magazines might play. Interestingly, Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines* (1987)

itself, in fact, stresses the 'supporting role' that the magazines play, such as providing

advice on tackling domestic violence as well as personal relationships, rather than solely

focusing on the narrow criticism of the construction of a particular women's agenda.

*Studying the Media* (1994), the textbook used in the classroom also emphasises this aspect,

particularly in contrast with Marjorie Ferguson's earlier work, *Forever Feminine* (1983),

which expresses the view that the basic message of women's magazines is that women

should identify with a femininity which 'focuses on Him, Home and Looking Good'

(O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 138). However, the aim of this particular brand of classroom

critical analysis itself (discovering the dominant ideology of the media) seems to have lead

a rather *selective* reading of Janice Winship's book, in order to emphasise *the* critical

discourse, which, in this case, seems to be very close to Majorie Ferguson's perspectives

on women's magazines. [11]

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[11] There seems to be a significant similarity between the simplistic understanding of the meanings
of women's magazines (which I discuss in this chapter) and the simplistic notion of genre as 'a set
of fixed codes and conventions' (which I discuss in Chapter 7). In both cases, the overemphasis of
*the* critical discourse on the ideology of the given media texts seems to result in such simplistic
notions, despite the fact that the teacher (and the textbook), in principle, emphasises a pluralist
notion of meaning-making particularly in relation to the role of the audience. I shall discuss this in
more detail in Chapter 7.

In fact, academic discourse in this field has reflected changes in western society, for instance, in the ways in which women's looks and bodies may be represented in the media, and the relationship between the media and the audience (Cf. Hermes, 1995). Reflecting such developments in academic research, the textbook also addresses the complexity of the representation of women in the media, rather than just focusing on negative stereotypes. For instance, the discussion of ideology and gender in the textbook is actually balanced between Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975) and the more controversial argument about female performers' greater control over their look and image (Robertson, 1996). While it addresses the issue of the objectification of women's bodies in the media as the provision of erotic pleasure or voyeurism for the male gaze, the textbook also discusses the possibility of the reversed gaze, for example in Madonna's pop video for her song, *Open Your Heart*, where the men are seen through Madonna's eyes as 'pathetic and frustrated' (O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 135). In this way, the textbook actually deals with the complexity of the representation of women's bodies in the media rather than reducing it to a simpler argument about the victimization of women by the media.

However, insofar as *the* critical discourse, which requires the students to take a critical distance from their experiences as audiences, is dominant in the classroom, this complex understanding of the representation of women's looks and bodies seems to be ignored. In this case, positing the fundamental goal of critical analysis (the discovery of the ideology

of the media) seems in effect to simplify the ways in which critical concepts can be applied to analyse the media, and thus to emphasise the negative aspects of the media, although the polysemic nature of media texts may be mentioned *in principle* or be studied in a separate time slot, for instance, in studying audience research. [12]

Now, I shall move on to discuss how the critical discourse can actually be taught in the classroom, focusing on the *discursive* positions that it may offer to the teacher and the students. While the aim of the critical analysis approach may result in focusing more on the analysis of 'closed texts', perhaps because such texts supposedly make it easier for the students to take a critical distance as members of the united, harmonious, critical classroom community, the underlying assumption of the approach – particularly in terms of what the students *know* and *do not know yet* – seems to create some tensions in the social context of the actual classroom. Particularly in the situation – as in this study – in which female teachers have to teach a mixed group of boys and girls about such a gendered subject as the representation of women, the female teachers seem to become much more conscious of their gendered identity and thus to become perhaps oversensitive about the boys' responses to the subject. Such a social context seems to affect the ways in which the critical discourse might be exercised in practice.

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[12] However, audience research was not taught in the school that I observed.

In the following extract, Susan is explaining the concept of representation by reading through an extract from the textbook with the students and is about to take an example of the concept:

[Extract 5-3]

1. Susan: All right, … (hesitantly) This is not going to insult anybody here. Right, if there is

2.    a classic image of a slim, blond and curvy woman in a slinky dress, what kind of

3.    interpretations do we have?

4. Kat: Bimbo.

5. Susan: Bimbo! Right, what do you mean by 'bimbo'?

6. Kat: (playfully) No brain.

7. Susan: (with laughter) No brain.

8. (All laugh)

9. Kat: (with laughter) Easy going.

10. Susan: (with laughter) Easy going.

11. (Students laugh all together more loudly and get distracted. Some boys playfully start

12.    making jokes about the 'bimbo' image, repeating the words, "Easy going")

13. Susan: (interrupting the boys) No, wait! What she's saying is a kind of manipulation…

14.    – she's not saying, "I think every woman is …", right? That's kind of so …

15. (Students are still being distracted and making fun of the image of the 'bimbo')

16. Susan: Yeah, the, the idea is that … that might be … Even if we don't want to think

17.    that necessarily – even if we know that our best friend is blond and curvy and loves

18.    slinky dresses but is the most intelligent woman that we've ever met, there's still

19.    slightly that kind of reaction that we all know about – even if we don't believe in it, we

20.    know about it. That's a SHARED understanding of what that image might be used to

21.    present. And one of the other things that comes up about representation is using things

22.    like stereotypes, OK? Which means the 'blond bimbo' is a stereotype, isn't she? I mean

23. she's the image that is used to produce a reaction from us very quickly. Stereotypes are

24. very useful to advertisers, aren't they? What do the stereotype do straightaway, if we

25. have a woman with blond hair, straightaway, what kind of meaning that are we

26. making of?

27. Karlie: Instant judgements.

28. Susan: We're making instant judgements.

29. Kat: Category.

30. Susan: We'll categorize instantly and the advertisers … it's very useful for the

31. advertisers to have these ideas and images that they can rely on us to instantly react to

32. have all these other judgements about. (…) So, what we'll gonna be looking at are the

33. ideas of how the images of women have been represented onto magazine covers in

34. order to project an image of women that might well be SHARED by PARTS of the

35. society but it might be something that is QUESTIONED by other parts of the society.

36. After all, we're walking a very dangerous line by saying, "ALL women want this",

37. "ALL women want that", "ALL women are the same". Is it true that ALL women are

38. the same?

39. All students: No.

40. Susan: No.


As can be seen from her use of language and hesitation in the beginning of the talk, Susan

as a female teacher seems to want to make sure that this gendered discussion should not

'insult' (1) any girl present in the classroom who may look like the classic image of a

'slim, blond and curvy woman' (2) even before she introduces the example for discussion.

This shows that the teacher is clearly aware of the *gendered* nature of the classroom and

somehow wants to protect the girls from the potentiality that the boys may make fun of

any of them. In this context she seems to want to show that she is speaking not only as a

teacher of the critical discourse but also as a female person, and in doing so, she seems to want to make the female students feel comfortable to discuss such a negative image of women – often used as a classic example of stereotyping (Cf. O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 129) – with the male students. Thus, when a female student answers her question by saying 'bimbo', she tries to lead the discussion in a playful way with laughter (4-10), perhaps because such playful exchanges between the teacher and a female student can ease the female teacher's anxiety about taking a negative example of a female.

Interestingly, however, the teacher responds quite differently to the boys' laughter and jokes about the same image; she suddenly stops her laughter and interrupts the boys (13-14). In this case, the boys' laughter seems to be regarded as evidence of their not being able to take a critical distance from the 'instant judgements' (27) that the media producers try to make them make (i.e., the assumption here seems to be that the boys laugh at the bimbo image because they actually laugh at such women), whereas the girls' laughter seems to be regarded as evidence of being critical (i.e., the girls laugh because they know that such an image is only a stereotype). [13] Then, she goes back to the textbook and repeatedly emphasises that the bimbo image is only a stereotype which is only a 'shared understanding' by 'parts' of the society, which is subject to challenge (20; 33-34). By repeating similar phrases three times – 'even if *we* don't think', 'even if *we* know' and 'even if *we* don't believe' (my *italics*) – the teacher seems to try to make sure that the boys

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[13] There is also the fact that 'easy going' is a euphonium for *sexually* 'easy'.

should position themselves as 'us' (*critical* beings) in contrast with 'them', who are considered as *uncritical*. In this way, the teacher seems to try to make the boys take a distance from such a stereotypical view of women, even by controlling their laughter, which is considered as an uncritical response to the 'instant judgements' that advertisers aim to create.

The teacher's attempt to confirm an alliance with the boys as *media critics* is conveyed in the 'I-R-E(initiation-reply-evaluation) ' structure, as Mehan terms it (1975), which is regarded as characteristic of 'normal' classroom discourse (Edwards & Westgate, 1994: 139). Here, Susan asks closed questions to elicit quick, short and obviously predictable answers that she herself has even provided ('we are making instant judgements by stereotypes') a minute before (22-29). Significantly, in the lines 36-40, when the teacher confirms that a stereotype of a 'blond, curvy woman in a slinky dress' as a 'bimbo' is a politically incorrect representation, she uses the typical three-move exchange of I-R-E, in which the teacher has the power as a transmitter of knowledge (see Chapter 4 for further discussion). Relying on such 'normal' classroom discourse, Susan makes the first move by making a strong argument against the stereotype of a blond woman, which the students can hardly reject, and then shortly asks a question to elicit the obvious answer from the students (36-38). When the students confirm the teacher's statement by saying, 'No' (39), she emphasises the message again by repeating the students' answer, 'No' (40).

This example seems to show how a particular version of feminist discourse (as *the* critical discourse in this context) might define the boys as potentially uncritical beings, as I discussed in relation to the analysis of Extract 5-1 earlier. In the case of Extract 5-3, such an assumption seems to justify the female teacher's anxiety particularly about the boys' laughter in this context: it is considered that the boys' laughter about the stereotypical image comes from their own stereotypical view of the bimbo. In this way, while the girls in this context might be considered to have sisterhood with the female teacher, and therefore their laughter could be forgiven, the boys in this context seem to be seen as people who need to be educated by the critical, feminist discourse. In summary, the assumption underlying the textual analysis approach defines the students as potentially uncritical; and this seems to be reinforced by the social context in which the female teacher implements the feminist discourse as *the* critical discourse for the benefit of the boys.

A discursive positioning of the teacher such that *the* critical discourse becomes the official classroom discourse, can also explain the following situation. Here, Susan was showing the group an educational television programme, which deals with representations of women on television over the last few decades, as a part of a lesson on the representation of women. There was a particular scene in which a male comedian was making fun of a mother-in-law, and the screen showed a dirty, big, fat pig running away at the same time.

While many students laughed watching this scene, the teacher seemed concerned again

particularly about the *boys'* laughter, and spoke to them, as follows:


[Extract 5-4]

   1.One of the things that struck me was that when we were watching some – that very, very

   2. old footage – kind of very … stereotypical, male's comic view of women, like the mother-

   3. in-law joke, that Spanish girlfriend who can't speak any English, whatever. It was really

   4. interesting for me to sort of see, around the room, the level of laughter that went back to

   5. those very stereotypical, conventional, predictable jokes that we could all have written –

   6. you know what those jokes are about. And YET, there were a lot of laughter coming from

   7. this room.


Here, the teacher firstly defines the jokes about women's bodies, based on the classic

stereotypes such as an old, fat and ugly woman being like a pig or an 'incredibly sexy but

dumb woman' who 'can't speak any English', as reflecting a stereotypical, and

fundamentally male perspective (2-3). In doing so, she says that such jokes which are

'very stereotypical, conventional, and predictable' are offensive to women (5-6), implying

that the boys' laughter at jokes based on such stereotypes can be equally offensive to the

female teacher and the female students present in the classroom. Then she addresses the

fact that there was 'a lot of laughter' in the classroom (6), and says it surprised her (1: '[it]

struck me'), asking the students to reflect on this interesting phenomenon (4). In this way,

Susan, as the teacher of the critical discourse seems to make it clear that the students are

only permitted to speak (and even laugh) from the particular discursive position of media

students. As I implied in the discussion of Extract 5-3, the problem here is that the teacher does not seem to know or perhaps even be interested in knowing where the boys' laughter actually comes from, insofar as the agenda given to the teacher seems to reconfirm *the* critical discourse, which by implication they do not know yet.

As such, the teacher's discursive position, which is informed by *the* official, critical discourse and its assumptions about what the students know and do not know, often seems to create somewhat awkward tensions in the classroom. In the cases that I observed, the teacher often seems to draw on the 'I-R-E' exchange structure in order to 'normalise' the official position. Significantly, when she introduces the key argument of Janice Winship's analysis of *Women's Own* in terms of its ideology (the promotion of the institution of marriage), Judy seems to make the students agree with the argument by using the 'normal classroom discourse' in a way that they can hardly reject it. In the following passage, she is reading through the extract from Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines* with the students. After a student reads the part in which Janice Winship argues that 'the institution of marriage is not questioned; only the individual's behaviours within it is', Judy leads the discussion, as follows:

[Extract 5-5]

1. Judy: (to the whole group) What does that last sentence mean?
2. Mac: It does say that they don't say about the marriage itself but that they just say
3.      about certain people.

4. Judy: Right, OK. Anyone here who sees marriage as a real problem?

5. (a few seconds' silence)

6. Jorden: (tentatively) We didn't really think about that.

7. Jake: (quietly) I really didn't think about it.

8. Judy: What about looking at your parents? Umm, I was anti-marriage for twenty years.

9. Jake: (after a few seconds' pause) I think a lot of people can't say about why they

10.   … It just happens. They can't say why they do it. It's complicated … by society.

11.   Judy: Umm, all right. Just my experience, then. I just wished my mother had

12.     divorced with my father at least fifteen years before she finally did. So I was

13.     extremely anti-marriage for most of my twenties – all my teenage years and most of

14.     my twenties, because I had the most negative role model as possible. Umm …

15.     that's why I supposed a lot of you were anti-marriage. Umm … obviously, you've

16.     come from really wonderful family.

17. Students: (speaking at the same time with laughter) No~~~!!!

18. Judy: OK. Good. Good.


Here, Judy begins the talk by asking the group a comprehension question (1), which Mac

(who has just read the extract to the whole group) answers by rephrasing the last sentence

of the extract (2-3). Then, Judy invites the students to a discussion of the key argument

made in the reading (4). But this invitation meets with silence on the part of the students

(5), perhaps because they are not sure how they can respond to this sudden switch from

the objective textbook discourse to a more personal opinion. They might have been

uncertain whether this sudden call for personal opinions was just to confirm the idea of

marriage only as an social institution, as the feminist discourse says, or to invite them to a

free discussion about it. After a few seconds' pause, two male students carefully refuse to

talk about the issue by saying that they have not thought about it (6-7). Judy, however,

asks them to discuss the marriage issue again, this time by focusing on their opinion about

their parents' marriage, then by briefly mentioning her personal experience of watching

her own parents' marriage (8). Once more, this invitation meets mostly with silence and a

vague statement about marriage which refers to the complexity of society (9-10). Then the

teacher goes on to confirm Winship's argument about marriage as an institution by

referring to her own experience of watching her own parents' unsuccessful marriage (11-

14). This remark ends with quite a strong statement on the part of the teacher, implying

that the fact that the students did not contribute makes her conclude that all the students

come from a 'really wonderful family' (15). This is a sarcastic comment, which one might

expect to be denied by polite listeners in normal circumstances.

In this respect, the lines between 11-18 can be seen as another example of the 'I-R-E'

exchange in the classroom. Here, the way in which the teacher makes the students agree

with her seems to be strengthened by 'making a concession' (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999).

According to Antaki and Wetherell, making concessions is a discursive structure, which

makes listeners agree to a position on an issue after previously disagreeing. Thus, the

three-move exchange in the above extract can be understood as the process in which the

teacher is making a concession: firstly, the teacher makes a 'proposition' (11-15:

'Marriage should be seen only as an institution rather than what everybody has to do, and

therefore *Woman's Own* can be seen as promoting the ideology of marriage'), then she

quickly makes a 'concession' (15-16 : 'But you come from a really wonderful family in which marriage works'), which meets with the 'reprise' of the students (17: 'No'), which is finally reconfirmed by the teacher (18).

In this case, the teacher makes a concession only as a rhetorical gesture in order to invite the students to agree with her initial position on marriage as institution and ultimately to her argument that women's magazines reproduce the dominant ideology in the society by promoting marriage. The exchange between the teacher and the students presupposes a particular political position (about marriage and about the ultimate meanings that women's magazines produce) as the 'right answer'. Therefore, there seems to be a danger that *the* critical discourse can become a somewhat *ritualized* official discourse in which the teacher and the students are required to take particular discursive positions in the classroom. What is particularly notable here is that it does not seem to allow either the teacher or the students to discuss their own personal experiences either about the idea of marriage as institution or about what women's magazines might mean to themselves as audiences in a more genuinely dialogical manner.

Thus far, I have tried to discuss how the critical media analysis approach is actually implemented in a particular Media Studies classroom. By analysing classroom talk, I have shown the pedagogic process by which the aim of the approach (discovering the dominant ideology by analysing media texts) might legitimise particular discursive positions both

for the teacher and for the students. While the analytical approach seems to be based on an assumption that students are potentially uncritical, and need to be 'liberated' by the critical discourse, how the students might read the media as *audiences* seems effectively to be neglected. In this context, the teacher seems only to speak *the* official critical discourse, which makes her scrutinize even the laughter of the students with disapproval.

However, while the official critical discourse might usually be maintained in the classroom by means of the rules of 'normal classroom discourse', there were moments when such official discourse was disrupted by the students' deliberate attempts to have a laugh. While such attempts can be regarded only as digressions from the 'normal classroom discourse', they seem to effectively problematise the ritualised process of the official discourse. I shall discuss this in more depth in the next section.

## 5. 3. 'Official critical discourse' and 'personal discourse'

As discussed in the previous section, the use of a certain style of textual analysis – which ultimately leads to a particular ideological judgement about the media – as the official critical discourse in the Media Studies classroom seems to be premised on the teacher's 'emancipatory' position, which is based in turn on the assumption that the students are not yet critical and therefore need to be 'liberated' by *the* particular critical discourse. This

assumption defines the role of the teacher as making the students adopt the particular discursive position of media *critics* rather than ordinary *audiences*, who just watch and read the media innocently. Adopting the discursive position of media critics can *ritualise* the exchanges between the teacher and the students in 'normal classroom discourse'; it enables the two parties to maintain their social and discursive positions as teacher and students. However, the official critical discourse seems to be disrupted when members of the class challenge the agreed discursive positions, for instance, by student-initiated jokes.

In linguistic terms, such a situation, in which the official discourse supported by the rules of 'normal classroom discourse' is disrupted, can be explained in Grice's terms as a breach of the 'Cooperative Principle' in the classroom. According to Grice, there are general principles that conversational participants are expected to follow, such as 'maxims of conversation'. In his theory, conversation participants need to make their conversational contributions in the manner required by the 'accepted purpose of direction of the talk exchange' in which they are engaged (Grice, 1975: 307). Although the conversational participants may not follow the maxims of conversation in a strict way, they understand and follow such general principles of conversation, insofar as they agree to participate in the conversation in a particular context.

This also applies to classroom discourse. While there are general principles of cooperation between teachers and students which are followed in order to make teaching and learning

happen, there are occasions when these rules are not strictly followed or even breached. The 'normal classroom discourse' can be defined by the teacher-lead classroom conversations in which the official discourse is shared as 'common knowledge', as Edwards and Mercer call it (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). The 'normal classroom discourse' tends to be initiated and concluded by the teacher, while the students tend to avoid initiating. However, as Sinclair and Coulthard suggest, while the students may avoid initiating whole class discussion, they are often more engaged in their own strategies such as 'complying just enough to avoid trouble', or 'initiating by "testing out" the teacher', or 'pursuing their own inter-pupil communicative activity in pursuit of opportunities for "having a laugh"' (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

In this respect, while the official critical discourse may usually be maintained in the classroom, the *ritualised* exchange between the teacher and the students seems to be often, if only temporarily, disrupted by the students' humorous communicative activity amongst themselves. Such inter-pupil communicative activity may come from their boredom with the ritualised classroom discourse, which has little meaning to them. Or it may be a form of conscious resistance to the ideological position of the teacher, although in quite a subtle way. In other words, while the students seem to be able to perform *the* critical discourse cooperatively as participants in the teacher-lead 'normal' classroom discourse, they also seem to find their own strategies for getting through it, often by making jokes about it between themselves.

Now I would like to take such an example from the classroom. Here, the teacher and the

students are analysing a series of front covers of women's magazines from the 1940s to

the present; they consider the conventions of magazine covers, the representation of

women, the target audience of the magazines and the development of women's magazines

over the past 50 years. The teacher emphasises again that the students need to think about

the target audience of the particular magazines in terms of their social class, marital status,

sexuality and so on, when they analyse the images on the front covers. In the following

extract, they are analysing the image of 'Rosie the Riveter', which appears on the front

cover of *Woman* in 1942 with the slogan, 'Plans for your post-war home'. The handout

given to the students is taken from *Selling Pictures* (BFI) and explains that the cover "was

part of a national campaign to reconcile women to being conscripted for jobs vacated by

men. The texts indicate that wielding a spanner is a temporary occupation: women will

soon be back in the home". In the picture (see [Picture 5-1] on the following page), 'Rosie

the Riveter', a beautiful woman, is holding a wrench in her hand. The analysis begins as

follows:


[Picture 5-1] The front cover of *Woman* (1942)

[Extract 5-6]

1. Susan: (looking at the image) Umm … this is the cover of a *Woman* magazine

2.     from 1942, right? And what was happening in 1942?

3. Students: War.

4. Susan: Right, World War 2 was going on at that time. Have a look at what this woman

5.     looks like, and what she's holding, and what text is printed on the cover.

6. Students: (reading the text on the cover) "*Plans for your post-war home*"

7. Susan: "*Plans for your post-war home*". So, this is the idea of what you're going to do in

8.     your home, which is an idea traditionally associated with women. But what is the

9.     thing slightly different about this woman?

10. Students: She's got a wrench.

11. Susan: She's got a wrench in her hand. Right. So, what, what is the big deal?

12. Florens: Because …, perhaps her husband's gonna die during the war and it's like, you

13.     know, now she has to fix things up. She starts doing things on her own.

14. Susan: Good! Yeah, maybe women had to start being more independent. (…)

15. Jorden: (quietly speaking to Arnie with laughter) She's just tidying up.

16. Susan: (…) I mean in 1942 even if her husband hadn't died he might have been away,

17.     for fighting. And probably following the First World War and during the past Second

18.     World War, women had to become, umm… had to start doing things which weren't

19.     considered traditionally feminine, and there was a very famous woman called Rosie

20.     the Riveter, who was used as umm … an advert to attract women to go on working on

21.     things like Army's factory, to be doing jobs, which traditionally were associated with

22.     men –to fill the gap that was left by the men, and the women needed to step into that.

23. Kalee: I mean –that's why many people thought that women should vote because they

24.   showed how well they were …

25. Susan: Good! Yeah, it was very difficult. I mean during the first World War, a lot of

26.     women were left without their husbands at the end of the first World War and they

27.     MORE THAN proved that they could run a home AND run a country. So, what might

28.     be associated with still, kind of, quite traditionally, stereotypically feminine umm,

29.     linked to women about the covers as well as what was different about it.

30.  Kalee: The make-up.

31.  Susan: GOOD! The make-up. Yeah, she's still attractive and she still has her hair scarf on.

32.     She's got a couple of curls sticking out. She's clearly made-up. She's holding a wrench

33.     in her hand but she can be a very beautiful mechanic …

34.  Jorden: (to Arnie) Maybe her husband's arms were blown up during the war.

35.  Arnie: (quietly giggling)

This extract shows a typical exchange between the teacher and the students in that the teacher initiates the talk by asking questions, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Firstly, the teacher asks information and comprehension questions, which require specific answers such as 'What was happening in 1942?', 'What does she look like?', 'What text is printed on the cover?' and 'What is she holding?' (1-2, 4-5, 8-9), and the students provide the correct answers accordingly (3, 6, 10). During such 'comprehension level' exchanges, both the boys and the girls are answering the teacher equally. In contrast, the next question of the teacher is located on a 'synthesis level', which makes the students think about how such analysis of the visual codes and the text on the front cover can make a coherent meaning (11), and this is answered by a female student only (12-13). In fact, what the female student does in her answer is to apply her knowledge about the changing status of women during the war in Britain, as feminists apply such knowledge to their analysis of women's magazines. Picking up this response, the teacher easily moves on to

introduce how the images of women in different historical times might be analysed in relation to the changes in women's social status (16-22).

In fact, such textual analysis can be seen as a process of appropriating the academic discourse about women's magazines, which was given to the students in the form of handout. As I mentioned earlier, Janice Winship, whose analysis of women's magazines was studied in depth in the classroom, argues that magazines like *Woman* reflected such changes in women's magazines, in terms of their concerns about women's roles beyond the boundary of domesticity, such as women's participation in paid labour and in local politics (Winship, 1987). After the teacher's comments in lines 14 and 16-22, the female student quickly responds again to display her knowledge about women in the war period and how it affected the social status of women afterwards (23-24). In this exchange between the female teacher and the female student, the critical discourse that they studied previously is effectively applied to the analysis of the media text.

Interestingly, while the girls were actively responding or listening to the female teacher's critical discourse, some of the boys were indulging in their own conversations, getting away from the whole class discussion and making jokes about the image instead of responding to it seriously. [14] Particularly when the female student was analysing the image using the critical discourse in lines 12-13 and the teacher was expanding the student's

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[14] There were 5 girls and 10 boys in the classroom, as I described in Chapter 4.

answer in relation to the broader discussion within feminist discourse, some of the boys were saying, 'She's just tidying up' (15) or 'Maybe her husband's arms were blown up' (34), and laughing (35).

To put this incident in context, the teacher in this lesson was standing at the back of the classroom to operate the slide projector and the female students happened to be sitting near where the teacher was standing, while the boys were sitting somewhat further away from them. This physical distance made it easier for the boys to get away from the whole class discussion and to indulge in communication between themselves. Interestingly, my tape recorder happened to be placed on the boys' table and thus I could listen to their conversations more clearly after the lesson, while the teacher was only able to notice that they were talking between themselves about something rather than participating in the whole class discussion. The following extract begins with the teacher, who was interested in hearing what the two boys (Jorden and Arnie) might be discussing between themselves:

[Extract 5-7]

    1.Susan: Umm … you two … can two of you, sort of, speak up a bit please?

    2. Jorden: (changing his words quickly) Is that absolutely a woman?

    3. Susan: (puzzled tone) Yes …

    4. Other students: (laughter and confused responses)

    5. Jorden: (inattentively) Oh, right.

    6. Susan: Yes, it's a woman. (with laughter) You've got absolutely worse eyes than I have. I

    7.   can see that even from the back!

8. (All laugh)

9. Jorden: Is it a woman?

10. Other students: (with laughter) Yeah! She looks lovely.

11. Susan: Anyway, Arnie, what were you two talking about?

12. Jorden: (firmly) We were just talking about that!

13. Arnie: (telling the truth with laughter) This seems ridiculous a lot, so probably her man's

14.   got no hands and that's why the woman's got the wrench.

15.   (All laugh)

16.   Susan: (with laughter) I thought you might have said something more useful for the

17.    discussion.

18.   (All laugh)

19.   Arnie: (quietly) Well, I can try.

20.   Susan: OK, so, what she looks like – she's holding a wrench and the text printed on the

21.    cover is "Plans for Your Post-War Home". Then, what does the cover suggest? What

22.    kind of woman is she and what is this woman's concerns? (…)

First, the teacher invites the two boys to share their conversation with the whole group, not knowing that they were only having a laugh (1). In response to this invitation, Jorden, one of the boys involved in the exchange, quickly changes his words and instead asks a somewhat awkward question (2), perhaps to avoid getting into trouble for his distracted behaviour (2). When the teacher says that it is a woman, puzzled at his strange question (3), at which other students just laugh (4), Jorden pretends that he asked the question seriously and is not as yet convinced that it is a woman (5). Then, Susan joins the students' laughter and makes a funny comment on Jorden's bad 'eyesight', reconfirming that it is a woman (6-7). While other students are still laughing at this 'silly' question (8),

Jorden asks the same question again, pretending that he is really confused (9), and the other students confirm that it is a woman (10). Then Susan asks Arnie to tell her what they were really talking about. Jorden continues to try to pretend that he was really confused about whether it was a woman or not (12), but Arnie describes the conversation that they had had (13-14), which makes the whole group burst into great laughter (13). At this point, Susan asks them to pay more attention to the 'useful' discussion of the whole class (16-17) and to get back to the work (20-22). Then Arnie says quietly to himself that he can 'try' to be serious, which is too quiet for the teacher to hear (19).

While this exchange certainly provides an example of students' distraction from 'normal' classroom discourse, the level of laughter that the students share in this context seems to imply that they feel that the analysis of the front covers of the magazines had become somehow 'too serious'. Here, the students seem to be able to laugh along with the two boys because they understand the two boys' distraction from the classroom discourse. In other words, they seem to agree with the boys that they would also make only a funny comment on the image of women on the front covers of the magazines, if they were only flicking through them at home. In this respect, it is interesting that the boys' 'silly' comments can actually seem subversive given the balance of power and the dominant reading being given. In this case, the joke and the laughter caused by the students' distraction in the classroom seem to suggest that the official critical discourse is somewhat separated from their everyday experience of reading magazines.

While the students' pleasurable reading of magazines is apparently regarded only as 'bad behaviour' in the classroom, the teacher who has to make them take a critical distance from such distraction seems to be struggling to avoid any possible conflicts with the students in doing so. In the following extract from an interview with her, Susan describes how she tries to make the students focus on analysis, without causing conflicts with them:

[Extract 5-8]

1. One of the things that I noticed on Friday was that Florens was reading horoscopes in
2. *Women's Own*. And I looked and I thought she was already in a trouble with me for
3. coming late for the lesson, and now she's reading horoscopes to Ben and Jake. I wanted
4. to kind of deal with this in a way that means that I'm kind of making a point about the
5. WORK. That instant I was almost playing a game, really. So I used what she was doing to
6. get them to sort of comment on why it wasn't really aimed at Ben and Jake – why even
7. from the little horoscope you could tell that Ben and Jake weren't really the target
8. audience of that horoscope. And that way – I think it was a double thing. One, it was an
9. opportunity to say that "Let's look at the language that magazine is written in." But it
10. was also a way of sort of saying "I'm not going to be involved in discussing your
11. behaviour. What I'm going to keep trying to do with you is to focus on your work."

The context that Susan refers to in this extract is when the group was asked to analyse the target audience of different women's magazines in smaller groups. In the classroom context, taking pleasure from reading magazines such as reading horoscopes for their own sake is not regarded as 'work' but as trouble or a behavioural problem just like 'coming

late for the lesson' (2-5). Therefore, the teacher tries to find a nice way in which she can

make the students focus on the 'work' without directly discussing the students'

'behaviour' (11). The way that she does it in this context is to make them concentrate on

the 'language' of horoscopes: how they address the target audience (6-8). In this way, the

teacher aims to achieve her double goal, which is firstly to make them 'work' without

discussing their 'behaviour' and secondly to make them analyse the media in a 'proper'

way (8-11).

This account of the teacher seems significant in that it shows rather explicitly what is and

what is not regarded as a *legitimate* way of engaging with the media in a classroom setting.

Reading magazines for pleasure is not a legitimate way of engaging with the media,

insofar as it is regarded as uncritical and therefore inappropriate. The official critical

discourse regards the rationalistic analysis of the media as the only legitimate engagement

with the media, and thus effectively defines any pleasurable reading as irrelevant. In this

way, textual analysis as the official critical discourse seems to limit the ways in which the

students might think about how real audiences of women's magazines might engage with

the media in more personal and emotional ways.

While 'personal discourse' is usually regarded as mere digression from the official critical

discourse, the ways in which it can be introduced in the classroom seem quite limited. As

we saw earlier in this chapter, Judy talked about her personal experience of watching her

own parents' unsuccessful marriage, but only because it effectively supported the critical discourse about marriage as an institution. On another occasion, Susan talked about her brother and how different he might look from her even though they came from quite similar backgrounds. But this kind of personal discourse was used only to explain the ways in which stereotypes about accent, dress code, ways of behaviour, and so on as visual codes can cause misunderstandings about people. In this respect, the personal discourse of the teacher was usually introduced only in relation to the official critical discourse, insofar as the teacher and the students took particular discursive positions as media *critics*.

However, there are some unusual moments when the teacher speaks as a member of an audience rather than as a teacher in the middle of the discussion. While this can be regarded simply as digression, the personal discourse of the teacher seems in effect to problematize the official critical discourse, which is aimed at criticising the ideas behind the representation of women in the media as only 'false' ideology. As I shall discuss, Susan's personal criticism of a television show, *Ally McBeal*, in the middle of a discussion based on the official critical discourse seems to raise complex questions about the representation of women, in the sense that it shows the complex meanings that Susan herself as a single, thirty year old, career woman, seems to make.

In order to show the contrast between her positions as teacher and as a member of an audience, I would like to begin this discussion by showing how the '*Ally McBeal* discussion' began in the first place. To put it in context, the discussion came about when the group was discussing the representation of women on television. When Susan invited the students to think about an example of the 'ideal' looks of modern women represented in the media, a student came up with *Ally McBeal*, the current hit television programme. As can be seen, while the teacher tries to make the students focus on the representation of the main character as a 'single, successful, and professional woman', this official discourse is soon disrupted by the personal discourse of the students who want to talk about it as its *audience* rather than as media *students*:


[Extract 5-9]

1. Susan: What kind of ideal look do you think the modern woman in 1990s have,

2.     thinking about images we see on the screen or on adverts?

3. Students: (confusion of voices)

4. Jorden: The woman in that series on Channel 4 is like that – the lawyer woman.

5. Susan: *Ally McBeal*?

6. Students: (speaking at the same time) Oh, *Ally McBeal*!

7. Florens: (annoyed tone) She's so flaky.

8. Students: (excited chatter between themselves about *Ally McBeal*)

9. Susan: (loudly) We'll come back to *Ally McBeal* later ...

10. Kalee: (to other students) We have a conversation about it every Thursday.

11. Students: (laughter)

12. Susan: Florens, I was interested in what you said about it – she's so flaky.

13. Florens: It's because it's written by a man.

14. Jake: She's so annoying.

15. Students: (excited chatter between themselves)

16. Susan: She's so annoying. OK. But what about what she looks like?

17. Jake: Sort of business type of woman. She is quite successful as well.

23. Elisa: She's so skeletal!

24. Florens: What she's saying is so unrealistic!

25. Students: (excited chatter between themselves with loud laughter)

Initially, the teacher invites the students to think about an example of the representation of the 'modern woman' (1-2). When a student, Jorden, mentions the current hit television show, *Ally McBeal* (4), this subject quickly gets attention both from the teacher and from the other students (5-6) and the whole group becomes involved in talk, mostly between themselves. Interestingly, most of the students' talk seem to be related to their emotional evaluation of the character, as can be seen in their frequent laughter and the emphatic use of the adverb, 'so' such as '*so* flaky' (7), '*so* annoying' (14) or '*so* skeletal' (18) (my *italics*). The teacher tries to get the discussion back to the 'objective' analysis of the looks of the character using a loud voice to control the digression (9), but Kalee continues to be involved in personal conversation with other students, talking about how much she likes the programme as an audience, irrespective of the teacher's words (10). Now the teacher has almost lost control of the classroom and even has to shout to make her voice heard. While she continues to attempt to get the discussion back on track, by making the students focus on describing the character who is 'so flaky' (12, 16), most students are busy

commenting on the character and the show irrespective of the teacher's request to focus on

representation (18-20). In this context, the teacher finally seems to give up speaking as an

objective teacher and to evaluate the show as a member of the audience, as a thirty

something, single career woman just like the television character, Ally McBeal:


[Extract 5-10]

1. Susan: I think Jake's point about *Ally McBeal* is the idea that it is not representing the

2. reality enough of a lot of the American professional women. But while *Ally McBeal*

3. might do one thing at court, but what happens when she gets back into her office and

4. when she goes back to her flat?

5. Jake: She's almost kind of "Oh, men, men, men", things like that. There are lots of

6. stereotypes in her character ..almost like … It's kind of … Her lifestyle is so funny but

7. unrealistic in some way.

8. Susan: I suppose ... (to Jorden) Jorden.

8. Jorden: They're always stereotypes about the modern women thing – not enough time for

9. their love life, but just career – so, they're moving on in their career and all that. Then

10. there are men almost turning around and saying, "Oh, are you a career woman, and

11. then you don't have ..."

12. Florens: Yeah! "Single, successful, falling apart!"

13. Susan: EXACTLY! Yeah, I mean, you know, I don't have to confess it but I'm a

14. bit ... when it first came out, I COULD NOT BEAR IT. I couldn't watch it. And

15. unfortunately in a house where now I am living in, we ALL watch it. And now I'm

16. hooked.

17. Students: (laughter)

17. Susan: (angry voice) And um, the whole billboard thing, "SINGLE, SUCCESSFUL,

18. and falling apart". I just thought, "Oh, Please!" Why can't we have single and

19.    successful keep together? Why does she have to be STICK thin? I mean, she's kind

20.    of the THINNEST woman that I've EVER seen on television. You know, she keeps

21.    falling over all the time and at any minute she's fallen down in the middle of the

22.    road, because she's too thin! Umm… and that she – she's ALWAYS all over the

23.    place and has PROBLEMS, and walks into the office and rolling her hair and all

24.    that type of thing. I mean, it's funny. I mean it's funny. BUT there is something

25.    about this idea of that she CAN'T HAVE IT ALL – She's NOT COMPLETELY

26.    SUCCESSFUL. She's not gonna REALLY make the man in the programme

27.    whoever it is. You know, even her old boyfriend Billy. Billy is now married to

28.    somebody else. And he's just …PATRONISES her.

29. Students: (laughter)

30. Jorden: We're not gonna be surprised in the end, she meets someone and gets married and

31.    quits her job and settles down and has kids, ...so the whole thing turns around again.


In the beginning of the above extract, Susan summarizes the discussion about the realism

issue raised by Jake, in terms of its representation of the average American professional

woman (1-2). But then she seems to want to talk more about how Ally's personal life is

presented in the show (3-4), a topic which may not necessarily be related to the fair and

realistic representation of an average single, career woman in America. The two male

students (Jake and Jorden) are critical of Ally, who wants to have her own man despite her

successful career, on the grounds that it is just 'silly' for Ally to say 'Oh, men, men, men'

all the time (5). In contrast, Susan seems to argue that the idea that Ally doesn't have a

man ('She can't have it all') is actually quite problematic (25).

In terms of the language that they use, the boys seem to be more objective and analytical, drawing on academic concepts such as 'stereotypes' and 'realism' (5-7; 8-11), while Susan seems to be rather too emotional about the character to describe her with such objective language. She 'confesses' (13) that she is now 'hooked' (16) by the television show despite her initial negative reaction to it. She tells this in a very intense tone, which emphasises her emotional attachment to the show. Then she picks up Florens's words, 'single, successful and falling apart' (12), the slogan used to advertise the show, to condemn the idea underlying the slogan, which regards a single career woman as fundamentally a sad failure.

To Susan, it seems problematic that Ally still has to be seen as a failure as long as she does not keep her own man, but it seems equally problematic that a career woman cannot have a man. Susan's complex emotions about Ally are conveyed in an unusually loud and fast voice, which is a huge contrast to the calm and controlling voice that she usually maintains in the classroom. In this respect, it almost sounds like an outburst of her own anxiety mediated by her sympathy for Ally as a single, career woman who does not 'have it all' (25). In this respect, her criticism of Billy, Ally's former boyfriend, as 'patronising', seems to be related to her emotional attachment to the character, Ally (27-28). [15]

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[15] I should confess that my interpretation of her talk partly comes from my own anxiety about becoming a 'single, career woman' and that Susan and I often shared such concerns (about relationships, for instance) in our informal conversations.

This incident shows how the two positions of Susan as the 'critical teacher' and as a member of the audience of the television show are intertwined in somewhat contradictory and emotional ways. As the teacher, Susan seems to be critical about the representation of a single career woman as a 'sad failure' and therefore to argue that Ally should be represented as a happy single career woman. Nevertheless, as a member of the audience, she still seems to want to see Ally have her own man. Significantly, while the teacher is speaking in such a personal way, she abandons the 'normal' classroom discourse, which is usually initiated and closed by the teacher. Interestingly, it is a student (Jorden) who summarises the discussion in this context, calming down the teacher's personal discourse and the other students' laughter, to get it back on track (30-31).

## 5. 4. Problems with the 'official critical discourse'

As I have discussed, one of the key aspects of the official critical discourse seems to be its view of the students as fundamentally *uncritical* beings, who need to be 'liberated' by particular kinds of critical discourse. In this respect, the teacher defines her role as an 'emancipatory' teacher who enables the students to speak this official discourse. However, as a member of the audience who takes pleasure from the media, the teacher like her own students also seems to find it difficult to maintain a critical distance. In an interview with

me, Susan explains how she might see her position as the critical teacher in the classroom, while she also problematises it from her experience as a member of audience:

[Extract 5-11]

1. I suppose in a way … maybe part of the difficulties is … they need to understand that there

2. is a social construction at work here, and maybe until they are able to do that completely

3. (…) [their] subjective reading should be based on knowledge and understanding rather

4. than just emotional response. You know, as students of the media, I think they need to be

5. able to do that, BUT at the same time, I can see members of the audience that we're talking

6. about are not necessarily operating at that level. So maybe there is a sort of … they need to

7. be BALANCED or ... And that's difficult. I mean ... that's come out in women's magazine

8. lessons, hasn't it? Why somebody is buying this magazine? You know, all sorts of theories

9. and ideas are behind it, but ULTIMATELY, you know, I know what constructs that

10. magazine is, but I still go to buy them. You know, it's not really 'cause I teach Media

11. Studies. (with laughter) It's because ... there's something about them I like. You know,

12. I find ... I like looking at the glossy pictures and, umm … picking through the bits of

13. articles and ... Maybe that's right. Maybe there should be a balance there ... There is an

14. understanding that a kind of theoretical and social sort of what the media is trying to

15. do and who they think that they are talking to. But ALONGSIDE just that sheer ...

16. [we should] not forget the idea of PLEASURE aspect of what's happening with

17. the media.

Interestingly, Susan defines her role in the classroom in terms of what the 'they (the students) need to do'. For example, she says that 'they need to understand' (1), as 'media students' (4), that the media are socially constructed rather than just read them

'subjectively' (3), based on their 'emotional response' (4), 'until they are able to do that completely' (2). On the other hand, she recognises that it neglects the fact that media audiences are 'not necessarily operating at that level' (5-6), by referring to her personal experience as an audience. As such, she confesses that she personally buys women's magazines, not just because she teaches Media Studies but also because there are things that she likes, for instance, 'looking at the glossy pictures' (10-13). By constantly saying the words, 'You know' (8-11), she seems to want me to agree with her when she emphasises her own experience as a member of an audience. In this way, she seems to want to problematise the 'difficulties' (1) of maintaining the official discourse, which requires us to 'forget the idea of pleasure aspect' in the 'objective' analysis of the media (16).

Like Susan, the students raise questions about the problem with the official critical discourse in terms of its implicit marginalisation of personal discourse, in their own account of what they have to do in the classroom. They seem to separate the way they should *analyse* the media as students from the way they just *read* as audiences in their everyday lives. In the following extract from a group interview, the students talk about how they feel about the ways in which they analyse magazines in the classroom:

[Extract 5-12]

   1. Florens: It's weird.

   2. Kat: We've GOT TO BE CRITICAL. There is an image, then I've got to say why this

3.    image is there.

4. Florens: Yeah, and also I find that when you're reading at home you kind of have different

5.    perception, you know, just "Oh, they are terrible". Do you know what I mean? But

6.    when you're at school, you have to ...

7. Elisa: I get mixed up with ... (with laughter) When I watched *Titanic*, I really watched it

8.    in technical terms, and I found it terrible. I thought it was computerized – you can tell

9.    (laughter) and I just thought ... I wasn't really impressed with that film at all. I just

10.    laughed. I watched it totally as a media, critical person.

11.    Florens: Sometimes it's good because it means you really have more than an idea of

12.    what films are all about, but …

13.    Elisa: But you can't really enjoy it.

14.    Florens: Yeah. Remember reading magazines in the class. I couldn't actually read it,

15.    when we were analysing it. I wasn't really taking a personal response. So it just

16.    becomes not that much enjoyable.

17.    Karlie: I agree with Florens. It really takes it away. I mean, it's just analysing it, not

18.    really taking the content for yourself.

When they were asked how the analysis of the magazines could be different from their

reading at home, the students' immediate response was that it was 'weird' (1). In the

classroom, they feel that they '*have got to be* critical' (2, my *italics*). Here, being critical

means that they have to analyse the construction of the visual codes by explaining 'why it

is there' (2), analysing what effects they are aimed at. While they admit that they can have

'more than an idea' about how the media work (11), the problem with being a 'media,

critical person' (10), is that it takes away their 'personal response' (15) and 'enjoyment'

(13): it is not 'really taking the content for yourself' (18). While they understand how they

should analyse the media as media students, they seem to find it rather inappropriate at home.

On the other hand, this does not mean that the students are not critical about the media when they engage with them at home. In fact, they do seem to be critical about them, for example, about the stereotypical views of relationships which can be found in the relationship quizzes in magazines. However, their criticism here seems to stem not only from ideological concerns but also from the difficulty of finding the right magazines which can reasonably satisfy their own interests:

[Extract 5-13]

1. Karlie: If you buy like a glossy magazine, they have sections for umm, improving the
2. house or something, children. They're not my interests.
3. Florens: There are magazines like *Minx*. It's funny. They have all sorts of fashion, stuff like
4. that, but also articles written by women, which is nothing to do with anything but just
5. about like … ironic thing, which is actually quite funny and more intellectual. Umm …
6. These magazines are really recent. They are only about a year or two old, and … I don't
7. know. I think that's funny. Because we're at a difficult age group, 'cause we're too old for
8. *Just Seventeen* and magazines like, you know, *Pink*. Those are like for little children, you
9. know, fourteen year olds.
10. Elisa: I think those magazines have offensive stereotypes in them. Umm …you know,
11. the quizzes, I think it's just so offensive.
12. Karlie: You know, kind of grown up, kind of real women's magazines. They're
13. just like …For example, I found the stuff, all the fashionable stuff … umm. It's just
14. expensive, I mean, it's not something I can afford to buy myself.

As they explain, they are critical about women's magazines in that they find the stereotypes in them 'offensive' (10-11). But they seem to find those magazines inappropriate mainly because such magazines do not deal with their own interests. As Karlie says, 'improving the house', 'children' (1-2) or 'too expensive clothes to buy' (14) are not what they as sixteen year olds particularly want to know about. Even *Just Seventeen*, whose title would suggest that it targets these students' age group, seems to be just for 'little children' (8), or those of a lower 'intellectual' level (5), as Florens says. As such, these students seem to be critical about the magazines in their own ways. And importantly, while such criticism may not necessarily count as legitimate in the classroom, it seems to help them avoid feeling intimidated by the boys' critical analysis of the magazines, insofar as they think that they are not the target audience of the magazines criticised in the classroom. Perhaps more significantly, they consider that such a 'feminist' and critical analysis is not really from a '*feminine* point of view', as Florens says in the following extract:

[Extract 5-14]

1. HS: How do you feel about analysing women's magazines in the classroom with boys?

2. Florens: Well …, it's fine. I went to a mixed school and it's just no different really.

3. Others: Yeah.

4. Florens: They just have different opinions but it's nice.

5. Others: Yeah.

6. Florens: I do think the girls seem to have better but different perspectives, because boys

7.    can't get quite caught up more than girls in actual images. We can get caught up in the

8.    models – what they're wearing –, but the boys can't. They can say feminist or something,

9.    but we can look at the models and say things about what they're wearing. It's a slightly

10.   different approach. (laughter)

11.   Karlie: For example, they just maybe kind of SEE PICTURES, but we KNOW about

12.   the fashion.

13.   Florens: Exactly! But I think it's quite good that boys are gonna learn, umm …, INSIDE

14.   WOMEN, umm…, FEMININE point of view. That's fine, yeah. I think that's gonna

15.   help a bit with their love life.

16.   All: (laughter)


Interestingly, the girls seem to have silently tested out whether the boys could make more

practically useful remarks on the information that women's magazines provide for the

target audience, for instance, 'what the models are wearing' (8). The fact that the boys

could not do so – boys can only 'see pictures' (11) rather than 'know the fashion' (11-12),

as Karlie says – seems to be regarded by the girls as evidence that girls have 'better

perspectives' (6) than boys. The girls do not seem to be particularly intimidated by the

boys' linguistic ability to 'say feminist or something' (8) perhaps because they believe that

they can perform such discourse just as well as the boys can (because they learned how to

do it in the classroom). In this respect, Florens's playful remark that reading women's

magazines could help the boys with their 'love life' (15) – and the other girls' laughter

which suggests their agreement (16) – seems rather ironically to question the relevance of

the *ritualised*, critical discourse that they perform in the classroom.

As this implies, there is a danger that learning the critical discourse can be regarded as a matter of learning to perform, mechanically, particular discursive positions that they need to take up in order to be seen as critical media students, particularly if it is not related to the ways in which they actually engage with the media (and with the dominant ideologies that the media produce) in their own lives. Thus is an important issue, if we take the view that we need to teach something really meaningful to students that will not only help them to gain better marks in their exams but also to make sense rather differently of the ways in which they engage with the media in their own lives. In the following extract, the boys, who were more the target of the teacher's 'emancipatory' discourse in studying such a gendered subject, seem to raise an important issue about some of the fundamental assumptions underlying the official critical discourse that they were asked to learn in the classroom.

[Extract 5-15]

1. HS: Do you think learning and discussing about stereotypes would have changed or would
2. change, if you had some kind of bias about the stereotypically described people in the
3. media?
4. Jake: It's hard really … cause the thing is … I found it a bit tricky and …
5. Matte: Or awkward to say?
6. Jake: No! Because I've done GCSE in Sociology last year and … even doing GCSE
7. Sociology, we were going around this stuff. So, mostly I KNEW IT, and then KNEW
8. HOW. (…) The thing is because we did Humanities, which is combined, so we knew
9. about stereotypes and gender stereotyping. So, during the two years of Sociology, we
10. basically were going over everything we've done. And although I kind of knew that

11.    it would be a bit involved in Media Studies, I didn't know HOW MUCH discussion

12.    we'll go on. (…) So it's kind of bizarre and tricky when you're doing the debates and

13.    you know all the outcomes.

14.  Stan: About the stereotypes, I learned them before. I learned about stereotypes.

15.    Personally I don't like it – it's typical. I'm black, yeah? And I always get stereotyped

16.    everyday when I go to a shop or walk down the road. The other day when I went to a

17.    McDonald's – I work there –, (with laughter) and then as soon as I came out of the shop,

    a

18.    policeman asked me, "Where're you going?", "Where're you coming from?", and I say,

19.    "I'm working in McDonald's.", then they're like, "Have you been stopped before?" and

20.    I go, "No.", but they go, "(in surprise) What? You've never been stopped before?

21.    You've never been to prison before?" And then I'm thinking … See? Stereotypical view.

22.    Just because I'm black, I'm stereotyped by the police. I'm gonna be arrested and I

23.    shouldn't be working in McDonald's. So, I don't like stereotypical people but sometimes

24.    I can't help it. (laughter)

25.  All: (laughter)

26.  Jorden: Yeah, the thing is when you talk about … It's difficult because … Miss says, "Ah,

27.    yeah, say what you think about stereotypes." But you've got to be very cautious about

28.    what you say, because you don't wanna offend anyone anyway at all. She says, "No, it

29.    doesn't matter whatever you say." But I mean – she knows it does. It's hard to say

30.    (laughter).


In response to my question about the effect of the critical discourse on their actual way of

thinking (1-3), Jake begins by saying that it is 'tricky' to tell (4), not because it is

'awkward' (5) but because he feels that he already 'knew it' (7), not only in terms of the

debates about the subject – that is, stereotyping – but also 'how' to do the debates (8),

including even the 'outcomes' (13). His point is that there is a kind of *false* 'openness' here: it is supposed to be an open debate, but the answer is pre-determined. While Jake says that he already knew how to do the debate because he had the knowledge from his previous academic study – he 'has done GCSE in Sociology' (6) –, Stan says that he knew about it from his own lived experiences: 'I always get stereotyped' (15). Significantly, however, Stan's experience was hardly heard in the classroom. Although racist stereotypes were discussed in relation to stereotypes in general, Stan may have found it difficult to share such experiences with his fellow students, particularly given that the students were predominantly white. [16] In this case, Stan may have felt that he needs to be 'cautious' about what he says, because he does not want to 'offend anyone anyway at all', as Jorden points out (27-28). In the classroom where everybody – including the teacher, as Jorden says (29) – knows that they can talk about the issue only in particular discursive positions (i.e., 'politically correctly' and politely), *the* critical discourse seems to become *ritualised* and thus 'tricky' (4), not to mention that it does not feel very challenging and new in intellectual terms.

As both male and female students' accounts show, the critical discourse, which is supposed to be empowering the students, does not seem to empower them, in the sense of giving them a new ability that they did not have before: they do not seem to become any more critical as a result of learning about the media via this particular approach. While

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[16] In fact, Stan was the only black student in the classroom, while there were 2 Asian students and 12 white students. See Chapter 4 for further description of the context of the classroom.

they appear to feel that there are particular discursive positions that they have to take up in order to be seen as critical media students, they also seem to believe that such positions are not particularly insightful, insofar as the particular discursive positions do not encourage them to talk more freely about their lived experiences of the media (in terms both of their practical or pleasurable reading of the media and of the actual impact of the media on their lives). The critical analysis approach, which is based on an assumption that the students do not yet know how to discover the dominant ideologies that the media produce, seems to legitimise a particular kind of critical discourse as the official critical discourse. Consequently, the students seem to be asked to subscribe to a rather simplistic account of how the media operate in relation to their own lives.

Reflecting on the lessons about women's magazines, Susan told me in a follow-up interview that she thought that the way that the students were taught women's magazines 'did not grab [their] attention' because the topic was dealt with 'quite superficially'. In relation to this, she told me that emphasising the 'male gaze' as one of the key issues in the representation of women (an approach based on feminist writing in the 1970s and 1980s) did not seem to touch the more complex ways in which contemporary women's magazines might operate, in the sense that such arguments did not touch the issue of ideology and identity in sufficiently complex ways. As such, the teacher seemed to perceive that this particular critical discourse not only overemphasised the ideological

meaning of the media but also remained somewhat remote from her and her students' personal experience of the media.

As I have implied, Susan talked more openly (than Judy) about some of the emotional tensions raised in her classroom, for instance, about her reaction to the boys' laughter about stereotypical images of women (as discussed earlier), in order to reflect on the approach informing her own teaching practice. (See Chapter 4 for the reflection on my relationship with Susan in terms of the researcher/researched.) In terms of their perception of their classroom practices, such discussions revealed some of the differences between the two teachers (Susan and Judy) who shared the same group of students. In the final section of this chapter, I would like to discuss their differences in relation to their institutional positions, including their working relationship as Media Studies teachers in the English department, and their knowledge about the media.

## 5. 5. The teacher's position and knowledge in relation to the 'community of practice'

While the problem with the official critical discourse can be addressed in terms of theoretical issues such as the notion of the media and of the audience, it also needs to be considered in relation to the ways in which it becomes the teacher's knowledge. From the situative learning theory, as discussed in Chapter 3, Media Studies students can be considered as new comers who gain knowledge about the media as a kind of competence that is recognised by the 'community of practice' of media academics and critics, by participating in the learning situation of the classroom. In this theory, the students construct their own 'learning curriculum' by engaging with a 'teaching curriculum' provided by the teachers who can be considered as old timers of the community. In this respect, it seems significant to consider the ways in which the two particular teachers in my study trained to become Media Studies teachers and worked together in a team within the English department in the school.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the school in which this study was conducted, the Media Studies course is attached to the English department. According to the staff handbook of the department, Judy's 'responsibility' allowance for the Media Studies course includes developing and resourcing the A-level curriculum, supporting and providing in-service training for other members of the department, coordinating the

department and relationships with the examination board, administrating the budget for Media Studies, developing the upper school curriculum with a view to implementing GCSE Media Studies in the future, and developing the lower school curriculum. While she has to deal with such responsibilities almost alone without support from the department, her main work seems to be limited to consolidating the existing resources and insetting new teachers within the limited time available. As a result of having to spend so much time on getting training (INSET) and providing sufficient support for other English teachers in their Media Studies teaching, Judy seems to have lost her initial enthusiasm for developing and updating her own knowledge. In the interview, Judy explains her position as follows:

[Extract 5-16]

1. In fact, I have had NOTHING but inset for Media for the last five years, which I'm
2. REALLY getting fed up with. You're allowed to do only one inset one year, and my
3. priority has been Media. So, you know, it's really pissed me off, because I'm very
4. interested in literacy and reading and even the bilingual issue, all those things. I had no
5. chance to develop these things. (…) There were six of us teaching Media Studies at one
6. point, and I said, "I can't handle this. There are too many." Because you know, they all need
7. support to one extent or another. I said, "I'm only earning eight points. It's crap!" So I said,
8. "I want less teachers – less Media teachers.", because it was getting out of hand. And it
9. wasn't the situation like, "I wanna teach Media, I wanna teach Media.", because they didn't
10. have a qualification in it. So they were quite happy to carry on teaching English without
11. having the stress to teach Media Studies.

As she describes (and Susan also confirmed in her interview with me), it seems that teaching Media Studies seems to have been regarded as 'stress' (11) for most of the English teachers, who do not have a 'qualification in Media Studies' (10). In this situation, Judy who trained as English and Media Studies through her initial teacher training and had an MA degree in Media Studies, seems to have been in a position to inset and support other teachers, even though she earns only 'eight points' (7) for it. As such, her priority has been given to Media Studies irrespective of her wish (3), although she told me that she was initially satisfied with having the opportunity to develop the Media Studies course based on her initial teacher training. While she also needs to develop other areas as a teacher of English herself in terms of her own career development with the school (4-5), the fact that she has been recognised as the only qualified teacher responsible for the Media Studies course seems to be perceived as somewhat unfair, as can be seen from her highly emotional expressions of frustration such as 'fed up' (2), 'pissed off' (3) and even 'crap' (7). Accordingly, her position in the department seems to have made her less ambitious in her approach:

[Extract 5-17]

   1. I don't introduce that much change. Well, you know, I'm not saying, "Let's do cartoons!

   2. Let's do animation!" You know, I'm not exactly [like that] … I have to say I'm quite

   3. CONSERVATIVE in what we try out. You know, I'm much more interested in

   4. consolidating the resources we have, you know, than pushing back the, you know, kind of

   5. BOUNDARIES of Media Studies teaching. And also because the syllabus has changed

   6. [from modular to linear], so for example, for the first time last year we were teaching film

7. and TV soaps together, so that was new. So we just concentrated on making sure that

8. we're gonna be OK. And we have all new teachers this year, so you know, we don't like to

9. throw new things to them.

Considering the institutional constraints under which she has to work, Judy's own evaluation of her teaching as 'conservative' (3) is quite understandable. When she has to continue to provide in-service training for and support new English teachers for their Media Studies teaching (8-9) and to restructure the course according to the new syllabus (5-7), it seems inevitable that she has to concentrate on 'consolidating resources' (4) rather than 'pushing back the boundaries of Media Studies teaching' (4-5) and 'throwing new things' to new Media Studies teachers (9). The style of team-teaching of Media Studies – two teachers dividing their work not in terms of study units but in terms of time slots – also seems to be related to the fact that Judy is in a more responsible position than her co-teacher in terms of providing what to teach.

While Judy's 'conservative' approach can be understood in relation to her position in terms of her responsibility for the Media Studies course in the English department, Susan seems to have felt somewhat ambivalent about the way she works with Judy, particularly in that she often felt that she was told by Judy what to teach. While both Judy and Susan had done their PGCE in English and Media Studies, Judy's previous working experience as a photographer and her MA degree in Media Studies seem to give her more expertise than the other teachers including Susan. Therefore, Susan admits that she and other

teachers have 'relied on Judy' because Judy is 'better read' in that area. On the other hand,

she seems to have wanted to validate her everyday knowledge about the media and the

way that she might use it in the classroom, rather than just using the resources that Judy

has developed:

[Extract 5-18]

1. I tend to rely on the things like the Media *Guardian* on Monday. I read that and I collect

2. articles and … You know, I read my magazines and everything. So I'm quite up to date

3. what's going on there. I'm still somebody who doesn't have umm … a partner and

4. children, so my time is still very much my own, which means that I have much more

5. freedom to be able to sort of go out a lot and see films or you know, watch the news or

6. whatever. So I think there is a combination, really, of … Judy finds quite a lot of academic

7. stuff, you know. It's so funny that I say all this nothing, actually. I did soap opera last year

8. and I sorted all that out. I found that all the readings – we had some in the department

9. already but I went to see my colleagues in another school and looked through her stuff, and

10. got stuff from the Internet and stuff like that from newspapers and umm … I think …

11. Judy called me, "Miss Worksheets" last week. (with laughter) I thought it was quite

12. funny. And umm … I think, I think SHE feels that I'm a bit … I don't know. … This

13. is my THIRD year. I taught the course twice already, so this feels for me like a real,

14. SETTLING DOWN with the course properly now. It has been very new for that past

15. four years in lots of ways and I sort of want to be able to …. I AM PULLING MY

16. WEIGHT on the course. But I DO UNDERSTAND what I'm talking about. I CAN be a

17. source of knowledge for the students that they get confident about I know what I'm

18. talking about, NOT feel that Judy knows about media but I don't have a clue.

Susan's comments here need to be considered in terms of the different ways in which

media teachers acquire the knowledge. While Judy seems to rely on a lot of 'academic

stuff' (6-7), Susan seems to feel that such academic knowledge is not necessarily 'up to

date' knowledge about current media (2). Thus, while such academic knowledge, which

has been consolidated probably by Judy, is already in the department (8), she tries to

update it based on her everyday knowledge and experience of the media which she gains

by 'collecting articles from newspapers' (1) and 'magazines' (2) and 'watching films' (5),

for instance. She emphasises that she managed to build her own resources by saying, 'I

sorted all that out' (8), by implication, without Judy's help. Therefore, Susan's reminder

of Judy's comment on her – 'Miss Worksheet' (11) – seems to show her ambivalent

feelings about the way that she works with Judy. On the one hand, she still seems to feel

somewhat insecure about her knowledge about the media, in that it is not regarded as

'proper' academic knowledge: she emphasises that 'I am pulling my weight on the course'

(15-16). Despite that, she seems to contest the way in which academic theory is

legitimised as the only reliable knowledge about the media, insofar as it is not necessarily

'up to date' (2). As such, she declares that 'I can be a source of knowledge for the

students' (16-17), by expressing her insecurity about how she might have seen in the

beginning of her teaching – 'I don't have a clue' (18) – rather on purpose, in effect,

expecting me to deny this. In doing so, she seems to want me as the academic researcher

to say that her way of getting knowledge is not inappropriate by repeating the words, 'You

know'.

However, as she repeatedly told me during our frequent conversations, she did not want to be seen as 'ungrateful' to Judy for support rendered particularly at the beginning of her media teaching. Therefore, she seems to feel somewhat uncomfortable with talking about her working relationship with Judy: she tries to ease her frustration at having been called 'Miss Worksheet' by saying that 'it was quite funny' (11-12); she also tries at one moment to say something about how she interpreted what Judy meant – 'I think she feels that I'm a bit …' (12) –, but then hesitates to say something possibly negative and just says, 'I don't know' (12). [17] She wants to emphasise that the different ways of gaining resources (adopted by Judy and herself) are a good 'combination' (6), while attempting to be more confident about her own approach.

However, as Susan says, while she might feel insecure about the amount of academic theory she possesses as a teacher, such anxiety seems to play a positive role in that it makes her validate more of the students' existing knowledge and experience:

[Extract 5-19]

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[17] Susan's hesitation in talking about her ambivalent feeling about her working relationship with Judy is also shown in her remark, 'It's funny that I say all this nothing, actually' (7). In my interpretation, this remark seems to mean two things. On the one hand, she feels that what she is telling me (about her working relationship with Judy) is just 'nothing' in the sense that she feels that it may not be relevant to my research, although it is actually quite significant to my research. On the other hand, she feels that she wants to talk about it to me because she feels that it is important.

1. A lot of my media knowledge – if I'm really, really honest, a lot of my media knowledge is

2. to do with my own interest. I picked up a lot from JUST BEING INTERESTED and

3. watching and reading and everything else. But I do think now I feel better about my Media

4. Studies teaching. I think it means that I'm MORE RELAXED in the room, which means

5. that when something comes up I can think a bit more calmly rather than panic about it.

6. Because at first time when I taught it, I was very, very edgy about it a lot. A lot of the time

7. I think – I felt, because I didn't have any answers, I shouldn't be teaching the course. Then I

8. began to accept more that there are ways of showing the kids, "You are knowledgeable",

9. "You might not have all the answers. But if you don't have the answers, you can find it."

10. Then they see that as a STRENGTH, FOR THEM TO LEARN rather than as a

11. weakness that they've got a crap teacher. (…) I'm very aware that there are HUGE,

12. HUGE gaps in my knowledge – HUGE gaps. I think part of my compensation for that,

13. in a way, is trying to listen to the kids to what they're bringing in to see if I can get

14. them to sort of – if there is an area which they are already interested in, then  to get

15. them to ANALYSE that rather than just WATCH or read or do whatever with it. Then

16. they can use that in their exam on top of whatever WE teach them.


The teacher perceives her own way of getting knowledge about the media from her

everyday interest and 'watching and reading' (2-3) as a way of enabling her to validate

more of the students' existing knowledge about the media. Perhaps, the teacher's

appreciation of the fact that the students can be knowledgeable could make it possible for

the teacher to reflect on the official critical discourse in a more critical way. However,

there seems to be a possibility that the students' existing knowledge can be used merely as

a basis for the teacher's 'scaffolding' through which they can gain access to the official

critical discourse, as Susan sees her role as making the students 'analyse rather than just watch' the media (16), insofar as the critical analysis approach is institutionally reinforced.

## 5. 6. Conclusion

In this chapter, based on a case study of an A-level Media Studies classroom, I have discussed how the critical media analysis approach might actually be implemented in a classroom. Drawing on my observation of the classroom and interviews with the teachers and with the students, I have argued that the analytical approach legitimises a particular kind of critical discourse as *the* official critical discourse, which is problematic in that it is a *reified* – and somewhat simplistic – version of a broader critical discourse.

The problems with the official critical discourse arise primarily from its implicit view of the media as a means of transmitting the 'dominant ideology' of the society concerned. In the educational context, the *overemphasis* on the ideological dimension of the media effectively defines the students as potentially *uncritical* beings – at least insofar as they are unable to demonstrate their ability to analyse the dominant ideology of the media, drawing on a particular model of semiotic analysis. In principle, semiotic analysis (i.e., 'critical analysis') is supposed to lead a *seamlessly* on to ideological judgement. *In practice*, however, the ideological analysis of the particular medium that they study (in

this case, women's magazines) derives from studying a particular academic perspective, which, again, *overemphasises* the ideological dimension of the media and thus *simplifies* the ways in which the media operate in relation to audiences.

While I agree with the aim of a 'critical analysis' approach in the broader sense that we need to make our students more 'critical', my own observations of how the approach was implemented in the classroom make me question such a narrowly defined political project. As I have discussed, an overemphasis on the ideological dimension of texts effectively controls the ways in which the 'personal discourse' both of the teacher and of the students can enter into the classroom. Allowing a space for this 'personal discourse' might enable students to *renegotiate* the meaning of the critical discourse. The dominance of the official critical discourse seems to prevent the teacher and the students from having more *dialogic* discussions about the ways in which they engage with the media in their own lives. While the narrowly defined political project, which desires to define the classroom as a critical community where critical discourse is spoken by every member of the community – by implication, *without any conflicts* between the members – may effectively control the discursive positions of the teacher and of the students, it generally seems to result in *ritualised*, and thus perhaps less meaningful classroom talk.

The issues raised in this chapter made me want to explore the question of critical pedagogy in the context of a youth project whose professed approach is more 'student-

centred' in contrast with the more 'teacher-centred' approach of critical analysis. On the

other hand, I also wanted to compare 'reading' or analysis-centred approach with a more

'writing' or production-centred approach. I shall discuss these two broader questions,

based on my observation of a youth media project, in the next chapter.

# Chapter 6.

# Going 'hands-on': learning media production

## 6. 1. Introduction

This chapter is a case study of a 'hands-on' approach to media education. It represents a 'writing' or production based approach, which can be compared to the 'reading' based approach discussed in the previous chapter. While the critical analysis approach focuses somewhat on negative aspects of the media, the hands-on approach focuses on the positive aspects: it views media production as the means through which young people can express their 'voices' and learn the skills to do so. While the hands-on approach may be divided into two different approaches, depending on their emphases – empowering young people as *critical citizens* (in the case of the 'youth work' approach) or as *media producers* (in the case of the 'training' approach) –, its pedagogy may be viewed as more 'student-centred' compared with the more teacher-centred approach of 'critical analysis'. Here, it is claimed that young people are to be empowered while they are doing 'what they want'. Given such professed aims and pedagogy, this chapter will discuss how the hands-on approach is actually implemented in the classroom, particularly when it is practised in a youth media project. The questions that will be explored are as follows: What kinds of skills and knowledge about the media are legitimised in this approach? How do the teachers and the students engage with media production in this 'student-centred' approach? How does the

approach provide the young people with meaningful knowledge and skills in media

production in terms of making them critical citizens and media producers?

In order to pursue these questions, I shall examine classroom talk taken from a course in a

youth media project, a course which is aimed at providing youth with opportunities to

learn the hands-on skills and to produce their own television programmes. [18] While the

terms such as 'teacher', 'student' and 'classroom' may not be the words normally used in

youth projects – instead, participants are referred to as 'trainers', 'young

people'/'members' and 'production office'/'studio', respectively –, considering that the

focus of this case study is on the *pedagogic* process. I shall use them simply to refer to the

people who teach and learn and the place where the teaching and learning takes place.

Analysing the classroom talk, I shall discuss the particular ways in which the people who

teach and learn in this approach are positioned *discursively*, and the ways in which

particular knowledge and skills are legitimised in the process. I shall also discuss the

process of developing the content of the videos in relation to the *implied* pedagogy of

group production and of a 'student-centred' approach.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, there are two units of classroom practice that I observed in

this study: Carrie's group for an 'interview exercise' and John's group for a 'drama

project' (in terms of the teachers involved there and the titles of the projects). Carrie was

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[18] See Chapter 4 for the context of the case study.

an 'outreach worker' whose job was to recruit young people from the local youth clubs and youth centres, schools and colleges, and job centres and so forth. As a youth worker, she was mostly responsible for bringing in 'disadvantaged' young people and for trying to keep them coming to the project, in order to develop their skills. Although she was not a 'trainer' in terms of her job description or her educational background (as I shall discuss later in this chapter), Carrie worked alongside the Training department for the Induction course, as well as running a 'Kids Club' for much younger members. Considering that the aims stated in the project's official documents are a mixture of youth work and training (see below), I wanted to explore how Carrie – as a youth worker – might implement a hands-on approach in her own classroom.

John, another teacher whose classroom practice was observed for the drama project, had been the person in charge of the Training department since this youth media project was founded in 1994, and had played a key role in setting up and developing the training structure and the courses. Many members of the staff had joined and left over the preceding four years and at the time of this study, only John had remained since the foundation of the project. While Catherine, the managing director, oversaw the general management – including organising 'guest workshops' by industry professionals and getting commissioned projects from the industry for higher level students, as well as fund-raising –, John was in charge of training the students in the courses and workshops where the education was actually taking place.

For example, John defined and redefined the requirements for the students to become 'members' of the project at levels 1 to 4 by structuring and restructuring the courses, workshops and 'members' tests'. He also produced the *Induction Pack*, which was used as a guide for the Induction course. Considering that his views on the aims and the pedagogy were influential in defining the knowledge and skills the members should learn, I therefore wanted to explore how he might implement the hands-on approach. By observing and interviewing Carrie and John, I wanted to explore how different teachers – who might have differing institutional positions and educational emphases – implemented the hands-on approach.

## 6.2.   Competing aims

As I have mentioned, two different models of the hands-on approach are reflected in the aims of the youth media project: youth work and training. According to their *Information Memorandum*, the target group of the project is defined as 'disadvantaged young people in local urban areas', 'who leave school only to find themselves unemployed and on the streets'. For those who may have 'destructive behaviour' such as 'drugs, truancy and prostitution', as the memorandum describes, the studio of this project aims to be a 'creative ground' or a 'refuge or sanctuary' as a 'cool option to the street' and an

'alternative centre', which has become necessary 'with the decline of the youth club'. As such, the project aims to turn '[these young people's] energies, frustrations and youthful imagination into something positive and rewarding' by 'exploring and representing their own culture, lives and interests' through television production.

It is also suggested that the aim of providing 'disadvantaged youth' with a 'safe and creative refuge' is to be done by training them with television production skills. At the time of the study, the training was, *in principle*, comprised of the Induction and Levels 1 to 4. Firstly, young people were asked to complete the Induction course to become 'members'. Then at Level 1, they were allowed to participate in workshops in specific areas such as 'script writing', 'single-camera and multi-camera operation', 'sound' and 'editing'. At Level 2, they were able to participate in producing regular programmes transmitted through a cable television channel and at Level 3, they participated in making programmes commissioned by the industry. Lastly, Level 4 was an industry placement with a scholarship.

*In practice*, however, the training structure did not work in this systematic way, simply because (as John told me in our interview) many students did not come back after taking the Induction course. While there might have been various reasons why these members did not pursue more advanced training after completing the Induction course, the training structure has since become more systematic in terms of the specification of the skills

required to upgrade one's member status. For instance, subsequent to my research, 'members' tests' were newly introduced between Level 1 and 2, and Level 2 and 3. Now, young people become 'inductees' after completing the Induction course and are then required to attend 5 workshops in different skills such as 'camera', 'lighting', 'editing', 'sound' and 'graphics', and to 'shadow' on the regular production. Then they need to take a members' test, which involves making a 'link' for an item, which will be transmitted in a regular programme. If they pass the members' test, they become 'members'. Then, in order to become 'pro-members', they need to attend at least 5 'members' workshops' and take the 'pro-members' test', which involves directing work of their own which can be used as 2 minute 'filler' for the transmission. In the transition period from the old to the new system, the existing members were automatically named 'inductees', 'members' and 'pro-members' depending on the degree of their participation and skills, as judged by the staff.

The youth media project that I observed therefore aims to function both as a 'youth provision' and as a 'training centre'. On the one hand, the project aims to provide a kind of *social education* for 'disadvantaged youth'. In this respect, television production is seen as a *means* to other ends – giving young people a 'sense of achievement' by making them participate in media production, in which they can 'express' their own ideas – building on the young people's fascination with the medium. On the other hand, the project aims to teach skills, not just as a *means* for social education but rather as *an end in itself*, in the

sense that these skills can make the young people employable in the media industry. The issue is then how the two different aims – making young people *critical citizens*, who can express their own ideas and making them *media producers*, who have the skills required for employment in television production – can actually be implemented.

In order to achieve such aims, two different, and perhaps conflicting, pedagogic approaches seem to be required of the teachers. On the one hand, their pedagogy should be seen as 'student-centred' in the sense that the focus is the youth rather than the staff, and therefore, as is stated in the *Information Memorandum*, it should be the young people who provide 'all the ideas' for the programmes. From this point of view, the *content* of the students' production is more important than learning the skills. On the other hand, the teachers need to pursue their own agenda of empowering the students, both *politically* and *technically*. In the case of technical empowerment, the teachers are required to teach particular ways of understanding and producing television programmes. Thus, the teachers are required to make the students pursue particular production values or follow the rules of television production, depending on the teacher's emphases, as discussed in Chapter 2. The question is then how far this 'technical' empowerment might be compatible with a 'political' empowerment – that is, the attempt to transform the young people into *critical citizens*. This 'political' aim effectively requires the young people to speak with the 'voice of youth' – that is, on behalf of a disadvantaged or even oppressed group.

Despite the complexity of the official aims and the pedagogic approaches of the project, however, a training approach seems to have become the dominant discourse. While the youth work and student-centred approaches may remain as an expressed ethos of the overall project, the actual practice seems to focus almost entirely on the particular skills that the students need to gain. For instance, the skills identified in the scheme of work on the Induction course, particularly in the 'interview exercise' are: identifying production process (pre-production – production – post-production); writing treatment, script and shot-list; familiarity with the technology such as hand-held audio techniques; filming one to one interview by establishing shots using different composition and shot sizes; identifying difference between 'rushes' and final edit; and identifying time-code.

The list of the members' 'core skills', which was recently introduced as part of the restructuring of the level system and the introduction of the members' tests, also reflects the dominance of the 'skills-based training' approach in this project. While these core skills are divided into 5 categories such as 'camera', 'lighting', 'sound', 'editing' and 'graphics', the emphases seem to be given almost entirely to *technical skills*. For instance, the skills identified for the category of camera are 'secure camera to tripod; basic health and safety (be careful about cables and do not touch lenses); labelling tapes; recording bars; how to focus; how to zoom using servo/manual settings; difference between iris and gain; when and how to use colour balance; changing depth of field using zoom (deep focus or short); rules of composition; and abbreviations of shot sizes and shot movements'.

As I shall discuss below, the youth media project has intensified such *abstract* technical skills – which are seen as transferable to any kind of television production – *in isolation from* the content being produced.

Considering that the educational practices of the youth project that I observed in this chapter are situated in a particular social and temporal context, I do not argue that they are representative of any youth media project in the sense that the same practices can be found in other contexts in exactly the same form. Based on this case study, however, I discuss the *symptomatic* significance of the practices, in terms of the ways in which the *discourses* of youth work and training might or do inform the pedagogy of media education. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion about the discursive validity of the case study.) In this respect, it is important to consider that the emphasis of the project on television production skills reflects the changes in the British government's policy for youth provision in terms of an increasing emphasis on skills training. This issue is explored further during the discussion of 'new vocationalism' in Chapter 2.

In fact, the British government has emphasised 'raising standards' in education, as a way of equalising educational opportunities for children and young people 'at risk' (D*f*EE, 1997: 24), as the top priority of its policy. In relation to this, a recent government report defines the young people 'at risk' as those with 'educational underachievement and educational disaffection' as well as 'family disadvantage and poverty' (Social Exclusion

Unit, 1999: 24), and thus recommends tackling the problem in association with the

provision of education and training (*ibid*: 67-69). In relation to such changes in the British

government's policy in youth provision, a recent, comparative international study on

children and youth 'at risk' suggests that youth provision in the U.K. has increasingly

emphasised a 'discipline system' and a 'task-oriented lesson approach' as well as 'ties

with the local community' and 'counselling' (de Geus *et al*, 1998: 42). As such, this report

also suggests that the emphasis on offering training courses (which are seen to enable

young people 'at risk' to get qualifications and thus become employable) has become an

important part of the youth provision in the U.K. (and many other countries in OECD) that

is closely related to the emphasis on 'effective schools' (*ibid*: 25).

For instance, 'Youth Start', a recent community initiative aims to improve the labour

market entry opportunities for such 'disadvantaged' young people through the creation

and development of pilot projects of an 'innovatory nature', including 'arts-based training'

(Walsh *et al*, 1997: 27, 30). In this respect, the emphasis of the project that I observed on

the training and testing of skills seems to reflect such trends in government policy for

youth provision, although the project that I observed did not yet receive statutory funding

at the time of the study. [19] In this respect, the competing aims of the youth media project

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[19] Significantly, such trends in the U.K. and other European countries – providing youth 'at risk'
with opportunities to enter the creative industries through training in arts and media – provided a
rationale for a similar youth project, HAJA Centre, which was recently launched in South Korea,
two years after the beginning of the economic crisis in 1997. (See Chapter 4 for my involvement in
the early discussion of the centre in relation to my own research questions in this study.) In this
respect, it is interesting that while the official title of the project – 'Seoul Youth Vocational

discussed in this chapter reflects a broader tension between youth work approach to media education (making young people express their own 'voices' in a 'safer' environment) and the training approach (making young people learn the skills required in the creative media industry).

## 6.3. 'Skills-based training' in practice

In this part of the chapter, I would like to discuss how the *skills-based training* which forms the dominant approach of the project is actually implemented, by examining classroom talk taken from the Induction course. The following extract is taken from some whole class teaching at the beginning of the course, when Carrie, the teacher, is teaching the students about the elements that they need to consider in the pre-production process of television production, particularly about writing a treatment and a proposal:

[Extract 6-1]

    1. Carrie: (looking at the *Induction Pack*) This is how you work out 'pre-production'

    2.    – what you need for any drama or interview. So, obviously, you need a 'title', yeah?

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Experience Centre' – emphasises its aspect of vocational training, in order to meet the demands from the funder, the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the widely known nickname of the project – 'HAJA ("Let's do it") Centre' – addresses its underlying aim as a youth work in terms of enabling young people to do something on their own. As such, the official English translation of the project title – 'Youth Alternative Cultural Factory' – seems to reflect the complexity of the aims of the project in terms of trying to compromise the demand from the government – economic productivity symbolised by the image of a factory – with a broader aim as an 'alternative' youth cultural project.

3.    Title of the show, OK? And 'duration' – how long it's going to last. Umm… for this

4.    interview, it's going to last 3 to 5 minutes. 'Genre/category'. Does everyone know

5.    what genre means? … It means a type of programme, yeah? Do you wanna shout

6.    out some different genres?

7. A girl: Thriller.

8. Carrie: Thriller.

9. A boy: Comedy.

10.    Carrie: Comedy. Umm… what about on TV? What kinds of genre do we have

11.     quite a lot?

12.    A boy: *Blind Date*.

13.    Carrie: What would you say *Blind Date* is?

14.    A girl: Chat show.

15.    Carrie: Chat show and sort of light entertainment, yeah? And you've got

16.     documentaries on TV, yeah? OK, so we know all the different types or

17.     genres we have. All right, 'target audience', then. (…)


Given that the above talk is taken from the whole class teaching element where the teacher

is giving an overview of the process of pre-production, it is interesting to see how it is

presented to the students. Here, the teacher is checking the list of elements such as 'title'

(2), 'duration' (3), 'genre' (4-17), and 'target audience' (17), as the items which the

students need to consider in writing their treatment. While the teacher does not mention

how these elements can be related each other in terms of developing the content, these

items seem to be treated equally insofar as they are regarded as little more than 'blanks' to

complete the *form* of the treatment. In this way, the teacher appears to imply that the

emphasis here is on writing the *form* of the treatment – rather than on developing the

*content* of the programme. This represents a form of *procedural knowledge* about

television production that the students need to know, whatever they make – '*any* drama or

interview' (2, my *italics*).


In relation to this emphasis on the *form* of the production, it is important to examine the

teacher's assumptions about what the students 'know' and 'do not know' about television

production. Interestingly, the teacher seems to assume that the students already and

'obviously' (2) have the knowledge about which elements need to be considered in pre-

production. What is assumed that the students do not know seems then to be the *language*

used in television production and the hands-on experience, for instance, writing a

treatment. As such, the teacher tries to ensure that the students know the meanings of the

*terms* that she introduces, by rephrasing them in 'easier' words (for instance, 'duration' (3)

means 'how long [the programme] is going to last' and 'genre' (5) means 'types of

programme').


Such assumptions on the teacher's part about what the students 'know' and 'do not know'

and her subsequent emphases on *procedural knowledge* about television production and

*media language* contrast with those of the 'critical analysis' approach discussed in the

previous chapter. The teacher here assumes that the students know what genre is – 'we

know all the different types of genres we have' (16-17) –, for instance, insofar as they can

name different kinds of genre – 'thriller' (7), 'comedy' (9) and 'chat show'(14) – and

examples of the subcategories – *Blind Date* is a 'chat show' or a 'light entertainment' (15) –, while the teacher in the critical analysis approach may assume that the students do not know about genre if they do not know the ideological dimension (see Chapter 7 for further discussion). As such, while it is assumed that what the students need to learn is how to make a television programme *with their own hands*, questions of *content* – and ideology – seem barely to be raised in this context.

The emphasis of the hands-on approach on the *form* and the *language* in isolation from the *content* are shown more clearly by the way in which Carrie introduces the 'interview exercise', as follows:

[Extract 6-2]

1. Carrie: What are the key things for you to need to do an interview? How

2.   does an interview start? What do you have?

3. A boy: Presenter.

4. Carrie: Presenter. So what does a presenter do?

5. Students: (confused voices)

6. Carrie: (picking up one student's response and writing down 'intro' on the

7.   whiteboard) Introducing him- or herself. It's 'intro', yeah? That is "Blah,

8.   blah, blah. My name is Bob and this programme is about … whatever".

9.   (writing down 'questions and answers') And then it goes onto the

10.   questions, yeah? And answers? Also what we're gonna do is

11.   something called vox pops. (writing down 'vox pops') That's Latin

12.   words for voice of the people. What it is like is … you know there is a

13. washing powder advert and someone goes to the streets with the camera

14. and says to people "Excuse me, have you used this washing power?"

15. Do you know that sort of thing?

16. Students: Yeah.

17. Carrie: And you see a man's hands, sometimes, of the man holding a

18. microphone and asking the same question to lots of people? We're

19. gonna do vox-pops outside in the streets to general public, maybe? So

20. that's in different locations. (writing down 'location') So, an

21. interview's got questions and answers, and outside locations to do vox

22. pops. And how do you get response in the studio from the outside?

23. What is the device you use in one place to the next?

24. Students: (confused voices)

24. Carrie: You can film them when you go outside, saying "Follow me."

25. Or you can do something called "link". (writing down 'link') Say,

26. "Now I'm outside, freezing cold in Ladbroke Grove. Thank you, here I

27. am." So, it's to LINK one place to the next. And also we need a link

28. back into the studio, yeah? And then, what are we gonna do after that,

29. after the show? It will be an 'outro', like "Thank you very much for

30. watching" or whatever. (writing down 'outro') So, (looking at the

31. words written down on the board: intro, questions and answers, vox

32. pops, location, link [to the location and back to the studio], outro) this

33. is the order that we're going to end up with, yeah? This is a rough

34. order but it doesn't mean that we're gonna film it like that. This is a

35. 'sequence of events'. But a 'shot list' – the order we're gonna film it is

36. going to be different. (…) So you usually film the 'intro' and 'outro'

37. at the same time and then questions and answers at the same time, and

38. the location, yeah? That is a rough outline of it [shot list]. Now what

39. we've got to do is to think in groups about what subject matter is

40.    going to be. (…) Shall we split into two groups then?

The teacher begins by asking an open question about the 'key' things in an interview, but she quickly turns it into a *closed question*, which requires specific information: 'how does an interview start?' (2). When a student answers this question with 'presenter' (3), which is not the exact answer that she is looking for, Carrie asks the students to pay more attention to what a presenter does (4), which she relates to the *format* of an interview programme. As such, she provides the right answer, 'intro' (6-8) with a typical example of it, and quickly moves on to mention other elements of the format of an interview programme such as 'questions and answers' (9-10), 'vox pops' (11-20), 'location' (20), 'link' (23-28), and 'outro' (28-30). Then, she moves on to introduce the terms such as 'sequence of events' (30-35) and 'shot-list' (35-38), in order to teach the *procedural knowledge* that is needed in this exercise and the specific *language* that the students need to use in the production process.

As was the case in Extract 6-1, the priority of the exercise here also seems to be given to learning about the *form* of the programme and to the *procedural knowledge* and *language* used during filming and editing. Interestingly, the emphasis on procedural knowledge in this context seems to make the teacher teach it in somewhat strange way. For instance, a live interview type of programme *would* be filmed in the same order as the sequence of events in the real situation of television production. Even the recorded interview would be

filmed in the same order as the sequence of events, although it might not be filmed in one-go, in order to allow the interviewer and the interviewee to rephrase their questions and answers or to have short breaks during the filming. However, in this exercise, the students were *required* to film the interview programme in a clearly different order from the final cut, in order to understand the use of sequence of events and a shot list (and to understand the difference between 'rushes' and the edited version). For instance, it was required that the presenter and the interviewee were filmed in separate shots and that they were filmed one after the other. Therefore, the two people doing the interview did not actually speak to each other when they were being filmed. The teacher then edited the rushes as if they were speaking to each other, in order to teach the effect of editing in the evaluation session. While this may not be how it would be done in a real programme, this exercise seems to have been deliberately constructed in order to teach young people the *professional norms* that are required to achieve 'realism' on television. As such, this way of teaching seems to reveal rather clearly that the priority of a hands-on approach is acquiring skills, which are regarded as transferable to the making of *any kind* of content.

While the hands-on approach prioritises learning about *procedural knowledge* as part of the skills of television production, it also emphasises the *professional norms* in television production and the *techniques* required in order to achieve them. Such emphases on the skills required in television production as well as on the *language* used there are continued in the evaluation of the students' production. In the following extract, John is evaluating

the interview exercise, showing the rushes that a group of the students had filmed on the previous day:

[Extract 6-3]

1. John: (after showing the shot of the 'link') So, what was that? Anyone
2. knows what's that called? … Do you remember 'link'? It's the 'link out'.
3. So, it's – when the camera goes outside, it doesn't shock the audience
4. 'cause they know that the camera goes outside. (after showing another
5. 'take' of the same shot) That's the same shot but it's 'Take 3'. That's a
6. nicely composed shot. I mean – what does it mean in terms of being in
7. one side of the picture?
8. A student: It means that she's talking to someone.
9. John: Yeah! It tells the audience that there is someone over here (pointing
10. at the space next to the presenter in the shot) off the screen that they
11. can't see.

Here, John firstly asks a question – 'what was that?' (1) – which is a closed question, requesting specific information about the type of shot. When the students do not respond immediately, perhaps because they are not sure exactly which kind of information the teacher is seeking, he provides the 'right answer' straight away by asking a question, 'Do you remember "link"?' (2). Then he explains the reason why the link is used in relation to a *professional norm* required in order to achieve *seamless* television: 'it is used so that the audience will not be shocked when the camera goes out of the studio' (3-4). By consciously referring to the next picture as 'Take 3' (5) when he moves on to explain the

composition of the shot, he seems to want to teach the technical *language* – 'take' (5) and

'shot' (6) – as well as pointing out another *professional norm* of composing the shot as a

'talking head' – leaving some space next to the talking person (9-11).

In terms of the exchange of talk between the teacher and the students, the above extract

can be seen as a typical three-move exchange of 'I–R–E (initiation-reply-evaluation)'.

Lines 6-11, in particular, clearly show this teacher-initiated exchange:

Teacher [*Initiation*]: What does it mean in terms of being in one side of the picture?
Student [*Reply*]: It means that she's talking to someone.
Teacher [*Evaluation*]: Yeah! It tells the audience that there is someone over here off
the screen that they can't see.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this 'I–R–E' exchange is characteristic of 'normal

classroom discourse', as Edwards and Westigate (1994) term it, which gives the teacher

the power to transmit any *legitimate knowledge*. Relying on this kind of exchange, the

teacher in this context conveys the *non-negotiable* 'rules' that the students need to follow,

for instance, when they operate the camera or edit the rushes, in order to get the right

effects. This exchange structure is also seen in the following extract in which Carrie

teaches the effects of editing, after showing the rushes:

[Extract 6-4]

1. Carrie: So, what do you think is going to be different between the rushes

2.  and the edited version? What you saw there [in the rushes], is it in the

3.  right order?

4. Students: No.

5. Carrie: No. What's gonna happen in the edited version, do you think?

6. Students: It should make more sense.

7. Carrie: It should make more sense? The answers come before the questions,

8.  do you think? No?

9. Students: No.

10.  Carrie: No!

Here again, the talk is initiated by the teacher's closed questions, which seek the 'right answers'. Interestingly, Carrie repeatedly asks questions whose answers are obviously 'no', possibly to get the right answers from the students even quicker. For instance, she asks the students if the shots in the rushes, which are not yet edited, are in the right order that we would see in the edited version (2-3). In this case, the answer, 'no' (4) is already implied in the teacher's question (2-3), given that the teacher has already explained the difference between rushes and the edited version earlier (see my discussion of Extract 6-2). After hearing this reply from the students, the teacher validates their answer by repeating, 'No' (5) and then asks the question, 'What's gonna happen in the edited version?' (5), in order to make sure that the students themselves can explain the difference between rushes and the edited version (lines 33-36, Extract 6-2). When the students provide the right answer, 'It should make more sense' (6), the teacher repeats their answer (7) and asks the

question, which contains the right answer, 'The answers come before the questions, do you think? No?' (7-8), to which, again, the students are expected to say, 'No' (9).

As I have discussed thus far, the hands-on approach in this context emphasises that the students should learn the *procedural knowledge*, *professional norms* and *language* used in television production, as well as *techniques* of operating the equipment (such as how to operate the camera, as discussed earlier in relation to the 'core skills' defined in the 'members' test'). I also have noted that these seemed to be taught as *abstract* skills, in isolation from the content of the production, and as *non-negotiable* rules. As such, the following extract taken from the overall evaluation of the interview exercise seems to show the kinds of knowledge legitimised in this hands-on experience even more clearly:

[Extract 6-5]

1. John: (…) Nearly all films and the most of the interviews that aren't in the
2. studio [with the audience] are filmed by one camera. And it's everyone's
3. job to make it look like it all happened at the same time, yeah? And to
4. make all the cuts flow so the audience doesn't notice, "Oh, that was an
5. edit!", yeah? What TV does is to false the audience, it tricks the
6. audience into believing something that isn't real. In this case, it was
7. tricking you to believe that those two people were having an interview
8. together at the same time but they weren't! It was the answers first and
9. questions on its own. And it was also tricking you into thinking that the
10. camera suddenly went outside because you had a link, "Now we're
11. going outside." And it's like in real time, yeah? If that wasn't like that,

12.  what it would be like, if there wasn't a link?

13.  A boy: It will jump!

14.  John: It will jump! And what would the audience think? How would they

15.  feel?

16.  A girl: They would be confused?

17.  John: They would be confused!

18.  A girl: They wouldn't know what's happening.

19.  John: Yeah, it won't work! You all know that [because you watch]

20.  television – you can all read it. I'm sure that you're all well practised

21.  in watching television, yeah? Everyone is. Umm… therefore you

22.  actually know all these rules already, yeah? But what we're gonna do

23.  in the next three days is for you to be going to rediscover what you

24.  already know, yeah? And you'll notice all these tricks and you'll use

25.  them to your advantage to make your own movie.

The teacher begins by explaining how the techniques of filming that the students learned

may be used to make a 'real' television interview particularly when the audience is not

present in the studio (1-2). Here, the techniques of filming and editing that are used to

achieve 'realism' are emphasised as the rules for the students to follow, particularly to

achieve continuity by 'making it look like it all happened at the same time' (3) and

making 'all the cuts flow' (4). Given that the above extract is preceded by the introduction

of terms such as continuity and jump cut [20], the exchange between the teacher and the

students here, particularly in the lines 9-19 is in effect a review of the concept of

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[20] I did not provide the transcripts for this part, simply because it was too long.

continuity editing. And the teacher's attempts to teach them the 'rules' also shows the discursive structure of the 'I–R–E' exchange, as follows:

1. Teacher: [*Initiation*] If that wasn't like that, what it would be like, if there
2. wasn't a link?
3. Student: [*Reply*] It will jump!
4. Teacher: [*Evaluation*] It will jump! [*Initiation*] And what would the audience
5. think? How would they feel?
6. Student: [*Reply 1*] They would be confused?
7. John: [*Evaluation*] They would be confused!
8. Student: [*Reply 2*] They wouldn't know what's happening.
9. Teacher: [*Evaluation*] Yeah, it won't work!

The teacher uses this three move exchange to emphasise the effect of continuity editing as a *rule* to follow in order 'not to confuse' the audience and to make the production 'less amateurish'. He emphasises that the students already have knowledge about television – the 'rules' – as a result of their experience of watching television (20-22), but they need to be able to do it *with their own hands* (22-25).

Thus far, I have discussed how the *skills-based training* approach is implemented as the dominant discourse in this youth project and what kinds of knowledge and skills are legitimised in the process. While the techniques of operating the equipment, procedural knowledge, professional norms, and language used in television production are emphasised as *rules* (which are fundamentally non-negotiable) that the students should

learn in order to achieve seamless, 'realist' television, they seem to be taught as transferable skills *in isolation from the content or message* that they may create. [21] Such an emphasis on the achievement of transferable and testable skills is conveyed in a rather traditional, teacher-lead pedagogic discourse (the 'I–R–E' exchange), although there is an apprarent commitment to a 'student-centred' approach. Given that the *skills-based training* approach serves as the dominant discourse, the question is then, as I briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, how the youth work and student-centred approaches, which are emphasised in the project's official documents, are played out by teachers who may have different educational emphases, particularly in relation to the actual process of television production.

## 6. 4. 'Youth work' and 'student-centredness' in the hands-on training

### 6.4.1. The 'youth work' discourse

As discussed in Chapter 2, the youth work approach to media education examined here aims to empower young people as *critical citizens* who can have a more 'questioning attitude' towards the views of the world expressed in the mainstream media such as television. Here, the adult worker is advised to encourage young people to 'express their

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[21] In fact, decontextulised learning with no specific content is much criticised in language teaching these days. See Crystal (1997).

own ideas' through media production, although the central aim may lie in exploring who

they are in more critical ways (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). Such an aim is, as I

have noted, marginalised by the dominance of the *skills-based training* approach in the

youth media project that is discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless, the student-centred

approach of the overall project, which requires the students to decide 'what they want to

do', seems to create some space in which the teacher could intervene in the *content* of the

production. The following extract shows how Carrie tries to intervene in such a manner:


[Extract 6-6]

    1. Carrie: Now you're lucky because you're here and you can show what

    2. young people are really about, yeah? But how are young people

    3. portrayed by the media usually? Do you think that's honest, good? You

    4. can think some of them are dodgy? Is there anyone who has feelings

    5. about how young people are represented in the media?

    6. A student: It's like young people are always on the street.

    7. Carrie: Yeah? That's one side of how they are portrayed. And this is a time

    8. when YOU can represent how you want to show your characters, yeah?

    9. You can show young people as how YOU feel yourself.


Firstly, Carrie defines the fact that the students are in the studio as 'lucky' because it gives

the students a chance to show what young people 'really' are (1-2). Using the negative

conjunction, 'but' (2), she effectively suggests that she thinks that the representation of

youth in the mainstream media is not fair to young people. As such, the questions that the

teacher asks right after implying her own opinion effectively invite the students to choose

the right answer from a binary opposition: whether the portrayal of young people in the

media is 'honest and good' (3) or 'dodgy' (4). In effect, these questions actively require

the students to agree with the teacher, insofar as the students do not believe that the

portrayals of young people in the mainstream media are *always* fair. When a student gives

the 'right' answer (as might have been expected), the teacher emphasises again that the

views expressed by the media are biased – 'that's one side' (7) –, and therefore that the

students should express an *alternative*, their 'own' perspective (7-9), using this 'lucky'

opportunity.


The issue is then what is regarded as young people's 'own voice'. Here, the teacher seems

to assume that the fact that young people become the producers will perhaps automatically

guarantee that their 'own' views will be expressed and that this will be 'honest' and

'good', by contrast with the (implicitly) 'dishonest' and 'bad' representations of the

mainstream media. By implication, young people are seen as an 'oppressed group' whose

voice is yet to be heard, and thus are interpellated as 'truth tellers', privileged witness of a

'reality', which will then be revealed through 'their own' uses of media (see Chapter 2 for

further discussion). [22]

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[22] Such a construction of young people as the 'oppressed', whose 'voice' needs to be heard, is
widely shared among the advocates of media education in youth and community projects. For
instance, the director of 'Educational Video Centre', a New York based youth media project argues
that their documentary making projects provide an 'alternative model for learning' in the sense that
such projects document 'conditions of exploitation', which then create an 'authentic public

The problem is that there is a possibility that the students, who are interpellated as 'truth-tellers', may simply express what they think they *should* do at least to please the teacher, insofar as the teacher is superior in the power/knowledge relationship. Clearly, the power/knowledge relationship between the adult worker and the young people in the context of a youth project is much weaker than the one between the teacher and the students in school, insofar as there is no obligation on the students' part to come to the project if they do not want to. Nevertheless, the adult workers in the youth project are not totally free from such power/knowledge relations, insofar as they have their own educational agenda, which they consider good *for* the young people. In this case, there is a possibility that the adult worker 'speaks for' the young people without considering the social context in which the young people are *discursively* constructed as the 'oppressed', as Orner argues is frequently a problem with 'liberatory' pedagogy (Orner, 1992: 84).

In this respect, the ways in which Carrie, the teacher whose interventions are most strongly informed by the youth work discourse, leads the discussion about the *content* of an interview exercise, seem to be quite problematic. While she may want to pursue her agenda to empower the students politically by making the students produce an alternative portrayal of young people, she needs to do so by making them do 'what they want to do' while simultaneously training them with skills of television production. In this context, the

dialogue that transcends the moral and economic imperatives of the market culture' and therefore 'transform oppressive experiences into liberating ones' (Goodman, 1994: 49).

following extract seems to show how Carrie struggles to accommodate the three different

agendas:


[Extract 6-7]

1. Carrie: So, what's going to be our subject matter? Shout out some ideas?

2. A girl: Smoking

3. Carrie: Smoking. (writing down 'smoking' on a paper) Right, I'm just

4.   going to write down some ideas here, yeah?

5. A boy: Violence.

6. Carrie: (writing down) Violence. Sometimes it's good to construct an

7.   interview as 'for' and 'against'. So you can have a presenter who could

8.   interview one person for violence (with laughter) or someone who was

9.   involved in violence or crime or smoking and so on. So you can

10.   construct it like that. And then you go out to streets and ask people

11.   how they think about that, yeah? And any other ideas about what

12.   subject matters are going to be?

13.   A girl: Romance.

14.   Carrie: (writing down) Romance? Right, what else?

15.   A boy: Sports.

16.   Carrie: (writing down) Sports? Right, so…any more sort of …

17.   A girl: Street pollution.

18.   Carrie: (writing down) Street pollution? OK. So now we have five

19.   different areas, yeah? Now you could choose one of those topics.

20.   Umm… what's going to be the discussion like about umm… sports

21.   for example? What is going to be? What sort of debate are we going

22.   to have about sports, about what's your favourite sports? How can we

23.   construct that?

24. Students: (silence)

Here, the teacher invites the students to 'shout out some ideas' (1) about the subject matter of the interview that they would like to deal with, and writes down what they suggest, such as 'smoking' (2), 'violence' (5), 'romance' (13), 'sports' (15) and 'street pollution' (17). While she keeps asking them to suggest different ideas and to make their own choices (1, 11-12, 14, 16), she intervenes in the discussion by implying that certain subjects would be a better basis for a debate, and thereby create clear roles for the people both in front of and behind the camera. The teacher suggests that the students should consider constructing their interview as 'for and against' (6-7) some subject such as 'violence', 'crime' or 'smoking' (9), which might be related to the negative representation of youth in the mainstream media. In doing so, the teacher seems to show her concerns as a youth worker with making the students 'express their own voice' about social issues. On the other hand, such a concern with the subject matter seems to be closely related to the teacher's other concern, informed by the *skills-based training* approach: that is, with teaching the *rules* of a television interview or studio discussion. In this case, choosing such subjects seems also to be seen as a useful way for the students to generate an interview by creating 'questions and answers' between presenter and interviewees as well as 'vox-pops' 'for and against' the subject matter.

As such, the teacher's concerns as youth worker – that the students need to deal with social issues and to 'express their own ideas' – are implemented through the process of discussing the content of the production. In this case, the 'student-centred' pedagogy seems to be implemented only in the teacher's continuous encouragement that the students should come up with 'their own' ideas and make 'their own' choice. In this respect, it is noticeable that the teacher suggests a plausible scenario for an interview about 'violence', 'crime' or 'smoking' (7-11), whereas she does not do so for the subject matter of 'sports' or 'romance', for instance (21-23). Thereby, the teacher seems to imply that the students' expression should be concerned only with subject matter related to social issues.

In the light of this, it is interesting to see how the students' discussion developed when they went on to choose violence as the subject matter of the interview exercise. Putting this in context, the discussion shown in Extract 6-7 was interrupted for a while by another group, which was working in the same studio. Interestingly, when the group went back to their own discussion, the teacher did not go back to the discussion about the subject matter straightaway but went for a discussion about the crews that they would need to have, as follows:

[Extract 6-8]

    1. Carrie: What crews do we need for this?
    2. Students: (silence)
    3. Carrie: We will need a cameraperson, presenter, sound person and director.

4. So that's the people we need. If we look down on Page 3 [of *The*

5. *Induction Pack*], you see all the different roles we've got, yeah? Who is

6. the top man? Who is the top man?

7. A boy: Producer.

8. Carrie: Producer, not director, yeah? (to the student who just replied) You

9. say, producer. OK, they work closely together –producer and director.

10. For the matter of money, producer maybe is the top dog, yeah? He

11. gets the money to make sure that the project goes ahead. But director

12. is in charge of the crew in creative elements, interpreting what the

13. script writers said, yeah? The cameraman says nothing. He just

14. listens to what the director says. Director is in charge of him

15. [cameraman]. As the programme goes along, all that the director has

16. to worry about is to get the shots right, OK? Producer is going to be

17. there to make sure that the shots are gonna be made on time and that

18. the crews are gonna be there on time. And we have a presenter who is

19. going to be in front of the camera? And a boom operator and a sound

20. person who checks the sound levels and actually holds the boom

21. microphone as well. So for this little interview we're going to do,

22. we're going to need a presenter, director, and a sound person and the

23. people interviewed. (…) Who likes to be in front of the

24. camera?

25. A girl: I don't mind.

26. Carrie: You don't mind. OK, this is good because some people don't

27. like being in front of the camera. (…) Anyway, so … Pick a subject!

28. Any subject! We are going to have to start!

29. A student: Violence.

30. Carrie: (looking around students) Violence? Violence? Violence? Yeah?

31. Yeah? Yeah? Yeah~~~!!! OK, violence.

As mentioned before, the teacher turns the discussion from the subject matter to the 'crews' (1) needed for the interview. When the students are quiet, perhaps because of the sudden change of topic (2) or perhaps because they do not understand what she means by 'crews', the teacher quickly gives the answer herself, reminding them that it is written down in the *Induction Pack* (3-5). Then, she reviews the role of each crew member such as director, producer, cameraman, boom mic operator and sound person (9-21), before she moves on to ask the students to volunteer for each role, including the presenter (23-27). When the students are allocated to different roles and two presenters are chosen for inside and outside the studio, the teacher quickly goes back to the subject matter and asks the students to 'pick any subject' because they have to start shooting soon (27-28). Finally a student suggests that they do 'violence' (29), perhaps because choosing this subject – that the teacher seems to prefer – would make it easier for them to move ahead with the 'hands-on' experience without having to spend more time discussing the subject matter. Picking up this student's response, the teacher quickly looks around at each student and asks if they would agree to do 'violence', in order to make sure that *they say* what they want to do, rather than it being dictated by the teacher (30-31).

Perhaps the reason why the teacher decided to discuss the role of the crew members in the middle of the discussion about the subject matter might be that she was pressurised by time management. In fact, the aim of this exercise was for the students to have a 'hands-

on' experience and this had to be completed within 2 hours or so. Under these circumstances, the teacher tried to waste as little time as possible by changing the order of discussion whenever the students fell silent. The teacher's impatience with the students' silence (which seemed to be caused by the time constraints) is also evident in the group's writing treatment, where they were discussing the title, target audience, genre and aim of the interview exercise. Here again, the teacher invites the students to come up with their 'own' ideas. However, she often suggests her own ideas rather strongly and, at the same time, constantly reminds the students that they do not have much time before starting shooting. The teacher also jumps from one topic to another whenever the students fall silent. As such, the teacher seems to imply that these elements are only the 'blanks' to fill in the *form* of the treatment. In this way, the teacher sends the students a dual, and perhaps confusing, message. On the one hand, she invites them to express 'their own ideas'. On the other hand, she implicitly asks them to choose particular subject matter about which they could express 'alternative' views. Perhaps in this context, the silence often created in the middle of the students' discussion may have been their only means of response to such confusing messages.

In this respect, it is interesting how the students respond to the teacher's request that they should 'subvert' negative stereotypical views, for instance, the idea of black male youth as 'social offenders'. Clearly, the teacher's intention here may be to empower them politically by making them 'express their own views' about such an issue. However, the

students do not necessarily seem to be empowered in this way. Despite the good intention of the teacher, the black male students present in this classroom may have felt somewhat uncomfortable with having to be seen (yet again) to resist such a negative stereotype, while the others may have wanted to be cautious in making any comments on the issue, at least in order to avoid offending their peers (see Chapter 5 for my discussion of the students' perception of dealing with black representation). In fact, the students often fell silent when they were required to discuss the actual content of the interview in this particular way. Interestingly, in this case, the teacher decided to make them deal with the subject matter, 'violence', and particularly' 'mugging', in a rather humorous way:

[Extract 6-9]

1. Carrie: Do you remember that our show is going to be informative? But the

2. story could be quite funny and all the twist all the way, you know? Well,

3. we've got a victim, an offender and a presenter. And we're gonna have a

4. Cameraperson and director. And then you're gonna maybe interview

5. people out on the streets. When you're interviewing out on the street,

6. you have to think about what kind of question you're going to ask people.

7. Anyway, let's get this done. Who is the victim and offender and what's

8. the story? Any story? Funny or stupid? It doesn't matter what's going to

9. be the scenario. Is it drug motivated or personal argument motivated?

10.    What is it going to be?

11.   A boy: A young man is walking down the street and gets mugged and

12.    then finds out it was his own brother?

13.   Carrie: OK. I like that one. So you could have … the interviewee

14.    already knows that his brother mugged him. Then the interviewer

15.    could ask him how he would feel? Oh, I always liked the one which

16.    was about an offender mugging someone and realising that it was his

17.    best mate's mum. (with laughter) That sort of thing and "how do you

18.    feel?" sort of... or smashing in a car and realising that it's his dad's

19.    new motor. I mean we could play around like that. So shall we do a

20.    mugger mugging his own brother?

21.    Students: Yeah.

22.    Carrie: Yeah! So the victim is the older brother? And the younger

23.    brother mugged him?

24.    Students: (with laughter) Yeah!

25.    Carrie: (with laughter) OK. The victim is older … hang on, it could be

26.    his sister. How about the victim is an older brother and the offender

27.    is his younger sister?

28.    Students: (with laughter) Yeah!

29.    Carrie: (writing down) OK, older brother and younger sister, yeah? So

30.    she's the leader of a gang in that area and mugged her own brother,

31.    yeah?

32.    Students: (with laughter) Yeah.

33.    Carrie: (with laughter) Brilliant! It's all done!

First, the teacher says that the students could make the interview 'funny', although earlier they had agreed that they were going to make it 'informative' (1-2). She then reminds them of the roles of the people that they would need to make this interview, both in front of and behind the camera, such as 'victim', 'offender', 'presenter', 'camera person', 'director' and the people who would be interviewed 'on the streets' (3-6). Here, the teacher is in fact asking the students to think of a possible 'scenario' for this fictional,

'funny interview' (7-9). Having almost given up on dealing with the subject matter in a

serious way, the teacher now asks the students to come up with *any* story, saying that it

does not matter (8-10).

Responding to this request, a student comes up with a story with an ironic twist: 'a young

man who mugged his own brother' (11-12). Excited by this 'funny' idea, the teacher then

develops it into a plausible scenario: 'a presenter interviewing the offender and the victim

in the studio' (13-15). Here, it seems to be the teacher who actually develops the idea

about the 'story' for the interview programme by summarising the students' ideas (19-20,

22-23) and by adding to (13-15, 30-31) and/or changing (25-27) them slightly. Now the

students seem to have come to an implicit agreement with the teacher in terms of making

the interview funny rather than serious. Nevertheless, the teacher manages to get the

students to 'subvert' the negative stereotype of 'black male youth' as offender by creating

a 'female offender' instead (25-31). [23]

Thus far, I have elaborated how the teacher and the students discussed the content for the

interview project. Building on this, I want to discuss the students' production, '*Speak Out:*

*Sister Act*', particularly based on the script (see Appendix 2 for the full script). It is a

comedy using the format of a talk show. Here, a presenter interviews in turn a 'sister who

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[23] In relation to this creation of a supposedly subversive image of a 'female offender', I shall
discuss in the next chapter how a particular kind of critical discourse about the media makes
students create a similarly 'subversive' image of female gangsters in making a gangster film trailer.

mugged her own brother' and then the 'victim (the brother)', and talks to 'members of the

general public' about the incident. Interestingly, this format is strikingly similar to that of

*The Jerry Springer Show*, an American hit talk show, which is very popular among young

people. [24]

Like *The Jerry Springer Show*, which deals with 'unusual' relationships among close

family or friends and brings the people involved to the TV studio to make them talk about

incidents which ordinary people might want to keep within their private life, *Speak Out*

deals with subject matter which 'members of general public' may find very 'unusual' – a

*sister act*s in a bizarre manner and mugs her own brother – and brings the 'victim'

(brother) and the 'offender' (sister) to the TV studio to talk about the strange situation in

public. The issue here is then whether this text, *Speak Out*, can be read as a 'subversive'

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[24] Interestingly, the three girls who participated in writing the script (Amilee, Jo and Cath) named
*The Jerry Springer Show*, in the questionnaires that they filled in when they enrolled on the course,
as one of their favourite TV programmes. In this respect, *The Jerry Springer Show* itself seems to
be a text worth analysing, particularly in relation to its ways of dealing with 'unusual' matters,
which 'can happen to anybody', as the presenter, Jerry Springer, always emphasises at the end of
the programme. Another interesting aspect about the *The Jerry Springer Show* is that the audience
(and the presenter) tends to be middle class, while those on stage are often either very poor, barely
literate or working class. This contrast between the people on stage and the audience
(commentators) is also reflected in the students' production, *Speak Out*. In my view, one of the
reasons why the programme appeals to young people seems to be that it is actually quite
*postmodern* in that it deconstructs conventional moral values as well as distinctions between the
'private' and 'public' domains of modern human life; 'others' on the stage and 'us' as an audience
(in that the 'unusual' incident can happen to 'us'); 'fictional' and 'factual' (in that the people on the
stage deal with the 'real' incidents but act to some degree); 'victim' and 'offender' (everybody on
the stage is to blame) and so on. Albeit in a very awkward way, therefore, *The Jerry Springer Show*
seems to have a postmodern message that things are much more complicated than we used to think.
Perhaps in this respect, it has a particular appeal for young people.

text – whose message is that 'black young male people can be victims of crime rather than offenders', and perhaps even that 'girls have more power than boys' – as the teacher might wish, or whether it is a mere imitation of a hit TV show.

Interestingly, the title of the programme seems to suggest that the text is a rather excellent parody, considering the context of the discussion about the story line. While the main title of the programme ('*Speak Out*'), which was in fact suggested by the teacher, embodies rather clearly the teacher's 'youth work' discourse (making young people express their 'voices'), the subtitle (title of the episode, '*Sister Act*'), which was suggested by a student, somehow cleverly – though not necessarily consciously or deliberately – undermines the teacher's political agenda, by implying that the programme is only a comedy (in that it is a reference to the comedy movie starring Whoppi Goldberg). In other words, the semantic tension between the main title (*Speak Out*) and the subtitle (*Sister Act*) of the programme seems to show how the students respond to the teacher's request to 'speak with their own voice'.

Teaching about the potential effects of positive and negative images of black people has conventionally been based on assumptions about 'the power of images', rather than understandings of what people do with stereotypes (Sefton-Green, 1990: 129). In this context, the students may have not felt particularly enthusiastic about the subject in the way the teacher may have wished them to. In this case, the creation of a 'subversive'

image for a female 'offender' seems to be a compromise between the students' wish to avoid the discussion and the teacher's agenda to make them oppose the politically *in*correct image of the 'black male offender'. As such, parody seems to provide a useful way for the students to negotiate the teacher's agenda, considering that its 'critical potential' can still satisfy the teacher. The difficulty, however, is that there is a possibility that one can read a parodic intention in a text where it does not actually exist, and therefore it is hard to draw a fine distinction between parody and imitation (Buckingham, 1998: 69).

Thus far, I have discussed how Carrie as the teacher, who is informed by the youth work discourse, struggles to empower the students both politically and technically within an institutional context where *skills-based training* is the dominant discourse. She also seems to struggle between the fundamentally *authoritarian* teacher's agenda – in the sense that what the teacher wants the students to do is already decided – and the 'student-centred' approach – in the sense that she needs to allow the students to 'do what they want'. This is particularly apparent in terms of the discussion over the *content* of the production.

## 6.4.2. The 'student-centred' pedagogy

While Carrie's teaching can be seen as a struggle to implement the *youth work* discourse within a *skills-based training* approach, particularly through the discussion about the content, her 'student-centred' pedagogy seems to entail little more than asking the students to say something. In contrast to Carrie, John seems to leave decisions about the content of the production much more to the students themselves, rather than trying to make them choose a particular subject matter. He encourages everyone in the group to contribute at least one idea, on the grounds that it is up to the students, rather than the teacher, to make decisions over the content. However, the way in which he gets the students to decide 'their own' content is not unproblematic either, in that he simply makes the students select the majority's favourites and combine them. In this case, the decision about the content seems to become only a matter of selecting something from the range of suggestions that are made. The following extract shows how the teacher makes the students choose topics for their action comedy drama in this way:

[Extract 6-10]

1. John: What we're gonna do now is to find out what it's gonna be about. Everyone is

2. gonna come up with a subject that it might be about. It could be something about

3. family or music, OK? Or it could be something random like dinosaurs or hurricane,

4. yeah?

5. Jed: Some boys are gonna have their party while their parents go out?

6. John: OK, what about a party, yeah? OK, what else? Everyone has to come up with

7. one thing!

8. Kele: Two people went bank robbery and it goes wrong!

9. John: OK, bank robbery.

10. Kele: And a woman gets it.

11. John: OK, what else?

12. Jed: (to Kele) Why a woman gets it?

13. John: OK, what else? Everyone has to say something.

14. Students: (confused voices)

15. John: (picking up other students' suggestions) OK, football …, murder…,

16.  revenge …, OK. (to a student who did not answer yet) What would you wanna

17.  do? What interests you?

18. Dorothy: Music.

19. John: OK, music. (to another student who did not answer yet) What would you

20.  wanna do?

21. Adon: I don't know.

22. John: What's important in your life?

23. Adon: (with laughter) Money.

24. John: Money? All right. It's a good subject to say something about. Umm…

25.  OK, so everyone should vote no more than once and we're gonna get a couple

26.  of these ideas. So, hands up for … Who wants to do a party? (…)


In this extract, the teacher repeatedly asks the students to suggest at least one idea per person about the topic of the production, by saying, 'What else?' (6, 11, 13) or 'Everyone has to say something' (6-7). Emphasising this seemingly democratic, 'one person one suggestion' principle, he writes down what the students suggest, such as 'party' (5), 'bank robbery' (8), 'football' (15), 'murder' (15), 'revenge' (16) 'music' (18) and 'money' (23). Here, the teacher seems to be interested almost only in the fact that he should get every student's voice heard by making other students name more subjects (11, 13). In doing so,

however, the teacher ignores the conversation between the two students (10-12) in which they try to discuss a plausible story line: 'a woman gets it in a bank robbery'. As such, he simply takes a note even when a student appears to say 'something random' (3) only to respond to the teacher's request (19-24). Once the teacher has the students' voice heard in this way, he asks the students to 'vote' (25) for the suggested elements to decide the topic. Then, he announces the result of the vote and says that the subject of the production should include 'bank robbery', 'murder', 'money' and 'revenge', which all received equal votes. [25]

In fact, the decision about the genre of the production, action comedy (which followed the 'vote' for the subject matter), was also made in this way: the students were encouraged to suggest 'their own' ideas, at least one idea per person, and then they were asked to vote for their favourites. The result of the vote showed that 'action' and 'comedy' received equal votes, and therefore, the teacher suggested that they should do a combination of action and comedy, in order to reflect the 'voice' of as many of the students as possible. Likewise, when there were two competing story lines that different students suggested, the teacher proposed that they should take one element from one person and combine it with another element from the other student, in order to accommodate the two stories in one production.

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[25] I did not include the transcripts of the 'vote' situation simply because they were too long.

However, this 'democratic principle' seems to have presented some difficulties in the process of deciding a story line, considering that the students were required to make it a mixture of four different elements (bank robbery, murder, money and revenge). On the other hand, in order to make it as simple as possible so that the production could be done within the limited amount of time, they were also required to make it with a maximum of 3 characters, 3 locations and 20 pictures on the storyboard. Therefore, while there was a dispute over the three characters – whether all of them should be 'baddies' or one of them should be a 'goody' – the reason why the former idea was accepted was that with the latter, it would be difficult to accommodate 'revenge' in the story line. In this way, the students agreed to the following elements of the story: two people carry out a bank robbery, which goes wrong; there should be one stupid character in order to make the drama 'slap-stick' comedy; all of the characters should be 'baddies'; there should be at least one female character; one character should be kicked out of the gang to make room for revenge on the other members of the gang; and one of the gangsters should be killed in the process of revenge.

As such, the story line of the students' production, *For Love and Money*, was decided as follows (see Appendix 3 for the full script of this production, *For Love and Money*): Three gangsters (two men who are brothers and one woman) are planning to rob a bank. The woman is the elder brothers' lover, and then she is kicked out of the gang because the elder brother discovers that she has been having an affair with the younger brother. Once

out of the gang, she becomes a teller in a bank, which happens to be the one the gang

brothers 'hit'. When the gang attacks the bank, the elder brother tells his younger brother

to shoot her once she has handed over money to them. But the younger brother shoots his

own brother instead. The final scene of the drama is then that the two lovers happily leave

the bank with the money.

Thus far, I have mentioned that John's 'student-centred' approach seems to mean that the

teacher gives the students an opportunity to get their 'voice' heard by making them

suggest *any* ideas, select some of them, and then combine the selected ideas. While it

might have been easier for John to make the students work with a given script, considering

that his emphasis was on the training of skills rather than on developing the content, the

'student-centred' approach of the project – 'everything should be decided by the young

people themselves', according to the official document – seemed to oblige him to use this

bizarrely 'democratic' way of decision making.

It is important to remember that this particular version of the 'student-centred' approach is

implemented within the dominant discourse of *skills-based training*, as I have discussed.

Therefore, while the students may be allowed to do 'what they want' in terms of choosing

the content of the production, the focus of the project is on learning *procedures* of pre-

production that they are required to follow before they actually start shooting. As such, the

emphasis was more on working out a treatment, script, storyboard, shot list and logging

sheet *with their own hands* rather than developing the content of the production. Without

being driven by the political agenda (making young people express an 'alternative voice',

as was the case for Carrie), John seemed to concentrate more on the training of skills.

As such, John focused more on teaching *techniques* and *professional norms*, particularly

when the students entered into the processes of production and post-production. The

teacher repeatedly emphasised that the students should learn by heart the instructions

written in the *Production Pack*, for instance, when he was teaching how to operate the

camera:

1. Never leave a camera on a floor, unattended or near the edge of a surface!
2. Be careful never to record over any work on your tape, checking the position of the tape.
3. Check if the camera is secured safely on a stable tripod.
4. Get steady shots by having the zoom as wide as possible, preventing the 'shaky telescope effect'.
5. Use the zoom controls minimally, as there is a tendency to over apply them.
6. To maintain continuity in the edit and prevent the 'jump cut', keep shots of the same object different, by moving the camera at least 45 degrees or more; or changing the shot size sufficiently.
7. Check if the camera is working. Label your tape, then record bars for 1 minute, at the tape's beginning.

These instructions can be divided into three different categories. Firstly, there are basic but important reminders related to *safe handling* of the equipment (1; 3) and of the tape (2; 7). Similar 'tips' that apply to the editing process include 'keeping tapes away from magnetic fields such as television sets and speakers to prevent corruption', which are emphasised by the teacher during filming. Secondly, there are instructions for *techniques* of operating the camera, for instance, to 'get steady shots' (4) or to 'operate the zoom lens' (5). Similar techniques applied to sound include 'keeping the microphone as close as practically possible to the source of the sound' or 'prior to rehearsal, set audio levels with performers talking in a suitable tone and inflection'. Lastly, there are *professional norms*, which are usually applied in television production, for instance, avoiding a jump cut with a '30-degree rule' (6). Television production usually requires camera operators to move the camera slightly more than 30 degrees from the previous camera position when they cut to another shot of the same object, in order not to lose continuity. In relation to this 'rule', the teacher suggested that the students should move the camera at least 45 degrees rather than 30 degrees, perhaps in order that the students would make fewer mistakes. As such, all the instructions are presented as *non-negotiable rules* that the students must follow in television production.

As Lave and Wenger suggest (1991), students (as new comers to communities of practice) get to learn particular knowledge and skills (as a kind of competence recognised in the 'communities of practice') in the process of becoming members of these communities.

While a 'reification' of knowledge and skills to some degree is inevitable and necessary in learning situations in order to give some form to our experience, as Wenger suggests, there is a danger that reification can disconnect learners from the richness of lived experience and thus can detach them from the very practice that it tries to capture (Wenger, 1998: 61). For this reason, learners' 'participation' in the practice, which is of a social nature, is important in order for the learners to negotiate the meaning of the practice. In this respect, it is important to examine whether defining the 'rules' of television production in this way allows the students to negotiate their meaning within the community of practice of media producers.

The first and second kinds of instructions, such as 'tips' for safe handling of equipment and techniques to get good pictures and sound, are rules that the students must follow in *any* television production. Similar rules may be required when students are taught how to type with a word processor, for instance, in order to avoid spelling mistakes. In this case, our participation in the real practice of television production may not be different from the reified instructions presented here. Unlike these, however, the third kind of rule such as the 30-degree rule, which is required in order to avoid a jump cut and to create 'seamlessness', are *not universal rules* but norms to serve *only one* style of editing, namely continuity editing. There are valid alternatives to this *dominant cultural practice* of mainstream cinema and television production, such as jump cutting that Jean-Luc Godard uses to make audiences conscious of the artifice on the screen (Crittenden, 1995:

26) (see below the criticism of the seamless editing). Therefore, the meaning of these techniques should be negotiated by the students' participation in the practice, in relation to the effect of the particular practices in their own programme, and more specifically, in terms of the ways in which they want to communicate with their audience.

However, the teacher here suggests continuity editing, for instance, as a 'rule' to follow by emphasising that the editing should be *invisible* in order to provide the audience with a *seamless*, spatially and temporally coherent narrative. 'Continuity editing tricks the audience', John repeatedly tells the students, so that the audience's attention is not drawn to the way in which the story is told. As such, the brief of the drama project given to the students in the Induction course emphasises this particular practice as a 'rule': the '180-degree rule' in order to maintain spatial continuity (cameras should stay on one side of the imaginary line called the 'axis of action' or the 180-degree line in order to ensure consistency of the spectator's perspective). Temporal continuity (the narrative should follow the chronology) is also emphasised so that  the students are encouraged to use a flashback in order to *naturalise* the shift in time by marking out the 'past' inserted between the flow of the 'present' narrative, when temporal continuity is disrupted.

While this particular editing style is taught in this youth project as a *professional norm*, there are alternatives. One of them is 'montage editing', which Soviet experimental cinema first introduced in the 1920s. It rapidly juxtaposes sets of images taken from

different time or space locations through fast editing, in order to create a third set of images in the audience's mind. Unlike continuity editing, which conceals the process by which a particular meaning is constructed, this alternative editing style reveals the preferred reading imposed by the filmmaker, by *denaturalising* the reality supposedly represented in the film. While this editing style was originally used by Eisenstein to perform a 'revolutionary task', such as presenting the story of the proletariat, it is now widely used in film and television advertisements (Hayward, 1996: 80).

In fact, continuity editing has been criticised as a social practice, which serves to create an ideological effect, in terms of giving the audience the impression of 'reality' by concealing the process by which that particular 'reality' is constructed. For instance, a flashback is commonly used as a *naturalising* device in mainstream film and television in order to offer a seamless, temporally coherent narrative and as such makes the audience believe that what is presented on the screen is *the* reality. Here, the audience is rarely positioned to question *whose subjectivity* or *whose truth* is represented by the 'seamless code'. While the audience may not necessarily be 'brainwashed' by such an ideological effect (see the criticism of the text-centred approach in Chapter 5), the film or television text is produced in such a way as to position the audience as recipients of a 'revealed truth', which is in fact a constructed reality. (Kuhn, 1982: 52)

Considering that continuity editing is based on the logic of a chronological narrative (one event continues 'naturally'), duration in such a style is in fact created by a distortion of real time using 'temporal ellipsis'. A film typically does not include the entire time that a character spends, for instance, 'going into the shower, putting on shoes or frying an egg' (Bordwell & Thompson, 1980: 172). As such, *naturalised* narrative (which forms the basis of the rules taught in this hands-on approach) is actually created by *manipulating* reality – and crucially, by implication, the audience.

In this respect, learning the techniques and norms of television production is not just a matter of learning to use equipment such as cameras or editing suites but rather, as Lave and Wenger suggest, a process of engaging in particular social and cultural practices, which are historically constructed (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 101). Therefore, while the students need to learn that techniques such as continuity editing should be *invisible* to the audience, in order to make the audience concentrate on the narrative rather than the techniques themselves, they also need to learn that such techniques are not *non-negotiable rules* but *negotiable* depending on the purpose of the production. (I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7 in relation to my discussion of the 'writing' aspect of media literacy.)

The problem of the skills-based training approach, however, seems to be that particular techniques and norms used to achieve 'reality effects' are taught as *non-negotiable* rules.

Such rules, including 'pressing the right buttons', for instance, in order to dissolve shots or to add particular sound to a shot, are reinforced by the introduction of a members' test. As such, the 'core skills' required for 'editing' include 'recognising tape formats', 'logging and describing shots', and 'setting time-code for dubbing'. In this respect, the type of learning expected here seems to be what Engestrom terms 'first order learning', in the sense that the focus of learning is limited to the learners' 'appropriation of a certain behavioural model', which is conditioned by 'reward and punishment' (Engestrom, 1994: 15): if the students do not pass the test, they are not allowed to participate in the making of real programmes. In this respect, the pedagogy of the training approach in this youth project seems to be fundamentally *authoritarian*, despite the fact that the teacher tries to make the students 'do what they want' *with their own hands*.

Thus far, I have discussed how the youth work discourse and the 'student-centred' pedagogy might be implemented within the dominance of *skills-based training*, by examining classroom talk taken from two different teachers' classrooms. While Carrie may try to empower the students as critical citizens as well as media producers, there seems to be a danger that her 'voice' as a youth worker, which is regarded as *speaking for* the young people, could become *authoritarian* insofar as she constantly imposes her own agenda. In such a case, parody seems to become a solution, which enables the students to do what the teacher wants them to do but in an enjoyable and perhaps non-committal way. On the surface, John's approach can be seen as more 'student-centred', in the sense that he

does not impose his own agenda but tries to make every student's 'voice' heard. However, his pedagogy does not seem to be fundamentally free from authoritarianism, insofar as it presents the knowledge and skills to be acquired as *non-negotiable* rules. Building on such observations, I would now like to move on to discuss how these two teachers' pedagogic practices might be related to their own knowledge about television production and their institutional positions within the youth project.

## 6.5. Communities of practice:

teacher's knowledge and position in the youth project

As discussed in Chapter 5, teachers are not a homogenous group even when they work in the same institution: they take different roles in relation to different kinds of 'communities of practice' related to their teaching. Considering the complex aims of the project as a new kind of youth work and as a training centre, as described in its official documentation, it can be said that there are at least two different communities of practice that inform the teachers' practice: the communities of television production and of youth work.

While she is often involved in the Induction course as a 'trainer', Carrie works mainly as an 'outreach worker' on the project, recruiting young people from the local area, which includes schools and colleges. Although she had a brief experience of working in the film

industry as a 'runner', she has not been professionally trained in television production. She studied Drama for her first degree and then trained and worked as a youth worker, before she joined the project. Therefore, her knowledge and experience about television production were gained, as she told me in the interview, mostly through the staff training provided in the project, and more importantly, through her own teaching on the Induction course.

Carrie sees her role in the project as a matter of getting local young people, particularly from 'deprived' backgrounds such as people who have dropped out of school, to come to the project not just because it is her official job description but also because she believes that the project should be for deprived people, who cannot afford to attend such courses elsewhere. Such a view is also reflected in how she recruits young people. For instance, Carrie advertises the project in local job centres or supermarkets where, she believes, young people from deprived backgrounds can find out about the courses offered. On the other hand, she also recruits students from local schools and colleges, in order to recruit a broad range of students. As such, she argues that the project should be a kind of *alternative* or *complementary* learning opportunity to school:

[Extract 6-11]

    1. I think this is, in a sense, social education – you bring people from all the different

    2. walks of life together, who would never normally be sitting together, and make

    3. them work together. I feel they might learn something out of that. They should get

4. to know people from different backgrounds. And you know, a lot of social learning

5. [can be done]. 'Team-building', 'confidence-building', 'social interaction', 'youth

6. provision' ... These are all important things. And using camera as a vehicle can be

7. useful to deal with a lot of social issues coming up. And what we give them is a

8. space to work on their own ideas. (…) When I was in another Induction course –it [the

9. students' production] was quite political – umm … [it was a] satirical advert about young

10. people – how they are represented by the media. But John's group produced … umm…

11. (with laughter) something like killing a hamster. So I think there is an influence of the

12. supervisor that does come through the different styles between John's work and my work.

13. Often mine is more, you know, about young people representing themselves. And

14. this one was an MP talking about crime –how young people commit it – and then

15. there are flashbacks – there is a black guy running after a granny, and the MP is

16. saying, "The young person just mugged her!" But actually the guy says, "Oh, here

17. is your wallet – you forgot it!".

Here, Carrie expresses her view of the project as a kind of 'social education' (1), which

may not be the priority in schools. She emphasises that the project can contribute to social

interaction of 'people from different walks of life' by offering an opportunity to meet and

work together (1-5). [26] Her view of media education as a means to empower young people

as critical citizens, who can express their own, 'alternative' views about social issues is

widely shared in the community of youth work. Here, it is thought that 'disadvantaged'

young people will become politicised if they are given a medium to communicate their

'voice'. As such, she encourages young people to make a programme with a 'satirical'

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[26] This view of media education as a kind of social education was also expressed by a teacher in the school that I observed, although it was seen more as a 'side effect'. I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7.

nature (9) such as subverting the stereotyping of young black males as criminals (13-17), as she tried to do with the students for the interview project that I observed.

*In practice*, however, there is a possibility that the teacher will simply *speak for* the young people, as I discussed earlier. Simply mixing up people from different walks of life, who may have different social interests, as though they are all equal, does not necessarily guarantee that they will share the same perspectives, as the teacher might like. (See Chapter 1 for my criticism of critical pedagogy.) By neglecting the potential differences of power within the classroom, due to a *romanticised* view of young people as a fundamentally *homogenous* group, who can easily reach an agreement about the issues they are asked to deal with, the youth work discourse tends to underestimate the difficulties for young people in negotiating *their own way* of representing young people themselves.

These concerns of Carrie, however, are marginalised by the dominance of the *skills-based training* approach. In this respect, it is the community of television production, *in principle*, which the teachers are required to lead their students towards. Reflecting this, most staff members who work as 'trainers' or 'production supervisors' on the courses and workshops (as they are called in this youth project) are initially trained in the area of film and television production. For example, John also did his degree in Film Studies and trained in film production, and continues to work as a freelance cinematographer. As the

person who was most deeply involved in structuring and restructuring the training system,

John defines the approach of the project as 'craft-based education', which aims to enable

young people to 'move up the levels of skills' identified in each level of the training, as he

told me in the interview. Therefore, he views the project mainly as a training centre,

although he admits that the teachers need to deal with the issues which occur in more

traditional types of youth centre (which may focus on the emotional and social aspects of

young people's lives), insofar as they work with young people rather than adults. Likewise,

Catherine, the managing director, forcefully defines the aim of the project:

[Extract 6-12]

1. It's not a youth centre – it's not a place for young people just to come and be. This is
2. especially for young people to come and train, and the training is making
3. programmes. It's to give young people opportunities to train by doing. It's
4. HANDS-ON training.

Here, Catherine confirms that hands-on training is the official aim of the project, and

therefore effectively marginalises the youth work discourse, by emphasising that the

project is not a place for young people 'just to come and be' (1) or to hang around. This

official training discourse became more dominant, subsequent to my research, as I

mentioned earlier, and perhaps for this reason, Carrie left the project to take a job as a

youth worker in another organisation.

How did the students perceive this training approach, and what did they think they learned from this project? In fact, the students seemed to have enjoyed their first hands-on experience:

[Extract 6-13]

1. Amilee: Acting in front of the camera, you know, I haven't done that before. Also,
2.  now I know a bit about directing.
3. Rose: It's interesting because you get to use things and do something that you never
4.  do normally.
5. Amanda: Yes, it gives you opportunities to do so much.
6. Joy: Yeah, I think it's pretty interesting. I think it's an experience for me anyway.
7.  I've never used the camera before or learned about sound or lighting or anything.
8. HS: So, what was actually new to you?
9. Joy: Everything. The new thing was really the technical side like using the camera. I
10.  mean I know everything about like theoretical thing or acting or theory bit, but
11.  this is very different. (…) In school, you write essays but you just have
12.  discussions about things.
13.  Other students: Yeah!
14.  Dorothy: Yeah, about what other people do. But you'll never get to do it yourself.
15.  That's a problem mostly, but that's education.
16.  All: (laughter)

As the above extract suggests, the most enjoyable thing for the students seems to be the fact that they had a hands-on experience of television production, which they have 'never done before' (1, 3-4, 7). What excited them seems to be the fact that they were making a

programme with their own hands – 'do it yourself' (14) – rather than 'discussing' (12) what 'others do' (14). The students compare this hands-on learning with their media learning in school, such as an A-level Media Studies course (in Rose's and Joy's cases): the opportunity that they get in this project can be complementary to their more theoretical learning in school (10-15). In this respect, the students seem to find it useful to learn that there are certain rules that *must* be learned in any television production, such as safe handing of the equipment and basic techniques to get pictures and sound, because all of these experiences are new to them.

While these students who were taking part in the Induction course seemed to find it meaningful to learn these rules of television production, others who may have been there much longer raised some questions about the training approach. For instance, the record of a 'members' meeting' reads that 'some people do not like the idea of a test' and instead that they want to be evaluated in a less mechanistic way, for instance, 'based on what they made' other than in a 'test' situation. While the tests were introduced to help the students 'move up their levels of skills' (and also to 'monitor their progress', as John told me), the students did not seem to feel that the tests were particularly useful in terms of developing the quality of their production, insofar as the emphasis was almost entirely on behavioural principles.

Other significant complaints made include the problem with the lack of the students' own space such as a cafeteria and a members' own room. As I discussed in Chapter 4, perhaps due to the lack of the space in the building there was no separate space where the members could meet up and discuss ideas on their own. Therefore, the students shared the production office, which was also used as the staff office. While this might be justified in terms of the principle that the staff and the students have 'equal' status, it resulted in inefficiency, at least in terms of the level of noise. In this respect, the students argued that this might be the main reason why many people did not come back to the project.

In summary, the students seem to appreciate the training offered in the project, particularly considering that, to many of them, it is their first hands-on experience and thus it gives them a sense of achievement from doing something on their own (rather than discussing what others do). On the other hand, there seems to be a gap between the views of the teachers and the students in that the students seem to want to learn about television production in a more flexible way (rather than the *narrowly defined skills* being tested) and to build their own community. In this respect, many ideas suggested in the records of members' meetings, such as 'organising social evenings for new and old members' or 'publishing a regular newsletter', seem to show the students' efforts to try to *renegotiate* the kind of competence that is required for them to gain as members of the project (which is defined by the training discourse) in the light of *their own experience* of becoming members themselves.

## 6. 6. Conclusion

In this chapter, by analysing classroom talk and the students' productions as well as the official documents and handouts given to the students, and based on my observations of the chosen youth media project, I discussed the issues raised by a 'hands-on' approach to media education. In doing so, I explained that while there are competing aims ('youth work' and 'training'), the dominant approach is that of *skills-based training*, which prioritises learning of techniques, procedural knowledge, professional norms and specialist terminology, which are all presented as fundamentally *non-negotiable rules* and as transferable skills that can be applicable to *any* kinds of television production. Based on my observations of the classroom practices of the two teachers whose educational emphases and institutional positions were different, I also discussed how its professed 'student-centred' pedagogy is to some extent at odds with the two competing aims of the project (youth work and training).

As such, I found out that while the teacher informed by the 'youth work' discourse might have tried empower young people as *critical citizens*, her approach was problematic in that she tended to *speak for* the young people by expecting them to deal with social issues in particular ways. On the other hand, while the teacher informed by the training discourse

might have tried to empower young people as *media producers*, there seemed to be a danger that this could fall into a mere technicism by focusing almost entirely on the behavioural performance of narrowly defined skills. In both cases, the students were required to follow fundamentally *non-negotiable* political perspectives (in the youth work approach) or skills (in the training approach).

Interestingly, however, the students seemed to find their own ways to negotiate with the given approaches imposed by the teachers, in order to construct their own 'learning curriculum' out of the 'teaching curriculum'. Parody seemed to provide the students with a useful way to play the teacher's game, responding to the teacher's political agenda which attempted to make them deal with social issues in particular ways, while at the same time meeting their own needs (making something *with their own hands*) from the training provided. While there was a positive perception of the students on the training offered in the Induction course insofar as it provided them with their first hands-on experience of television production (which may be rarely obtained in school), there is a negative perception of the tests of narrowly defined skills, which the students seem to want to change.

The problems entailed in training students in narrowly defined skills, which I discussed in this chapter, raise an important question about the relationship between the theoretical and practical aspects of media education (or between criticism and production). On the other

hand, the issue of the pedagogic process of *group* production seems to need to be

examined, particularly in relation to how individual students might learn together in a

group and what might be the role of the teacher in the process. I shall explore these issues

in the next chapter, examining what it means to empower students both as critical readers

and as creative producers.

# Chapter 7.

# Becoming media literate:

# issues of 'empowerment' in media education

## 7.1.    Introduction

I have discussed in the two previous chapters how different approaches to media education aimed at the 'empowerment' of students might be implemented and what kind of issues might be raised in the classroom. While a critical analysis approach aims to empower students as media *critics*, due to its narrow emphasis on the ideological dimensions of the media, the 'official critical discourse' seems to limit the ways in which students explore how they actually make sense of and use the media in their own lives (see Chapter 5). While there are occasions in which both students and teachers may speak their 'personal discourse' about the media as audiences, it seems that, ultimately, they are not free from their *discursive* positions as the student and the teacher, which are informed both by the 'official critical discourse' and by the institutional relations between teacher and student within the school context. In this case, there seems to be little space for the students to *renegotiate* the kind of competence that they are required to gain to become media critics.

The 'hands-on' approach to media education – which is expected to empower students by providing more space for them to express 'their own voice' through media production – also has its own limits (see Chapter 6). While this approach, focusing on the writing side of the media (compared to the focus of the critical analysis approach on the reading side), can be seen as more 'student-centred' in terms of its professed aim of enabling the students to do 'what they want', problems are raised particularly about what is considered to be the students' own voice or what they want and how the teacher may recognise these things in order to help the students to make their own productions. Such issues are equally, although slightly differently, raised in two alternative, hands-on approaches: the 'youth work' approach and the 'training' approach. While the teacher informed by the youth work approach claims simply to *speak for* the young people in the hope of empowering them as *critical citizens*, the teacher informed by the training approach almost ignores the content of the production due to a narrow definition of the skills involved in media production. In both cases, the kind of competence that the teacher tries to teach, whether it is the 'critical voice' of the youth or the 'rules' of television production, seems to be presented as *non-negotiable*.

Following my discussion of the *negotiability* of knowledge in the two previous chapters, I want to explore in this chapter, whether and how such problems can be resolved when the different approaches come together: how media education can empower students *both* as critical readers and creative writers, and how it can function as a form of social education.

While this question ultimately leads on to the bigger question of what we mean by 'media literacy', it can be subdivided into three separate, although interrelated, issues: firstly, the relation between reading and writing or criticism and production in media education; secondly, the issue of learning in a group, particularly when the students have diverse knowledge and skills about the media; and lastly, the teacher's position and knowledge in relation to the diverse 'communities of practice' with which they engage.

While I deliberately discussed the different approaches to media education in separate contexts in the two previous chapters, in order to highlight the issues of reading (criticism) and writing (production) of the media, the relation between the two aspects remained a key issue. Clearly, there is a danger that students may simply reproduce the official critical discourse and the rules of media production, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, if the knowledge and skills are presented as *non-negotiable*. The question is then how we can make the students use their own critical voice about the media both as critics and as producers, in the sense that they can *renegotiate* the terms of the critical discourse. If we believe that critical discourse (rather than *the* official critical discourse as its particular version) can provide the basis for students to explore the relationship between the subjective and the social (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994: 106) and that media production can be more than training in *narrowly defined* technical skills but about teaching media literacy in a broader sense (Stafford, 1995: 51), this is an important question.

The second issue raised in the previous chapter is how media education can function as a form of social education or, in other words, how students can be empowered in the sense that they can express their 'voice' and develop their confidence by making their own productions, particularly in a group. While it has been argued that students can develop their 'group identity' and confidence by working in groups in order to make media productions, there has been little discussion about how this might happen (with the exception of Buckingham *et al*, 1995). On the other hand, the issue of working in groups becomes complicated, particularly when we consider that students bring different levels of knowledge and skills. The idea of learning in a group has been supported by the Vygotskyan perspective on learning, particularly by the argument that students can learn from more capable peers rather than only from adults. However, its almost exclusive emphasis on learning as a *cognitive* process may not explain how individual students' *emotional* and *social* confidence can actually develop as a result of working with peers, who have more *or* less knowledge, and within the power relationships that are inherent in the classroom context (see Chapter 3). Therefore, I would like to explore both how students with diverse background knowledge about the media can actually come to learn together and what the teacher's role can be in seeking to build their confidence.

The last question that this chapter will discuss is about the teachers' positions and knowledge in relation to the various 'communities of practice' – such as those of

academic Media Studies, of media production and of the institution where they teach –
that are relevant to media education. As I have discussed in the two previous chapters,
teachers' classroom practices need to be considered both in relation to their *discursive*
positions, which are informed by the dominant discourses about media teaching, and by
their institutional positions within the particular contexts of the school or the youth project.
This becomes a key issue particularly in relation to the first question of this chapter,
because the relation between reading and writing in media learning cannot be understood
without considering what kinds of knowledge and skills teachers might be able to offer to
students and whether and how such knowledge and skills could be presented as *negotiable*.
This is particularly true if we want to enable students to *renegotiate* the kinds of
competence that they need to gain in order to become media critics and producers in their
own ways.

In order to explore these issues (the relationship between reading and writing in media
education; the pedagogy of group production; and the negotiability of knowledge), I went
back to the school where I conducted the first study discussed in Chapter 5. In the unit of
work described here, the school worked together with a local youth media arts centre in
order to provide what the teachers saw as a more 'professional' environment for the
students' production. The specific project given to the students was to make in small
groups a gangster film trailer, which was part of their study of film genres, one of the
topics included on the Media Studies syllabus that the school was following. As defined in

the overall aims of the syllabus, the students were required to demonstrate, through this project, a 'critical, analytical and conceptual understanding' of the gangster film genre and to 'engage with media technology in inventive and imaginative ways' (OCR, 1999: 2). Given this aim of the project, I wanted to explore how the students might be taught to become critical readers *and* writers of the particular film genre.

In addition, and given that the teachers wanted to use this group project as an opportunity to develop the students' 'social and communication skills', particularly by making students who did not normally work or sit together work in the same group, I thought that this project would be a good context in which to explore my second question. In fact, the teachers (Judy and Susan) divided the students into three small groups, with five students in each group, taking account of the individual students' academic ability, 'personality', gender and overall attendance, all of which I shall discuss in more detail later in this chapter. In this respect, then, I wanted to explore how students with diverse background knowledge about the media work together in groups to become media producers, and if and how they develop their social and communicative skills when they have to reach a compromise between different ideas.

Lastly, I thought this project would be a good site to explore how different *teachers* with diverse knowledge about the media and different positions on media education might work together (see Chapter 4 for the discussion of the context of this case study).

Although I observed the other two groups' work processes and collected relevant data in order to compare them with my focus group (Group A) (I shall discuss the reason why I chose this group later), having chosen one of the three groups as my focus group, I conducted intensive observations during the entire period of production. The three groups were as follows:

Group A: Ben, Jake, Jamey, *Kat* and *Kalee* (*R.I.P.*)

Group B: *Elisa*, *Florens*, Jered, Jorden and Mac (*Passengers*)

Group C: Arnie, *Kelley*, Matte, Maron and Stan (*The Extreme Objective*)

* *Italics*: female students; in brackets: titles of the trailers

## 7.2.    Becoming 'critical readers'/'creative writers'

One of the key questions underlying my discussions in the two previous chapters is what we mean by the critical readers and media producers that we aim to empower the students to be. In order to explore this question, I examined whether and how the discourses that inform the teachers' classroom practices might allow the students to *renegotiate* the kind of competence required to become critics and producers. The same question is applied to this part of the chapter: how are the students taught about the gangster film genre, in order that they may become both critical readers and creative producers of a film genre? Or, to

put it more precisely, how can the critical reading of the genre as a whole (genre criticism) be related to the students' production?

In my observation, the actual project of making a gangster film trailer was preceded by a number of viewing sessions in which classic gangster films of the 1930s such as *Little Caesar*, *The Public Enemy*, and *Scarface* as well as some modern gangster films such as the remake of *Scarface* and *Goodfellas* were analysed, via a focus on the conventions of the genre. *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* – which was released as a video at the time of the study – was also shown in order to look at how such conventions can be related to this new British gangster film, considering that the setting of the students' productions was going to be in London. Complementary to this viewing was a reading of an extract from John Gabree's *Gangsters: From Little Caesar to the Godfather*, which discusses how the classic gangster films can be analysed in terms of iconography, such as the characters, dress codes, the urban setting and the tools of the trade (cars, guns and telephones); how they can be read as portrayal of the reality of the world during the Prohibition era; and how modern gangster films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Godfather* can be seen both as a conservation of and an innovation in the traditions of the classic gangster film.

Building on such viewing of and reading about gangster films, the concept of genre was introduced. The particular texts that the students read in relation to genre theory included

an extract from *The Cinema Book* (Cook, 1985) and the definition of genre from *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994) Such readings suggest that while genres can be understood as 'sets of conventions', which run across 'visual imagery, plot, character, setting, narrative, music and stars', such generic principles are constantly altered and adapted by the industry (which responds to the introduction of new technologies and the changing expectations of the audience). Drawing on these readings, Susan, the teacher, explains how the notion of genre can be used by three different groups of people – writers/directors, industry and audience – as follows:

[Extract 7-1]

1. Susan: We've talked about gangster films – the conventions of gangster films. And I
2. want you to open it up a bit more broadly to look at what the idea around genre
3. means. (…) What does the word, 'genre' mean?
4. Stan: Category.
5. Susan: Category, OK. Why is it useful to have this idea?
6. Stan: It helps you to understand a film before we actually go and see it. It could
7. give you a brief idea about what you expect.
8. Susan: Right, so it's something about your expectation. That's a good point because
9. it's about audience's point of view – what the audience is doing when they go
10. to see a film. What about from the industry's point of view? What about the
11. point of view from the institution of film making?
12. Jake: They try and test things …
13. Susan: They've got tried and tested the formula that worked. Good. What about
14. the people who come in between all that – the people who actually make
15. films? Apart from the institution – sort of studios or distributors or whoever

16.    who are involved in the money side of filmmaking. What about people who

17.    are from the more creative side of filmmaking, if you're a writer or a director,

18.    why might you be interested in the idea of genre or what might you do with

19.    the idea of genre? Go back to the idea of the expectations of the audience. (…)

20.    Mac: You might be watching, thinking if this film is as good as others.

21.    Susan: Right, so their bigger framework might be actually about other films

22.    within that genre and how this individual film that you're watching matches

23.    up to other films you've seen. Now let's go back to our writer or director.

24.    What about that person, then? What might they be trying to do, working

25.    within the genre?

26.    Mac: The conventions of …

27.    Susan: Right, if you're in possibly, the more creative side of the filmmaking industry,

28.    one of your main interests may be to do with "OK, what's been before?",

29.    "Who's made films within that genre?", "What can I do?", "How can my film

30.    fit into that genre but also give a bit of stamp of originality, maybe, or

31.    individuality?" rather than "This is just another gangster film or sci-fi or

32.    whatever." So, it's almost kind of reverse in a way. We've got a kind of

33.    'writer' or filmmaker at the front, who's interested in working in a particular

34.    genre, from a point of view of their kind of artistic invention and what they

35.    do with the film artistically and what they do with it creatively, what they do

36.    to try and say "Look at my film. It's within this genre but this is what I've

37.    done slightly differently." And you've got the industry. They need to be

38.    assured that your film is going to sell. (…) And you've got the audience as

39.    well. In a way it's a kind of triangle relationship going on between all those

40.    three areas that the industry – the studios and distributors and marketing

41.    people – is trying to take account of the audience's point of view because they

42.    want the film to sell. Filmmakers and writers are interested in the audience as

43.    well because they want to communicate something with their audience.

Starting with the basic definition of genre as 'category' (4-5), the teacher encourages the students to think about how this concept may be used by three different groups involved in the production and consumption of films: 'audience', 'industry' and 'creative filmmakers' (8-11; 13-19). Picking up the students' responses, Susan suggests that genres are to do with these three parties' interests: audiences bring their 'expectations' when they go to see a film (6-8); the industry wants to 'sell films' which can satisfy the audiences' expectations (12-13; 40-42); and writers or directors want to communicate 'something slightly different' based on the audience's expectations (27-32; 42-43).

Given that the assignment of making a gangster film trailer is informed by the theoretical understanding of genre, it seems problematic that the notion of genre here is ultimately presented as a 'formula' (13) – in other words, as a *fixed set of recognisable textual conventions*. Clearly, the notion of genres as 'codes and conventions' shared among audience, industry and creative filmmakers, particularly in the case of Hollywood narrative films (e.g., Neale, 1980) takes account of the way in which genres change and evolve over time (as I discussed earlier in relation to how the students studied the concept), and thus moves well beyond earlier theorists' notion of genres as *fixed* sets of conventions (e.g. Warshow, 1970). However, such a notion of genres as 'social institutions', as Ryall suggests (Ryall, 1998: 328), which implies a 'bond or a contract between producers and audience relating to the significance and meaning of what was on the screen' is

fundamentally based on a notion of the audience as a 'mass audience', whose expectations

about and readings of a film text are regarded as more or less the same.

In the light of such an understanding, Susan emphasises that creative filmmakers such as

writers or directors work with the idea of genre in order to 'match up to other films' (22)

within the same genre and so to meet the 'expectations of their audience' (19), but with 'a

bit of stamp of originality or individuality' (30-31) and their 'artistic invention' (34). In

this account, it is suggested that writers or directors try to fit their own films into *given*

*textual structures* only with 'slight differences' so that audiences are still able to recognise

them as being within the given genre. Such a notion of genre is based on what Altman

terms 'neutral textual structures' (Altman, 1999: 101). This notion of genre does not take

into account how different audiences might read a film text differently and thus construct

their own notion of genre in negotiation with the diverse discourses provided by producers,

exhibitors, critics and other audiences.

It is problematic that this *text-centred* notion of genres is effectively reinforced by the

kinds of practical tasks typically given to students. Students are required to demonstrate

their understanding about the ways in which the gangster film genre works, while at the

same time they need to be seen as critical about the genre. As such, the students are

required to produce what Buckingham terms 'the impossible text' – the text which

encodes oppositional content within a dominant form (1998: 68). In this case, the students

seem effectively to be required to work with a *fixed* notion of genres as 'sets of

conventions', perhaps because this appears to make their task easier to undertake.

Nevertheless, the view of genres as *given textual structures* rather than *negotiated*

*constructions* can limit the ways in which they *as writers* can construct their own

productions based on what the gangster film genre might mean to *themselves as audiences*.

This is quite similar to how the students are required to work with the narrowly defined,

ideological dimension of women's magazines, in order to do a critical analysis of the

media (see Chapter 5).


Given that the text-centred notion of genre basically makes the students work with the

fixed notion of the gangster film genre as a set of conventions (such as iconography), it is

interesting to see how 'the impossible text' can *in practice* become 'the inevitable text'. In

fact, all three groups of students that I observed came up with fairly similar plots for their

productions: as I shall describe below, all of them decided to keep the narrative

conventions such as the 'rise and fall' narrative and the visual codes such as 'guns, cars

and drugs', while they chose to challenge the conventional representation of female

characters by 'giving them a gangster status', as they said, rather than just portraying them

as 'mothers, wives and girlfriends of male gangsters'. [27] (See Appendix 4 for the details of

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[27] The portrayals of female characters in gangster films predominantly as 'mothers, wives and girlfriends', at least in the classic gangster films in the 1930s, have characterised the genre as predominantly male-oriented.

the plots of the three groups' productions. See also Appendix 5 for the selection of the

shots.)

In the case and opinion of Group C, who produced *The Extreme Objective*, the 'power' of

the female character as the 'hidden mastermind' of the new gang is indicated by the 'stain

of lipstick on a cigarette' shown in the last shot of the trailer (C-9 in the Appendix 5). In

Group B's trailer, *Passengers*, the power of 'Senese', a female gangster boss, is implied in

the scene where she collects money from her henchman 'Junk' and hands over a bag of

drugs for him to sell (B-3 in the Appendix 5). Lastly, in Group A's *R.I.P.*, which is my

focus group's trailer, the four members of the new gangster group (two females and two

males) are shown firstly in separate individual shots (A-4, A-5, A-6 and A-7 in the

Appendix 5), and then all walking together in one shot (A-8 in the Appendix 5). There is

also a shot in this trailer where one female gangster is wearing lipstick as she is glancing

at a male character's (implied as her lover's) half-naked body in a mirror (A-18 in the

Appendix 5). Although there was clearly a danger that it could still be seen as a

continuation of the male gaze, the students argued that this shot was intended to 'reverse

the male gaze at the female's body', which was identified as one of the conventions of

classic gangster films.

It seems that the striking similarity between the three groups' plots in terms of creating

'powerful female gangsters' also needs to be considered in relation to the social context of

the classroom. (See Chapter 3 for the discussion of the sociocultural perspective on learning.) Considering that the productions were done in mixed-gender groups and that female teachers (Susan and Claire) supervised them, it hardly seems surprising that the students might have wanted to challenge the male-dominated genre convention by creating powerful female gangsters, at least in order to impress their female teachers and, more practically, to create roles for the female students in terms of the cast for their productions. [28] The question is, then, whether and/or to what extent we can take the fact that the students created 'powerful female gangsters' as evidence that they are 'critical' of the existing gangster film genre.

Another issue I want to consider is to do with how far the students' productions can be seen as 'creative' or 'original', given that they are required to work within the narrative conventions of the gangster film genre such as the 'rise and fall' narrative (which they studied in the classroom). In this respect, it is interesting that two of the groups, including my focus group, decided to start their trailers with a funeral scene (A-1, C-3 and C-4 in the Appendix 5), in order to indicate the 'rise of a new gangster group'. This caused (in Claire's words) 'some bad feelings' between the two groups in the debriefing session, particularly over whose idea it was originally, because they felt that the effect of this particular scene in the trailer in terms of constructing the narrative convention (the rise

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[28] Similarly, Dorothy, a female student in the drama project discussed in Chapter 6 argued that at least one among three characters should be a woman, considering that half the members of the group were girls.

and fall of a new gangster) was more or less the same (although the actual meaning of the funeral in the entire film in each group's production might be slightly different).

In the case of my group (Group A), the funeral scene provides the motivation for the 'rise of new gangsters'. Four cousins get to meet at the funeral of their cousin, 'Martin', who was killed by an established gangster, 'Vincent'. They become gangsters in order to revenge Mac's death. Likewise, the funeral scene in Group C's trailer, *The Extreme Objective* indicates 'the rise of a new gangster', who is not yet known to the established gangster group ('Don Ferrerro', the mastermind of the established gangster group was killed in mysterious circumstances. The identity of the new gangster, who is known as 'Mr. Man' and who killed 'Don Ferrerro', is revealed in the end of the film). Given that the students were required to demonstrate their understanding of the narrative conventions of the gangster film genre by doing so, it hardly seems to be a mere coincidence that both groups used a funeral scene as an indicator of the rise of a new gangster.

Interestingly, Group B – whose trailer, *Passengers*, did not include the funeral scene – was not caught up in the other two groups' dispute over originality and therefore, their plan was regarded as the most original. Their attempt to make a more modern gangster film by depicting a 'computer fraud' alongside 'drug dealers' was regarded both by the students themselves and by the other groups and the teachers as the source of their originality. (See this group's plot in the Appendix 4.) Nevertheless, their attempt to try to focus on the four

main characters' love/betrayal relationships was seen by the other groups and the teachers as 'too much diversion from gangster film conventions' (because it does not show enough 'organised crime') rather than as evidence of their originality in exploring the private aspect of the gangsters' lives, as is now seen in the recent hit television series, *The Sopranos* or the film, *Analyse This*.

Thus far, I have discussed how the critical reading of gangster films (as a case study of genre criticism) is fundamentally based on a notion of genre as *textual structures* rather than *negotiated construction*. I have also noted how the given task for the students requires them to produce what Buckingham terms 'the impossible text', in that they are required to demonstrate their understanding of conventions of the genre but at the same time be overtly critical within the text itself. Considering that the critical reading approach to the gangster film genre effectively limits the ways in which the students could make their productions critically and originally, 'the impossible text' somehow becomes 'the inevitable text'.

In this respect, it is interesting that my focus group students decided to 'keep the plot simpler' to the extent that they could claim to be demonstrating their critical understanding of the genre, but to make their trailer 'look better' than other groups' productions in order to claim their originality in terms of the *style* of the trailer. It appeared, particularly after the debriefing session, that they found it difficult to claim

originality solely by challenging the conventional representation of gender relationships by creating two female gangsters (who were given 'equal status' with male peers). In this case, it seems that the students wanted to express their critical understanding and originality rather separately: critical understanding via *content* and originality via a visual *form*. The question is, then, how the students might learn to express their ideas using audio-visual languages more originally and creatively. This more practical aspect of the relationship between reading and writing is further complicated when we consider the fact that the individual students in a group have different levels of prior knowledge and skills in media production. I shall discuss this issue in the next part of the chapter.

## 7.3. Learning to 'write' in a group

As I discussed in Chapter 2, many advocates of media education have supported the idea of *group production*. Here, media education is viewed as a kind of social education which aims to develop students' 'social and communication skills' and 'group identity' through working with other people, as well to build their 'confidence' by allowing them to make their own production (see also my discussion of the youth work approach in Chapter 6). While these social education aims may not have been the major concern of the gangster film trailer project discussed in this chapter, they were regarded as a kind of 'side effect', which could be achieved by making the students work in small groups.

The teachers deliberately made students who usually did not work or sit together in the classroom work together in the same group. As Susan told me in the following extract from the interview, she and Judy formed the three groups (before Judy had left for her maternity leave), bearing in mind each student's academic ability, gender, personality and overall attendance, rather than permitting existing friendship groups:

[Extract 7-2]

1. Susan: It's interesting because the trailers are really the products of the groups they

2. came from. I mean, really, the identity of the group is really kind of stamped in

3. their trailers, which I think is fascinating. You know, Arnie and Stan and Maron

4. made that kind of classic gangster – very, kind of masculine sort of thing.

5. HS: Yeah, and there was only one girl in the group [Kelley].

6. Susan: Yeah, it was difficult. I mean, Claire and I talked to Kelley at parents evening

7. about the fact that we felt that she handled them [the boys] very, very well. You

8. know, I wanted Jorden and Arnie to be split up. I wanted Arnie to learn how to

9. work by himself. And I think it was fantastic because Arnie really took the

10. leading role in his group. I think he started to see himself as more of an

11. individual in the whole class rather than just somebody who was bent to Jorden

12. all the time, which is a way that he has been doing before.

13. HS: And Matte and Jake as well?

14. Susan: Splitting Matte and Jake was similarly …, yeah. I mean I think they

15. have a similar way of behaving and similar kind of thinking.

16. HS: I think they're playing in the same band. Is that right?

17. Susan: Yeah, they're in the same band. I mean there is a lot in common between

18. them, but I felt that I wanted them – their expertise shared around. And also

19.    for them to have to think a bit about a different way by working with different

20.    people. I think, maybe, I've been thinking about it so I probably decided

21.    [how to split these people]. We [Susan and Judy] looked at quite strong

22.    personalities in the group and wanted them split up. We didn't want them to

23.    end up in a particular area. I suppose my perception was maybe a bit … You

24.    know, you've got sort of Jorden and Arnie, Matte, Jake and Mac split up.

25.    And there was a business of spreading the girls out. I think as far as the girls

26.    were concerned, I think I felt that – I was concerned about something like

27.    Kalee's confidence. And I wanted her to feel confident with the people that

28.    she was working with. And then, it struck me that Jake often made quite

29.    provocative and challenging statements about things. And I think Kalee is

30.    one of the persons in the room who handled him very well. I remember last

31.    term we talked about sexuality, and I felt that Jake and Kalee had quite

32.    similar ways of dealing with things and they were quite mature compared

33.    with the rest of the group. So, I think I kind of felt that Jake and Kalee could

34.    complement each other from that point of view.

As Susan explains here, there seem to be two broad aims underlying the idea of group production: 'personal development' and 'learning from/with others'. These are reflected in the ways in which the teachers 'spread out' the students. Firstly, they spread out the students with 'quite strong personalities' (21-22) – the people who are seen as 'always bent to' their friends (8-12) – and 'the girls' (25) – who are outnumbered by the boys – in order to develop their social and communication skills and their confidence. Secondly, the teachers spread out the students with 'expertise' (18) such as Jake and Matte, in order to allow other students to 'share' such expertise. The question is then how these two aims –

'personal development' and 'learning from/with others' – as the rationale for group

production can work in the actual situation.

In fact, these two aims seem to be difficult to consider separately in the group process,

insofar as individual students' 'confidence', for instance, may grow only when they feel

that they have successfully contributed to the group with their own knowledge or skills. In

this respect, it seems that Susan's comments about the individual students' personal

development – for instance, her view that Arnie somehow learned how to work with

people other than his best mate by taking a 'leading role in his group (Group C)' (rather

than being 'bent to his mate, Jorden all the time' (11-12) – also needs to be explained in

relation to how this student actually came to learn more about media production

specifically.

In this respect, Susan's comment on Kelley's 'social skill' (6-7) in the above extract raises

an important issue. Considering that Kelley was the only female student in her group

(Group C), Susan and Claire, as female teachers, seemed to be slightly worried about her

position in the group. While it might have been ideal to have a balance between the

number of male and female students, it was inevitable that one of the three small groups

would end up with only one girl among the five members because there were only five

girls among the whole group of fifteen students. In this context, Kelley was the one who

had to work in the predominantly male group, and therefore the other female students

often 'felt sorry for her'. [29]

Under such circumstances, Kelley managed to convince her male peers of the need to

challenge the conventional representation of female characters in the classic gangster films

by creating a 'powerful female top-dog' in their trailer as the group described. In this case,

the female teachers seemed to be pleased with the fact that Kelley 'handled the boys very

well' (6-7), considering that she was able to use the critical discourse about representation

– in relation to the conventional portrayal of women in classic gangster films – in order to

negotiate her own position and role in the predominantly male group. In this respect, it is

difficult to know whether the critical discourse used here as *grounds for negotiation*

actually contributed to making the group become more critical, or whether it was used

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[29] In fact, this lack of balance in terms of gender was the reason why I did not choose Group C as my focus group. While Group B was considered as my focus group in the light of the fact that there were two girls among five members of the group (just like Group A), it did not have the similar degree of balance in terms of the members' personality, as there were four students with very 'strong personalities', as Susan told me in the interview, and one with a 'less strong personality'. Jered, who was described as the one with a 'less strong personality' was one of the two Asian students in the whole group, and was very shy and quiet, unlike another Asian student Maron, who got on very well with the other students. In fact, for personal reasons Jered was absent for the first two sessions of the pre-production stage and therefore the other four students of his group had to decide the plot without him. Interestingly, their plot was about four people, who were loosely linked to each other around one particular gang and, for personal reasons, had reasons to want to kill each other, but then happened to kill a stranger in a cross-fire. Jered, who was absent when the group was discussing the plot, had to take up the role of the stranger, who did not have much of a character. While this plot rather clearly reflected the group dynamics and therefore it might be worth examining, it was not my intention to focus on the group dynamics on its own in this case study. Therefore, I chose Group A, which had a balance both in terms of gender and of personality, as my focus group.

only *rhetorically* in this local power struggle in the predominantly male group.

Nevertheless, as this example reveals, the question of personal development cannot be considered separately from the knowledge about media on which individual students draw in order to negotiate their own ideas in their groups.

In this respect, I would like to discuss how Kalee and Jake in my focus group (Group A), negotiated their own ideas and what kind of issues are raised both in terms of 'personal development' and 'learning from/with others' in media production. As Susan explains in the above extract, the teacher expected Kalee to be able to 'develop her confidence' (27) by being able to 'handle' Jake, who was seen as one of the 'strong personalities' (21-22); and Jake to be able to 'develop his social skills' by working with people other than his best mate, Matte (14-15). As I shall discuss below, apart from such concerns with personal development, the teacher also seems to have expected that Kalee and other members of the group could learn somehow from Jake in terms of what she calls his 'expertise' (18).

According to the subject review records written by the teachers (Susan and Claire), Jake is described as a 'critical, sharp, enthusiastic student who is an asset to group and class work as well as performing at a high standard individually', while Kalee is said to 'bring a fresh outlook to class discussions' but to 'need to build her confidence to believe this'. The records also show that Jake is expected to have Grade A in his A-level examination, whereas Kalee and other members in the group are expected to have Grade C or D,

considering that they 'need to learn to use 'key terms' and to 'comment in more detail' on the media text they analyse'. [30] In this respect, it seems that the teachers wanted Kalee in particular, who was regarded as having an equally 'mature' and 'fresh outlook' as Jake, to become more 'articulate', for instance, by using more academic terms, perhaps as Jake did. As such, the issue of 'personal development' (such as Kalee's 'confidence') is closely related to the student's ability to draw on knowledge about the media validated in Media Studies, for instance, by using theoretical terms. The question is then how and what Kalee and Jake might have learned from each other by working in the same group.

Interestingly, all three teachers involved in the project (Susan, Claire and John) called Group A 'Jake and Kalee's group', implying that their roles were crucial to the production of their trailer. For instance, Claire comments on the 'quality' of their contributions, as follows:

[Extract 7-3]

1. I actually find the dynamics fascinating really, and I think there was a lot of
2. development in the group. Because at first Jake and Kalee's group were incomplete
3. almost at the beginning because there was a different sense of perception and sort of
4. a range of sophistication in the ideas. So for example, Jake had, I felt, quite a
5. sophisticated idea and insightful idea, about reflecting the current concerns with
6. violence in a school context. And I think theoretically the concept was quite

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[30] The predicted grades are based on the students' previous work such as written essays, including textual analysis, and practical productions.

7.  sophisticated, but as we showed later, the instincts of the rest of the group were

8.  towards the practical application of ideas and whether that perception was do-able

9.  or not. And so I think, in the end, it was Kalee and the others who actually put the

10.  whole thing on that, which initially caused a block of the communication, but I

11.  think they overcame that and that conflict of the ideas and interests became

12.  quite a constructive thing. And as John said eventually it made their video so

13.  successful, because the more practical elements of the group were constantly

14.  putting a stop on the most high flown but perhaps not possible ideas, which he

15.  [Jake] may be able to achieve at a later stage, but at the moment wasn't

16.  necessarily appropriate [here]. So I think that dynamics developed quite

17.  interestingly and there was also mutual respect that came across in the end, and

18.  I think that was good.

Claire begins by pointing out that there was a 'different sense of perception and a range of sophistication in the ideas' of the group (3-4). While Jake's contribution is seen as the 'source of ideas' in that he brought 'theoretically sophisticated and insightful ideas' (5-7) to the group, Kalee' and the others' contributions are described as a 'practical application' of Jake's ideas. The teacher suggests that the tension between these two 'different quality of contributions', as she called them in the extract below (Extract 7-4), operated constructively in the end, even though it caused a 'block of communication' (10) at the beginning of the group discussions.

From my own observation, I would agree with the teacher's perception that there were two broadly different roles that the students took in the overall process of the group production

and that this was ultimately constructive for the development of their production. However, if we do not look at how their discussions actually went, there is a danger that such a perception of the division of roles between the students can be regarded merely as a reflection of the students' different 'personalities' or their 'academic ability'. In relation to this, since the production was supposed to be the students' own, it is important to point out that the teachers' involvement in the group discussions was significantly reduced. This meant that the students were effectively required to work alone, based on their theoretical study of the gangster film genre as well as their *implicit knowledge and skills* about media production. In this respect, it becomes important to consider how the students negotiated their ideas and roles in this group production.

I need to explain briefly how the overall group production went and the role played by the teachers in its completion. Before they began their group work, the students watched some film trailers and discussed the general conventions of trailers in terms of selecting and editing key points of a film, which stand out and grab an audience's attention. They were also given an extract from Roy Thomson's *Grammar of the Shot* (1998) which was about shot compositions, camera angles, and their effects on an audience. When group work actually began, however, rather than trying to teach the students what to do, as Claire described below, the teachers became 'facilitators' of the group discussion.

[Extract 7-4]

1. I think my role initially [during the pre-production process] was that as a sort

2. supervisor, really. I think I had the impression that it was very much teaching as a

3. facilitator, you know. They need something then I'll find it out for them. If they

4. needed information about the syllabus, you know, I knew what they were required to do.

5. So, I sort of had that knowledge, but it was very much … facilitating … but at the

6. same time I think the other job was really understanding of their dynamics of the

7. groups and sort of making detailed observation of who's doing what and sort of the

8. quality of their contributions.

In fact, Susan and Claire's main role in this process was largely to do with making sure

that the storyboard was done before they started shooting and that students should find

'realistic' locations as well as experimenting with camera shots, while they (mainly Susan)

were arranging to work with John from the local media arts centre, in order for the

students to use the digital video camera and editing suite in the centre at a later stage. As I

observed, the teachers' roles in the students' pre-production stage can be identified

broadly in two ways. Firstly, they were 'facilitators', as Claire described her role in the

above extract, in the sense that they gave the students deadlines and checklists to complete

their proposals and storyboards. Secondly, they were 'observers' of the group process in

the sense that they were making records of the individual students' contributions, both for

communication between the teachers and for reference in later assessment. During the pre-

production process, however, actual production knowledge and methods were barely

taught by the teachers, as I shall discuss below.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, in relation to the context of this case study, the major reason that they arranged to work with a 'professional' from a local youth arts media centre was the absence of Judy, who would normally have been responsible for students' production work. Judy used to be a photographer before becoming a Media Studies teacher, and thus could help students to communicate in visual ways as well as teaching the theoretical side of the media. In contrast, coming from English and Sociological backgrounds, but having little experience or training in media production, Susan and Claire felt more comfortable teaching the theoretical and analytical aspects of the subject than the practical ones. Being aware of the students' need to work with audiovisual media, therefore, the teachers decided in Judy's absence to get a 'professional' expert in media production to help with the students' video project.

It would have been ideal if a professional expert had come in to teach audiovisual communication before the students had started storyboarding, so that they could have applied that knowledge about media production to their own project. However, bringing in an outside expert and using the equipment outside the school meant, in practice, that the school had to pay for it, and thus the school naturally wanted to use the outside resources as sparingly as possible. Therefore, the teachers wanted the students to finish the pre-production work between themselves before starting to work with a professional and using the outside resources, and in the meantime they gave students the school cameras to try out their plans. Because the actual filming would be done over two intensive days

(excluding borrowing and returning the cameras to the youth centre), as I described in

Chapter 4, students had to plan their shots very carefully. While such pressure on students

during pre-production and filming might have meant more efficiency in terms of the

overall time management of the project, it also meant that the students had to rely on their

*implicit* knowledge of audiovisual communication to construct their shots. For this reason,

it seems somewhat inevitable that those in the group who suggested the most ideas, or

justified them most articulately, were perceived as 'dominating' the discussion.


I now want to return to the discussion of how my focus group students worked together,

particularly in relation to how Jake came to be seen as a 'source of ideas' whereas other

members were seen as 'applying Jake's ideas'. In their meetings, Jake talked at length

about which shots to use in order to get a particular point of view of a character or, for

example, which camera angle and shot composition they could use in order to get a view

of the cemetery. Furthermore, Jake suggested that they should use their own soundtrack to

get better sound effects: he talked about using music technology such as sampling and the

specific equipment to use, and then said that he would even like to compose the music.

While Jamey and Ben supported Jake's idea with their knowledge about the equipment

and computer programmes, Kalee and Kat were mostly excluded from such discussions;

this happened in part because they did not know very much about the kind of technology

and equipment discussed.

In fact, in terms of his familiarity with using media technology, particularly various music tools, Jake had more 'expertise' in media production than other members of his group did. As he wrote in the questionnaire that I asked the group to fill in, Jake was already familiar with various computer programs such as 'photo manipulation', 'desktop publishing' and various music tools such as 'sequencers', 'sound editors' and 'MIDI', based on his own experience of composing music – he was taking Music as one of his other A-level subjects and was also playing in a band – and of producing a music video for his own rock band. In contrast, Kalee and Kat told me that they did not have such experience in media production other than using camcorders for birthday parties at home, while Ben and Jamey were more familiar at least with using computers. Given such differences in the students' knowledge and experience of media production, Jake's 'expertise' in this area, which the teachers wanted him to share with other students, was likely to be seen as rather intimidating, particularly to Kalee and Kat.

In this context, Kalee often told Susan and Claire that she did not know what to say about the soundtrack, not, perhaps, because she did not really know what to do but because she felt somewhat *powerless* to intervene in the discussion with the same degree of 'sophistication'. Without the teachers' input on these technological issues, it seemed to be difficult for the 'less media literate' students to participate more 'confidently' in the group discussions. In these circumstances, Kalee and Kat seemed often to feel that one 'boy'

(Jake) was trying to dominate the group rather than listening to other members' opinions and that the other 'boys' (Ben and Jamey) were on his side, as they said in the interview:

[Extract 7-5]

1. Kalee: It wasn't our aim to spend a year's time in planning it [the trailer]. And when
2.   you spend so much time planning something, not knowing where it's gonna go,
3.   it's difficult.
4. Kat: We planned and filmed and edited together. But … (hesitantly) we had a bit of
5.   difficulty with Jake. He seemed to have his own way all the time and we had no …
6.   He didn't listen to us [even if some decision had to be made in his absence] and
7.   we really had to, you know, …
8. Kalee: I don't know, I did find it difficult to get on with him [Jake]. And I think
9.   a lot of the work was an individual work because you've got to think about
10.   what YOU were saying and what YOU were doing and how YOU were
11.   getting on with other people and how YOU were working with other people.
12.   And to just sit back and let other people get on with it and with what other
13.   people talk about, it's quite a difficult thing to do.
14. Kat: I don't know. He was always difficult in our group. I don't know. He was
15.   more determined. Because even if we all agreed, …
16. Kalee: It all went slowly and slowly. There were the shots WE wanted to do and
17.   HE wanted to do, so we had to work more in the end. We had to work quicker
18.   to get things done, which I think was good. So it made us work more as a
19.   group because we were so different. I mean we had different opinions
20.   between ourselves, but OUR opinions and HIS opinions were like, MILES
21.   AWAY.

In this interview, Kalee and Kat expresses their difficulty in 'getting on with' Jake (8),

saying that he was 'more determined' (15) about having 'his own way all the time' (5-6),

when the project was meant to be a group production. As such, negotiations about

different ideas seem to run the risk of becoming a matter of *personality* (as Jake is accused

of being 'difficult'), without any sense of an agreement on which principles they should

use in order to negotiate with each other. Considering that the degree and quality of the

contributions that each member of the group made was monitored by the teachers for later

assessment, this was particularly true when it came to the issue of 'ownership', as Kalee

points out (9-13).

In fact, it does not seem entirely unfair for Kalee and Kat to say that Jake was a 'difficult'

person to negotiate with, because he seemed to be somewhat 'selfish', considering that he

tended to leave the 'organisation' side of production to the girls and to concentrate on the

'creative' side. For instance, on the day before the first day of shooting, the group was

supposed to meet up to finish the discussion of the shots and to decide the order of

shooting. But Jake was not going to come to the meeting because of other commitments (a

rehearsal for the concert of his rock band) and, without giving advance notice, Ben and

Jamey did not turn up. In this context, Kalee and Kat had to make the final decisions about

the shots in order to get them ready for shooting the following day. However, in the

meanwhile, as it turned out the following day, Jake had worked on the shots at home alone

after his rehearsal was finished. Then, he insisted on re-negotiation when the group was supposed to start shooting.

Quite understandably, this made Kalee and Kat, who had worked very hard to make the decisions on shots (which they believed were final) in the boys' absence, feel frustrated by Jake in particular and worry about the delay in the group's shooting schedule. In these circumstances, Kalee seemed to have given up on arguing with Jake and decided to focus more on the 'practical application' of Jake's ideas (as Claire put it), or on becoming the 'producer' of the group (as John put it in the interview with me), perhaps because she felt that she had to make sure to 'get things done' (8) (rather than relying on the boys for time-management), *not* because she did not have better ideas than Jake. [31]

To be fair to Jake, however, one of the reasons why he was considered as 'difficult' was to do with the fact that he persistently demanded clear reasons why particular ideas should be accepted or rejected. For instance, when he suggested that the group should include the shot of 'Jake in a car pulling up', he supported this idea by saying that they needed to use one of the 'visual codes' of the gangster film genre such as 'luxurious cars', in order to show the powerful status of the gangster leader, 'Vincent Wilson', in their trailer. [32] Kat

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[31] In fact, it was Kalee who kept a record of the discussion and the progress made in the group's meetings from the time the group work began. The other members, including Jake, relied on her records in order to check what needed to be done before they moved on to other things.

[32] In fact, this shot was replaced by the shot of 'Jake on the mobile phone' during the filming process for practical reasons. See A-10 in the Appendix 5.

rejected this idea, saying that it was 'not very original'. But when Jake asked her how she would like to show Jake's status, she did not suggest any alternative idea. On another occasion, Jake suggested that female gangsters and male gangsters in the trailer should be seen to 'hug each other' and to 'shake hands', in order to show their closeness as members of the same gang (A-2 and A-3 in the Appendix 5). However, Kat rejected these suggestions not because she felt that such shots were ineffective but because she felt 'embarrassed' to perform such scenes herself. Responding to her rejection of his ideas, Jake suggested that they should include a dialogue between the two characters or a voiceover to indicate that they were cousins, but Kat again rejected this idea without providing any alternatives.

In such cases, it seems somewhat unfair to criticise Jake for being unduly 'determined' to get his ideas accepted or being 'difficult' to negotiate with, as Kat and Kalee often told me, considering that he was perhaps only seeking to *share grounds for negotiation* and that in fact there were no alternatives suggested. My observations seem to show that, without the teachers' intervention in the group discussion to provide the students with grounds for negotiation, there is a danger that the negotiation between different ideas in a group can become a *personal* matter – for example, a case of being flexible about accepting other people's suggestions rather than insisting on one's own all the time.

## 7.3.1. The 'soundtrack' discussion and the role of the teacher

In this respect, I would like to discuss how the teachers from the school (Susan and Claire) and from the youth project (John) engaged with the students, considering that John was invited to the project as a 'media professional' in order to support the students on the 'technical' side of the project of making gangster film trailers. In fact, the most difficult discussion that Group A had throughout the entire process of production was the one about the soundtrack of the trailer. When the discussion began, the group quickly agreed that they needed slow music with the sound of a gunshot, considering that the trailer would start with the funeral of a character, 'Martin', who was 'shot dead by a gunshot'. Then, Kat told the group that she had found a good piece of music, which she described as starting slowly and having the sound of a gunshot. In response to her suggestion, Jake suggested that the group should listen to the track before they decided on it, which was reasonable. The conflict between Kat and Jake began, however, when Jake said that he would like to compose the soundtrack by sampling from different music, using the facilities which he could get access to in the Music department, [33] 'if Kat's music was not good enough'. While Ben and Jamey asked Jake to explain more about the kinds of music and computer software that he wanted to use for sampling, Kat appeared a little angry, perhaps because she took Jake's immediate rejection of her idea somewhat personally. At

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[33] Jake was the only person in the group who was taking Music as one of his A-level courses and thus was able to use the facilities in Music Department.

this stage, however, it was not possible to make any decision on the soundtrack because neither of them had brought the music with them.

When the group started discussing the soundtrack again on another occasion, Kat brought the tape of the music that she had mentioned before and played it so that the other members of the group could listen to it. It was a dance track, starting with the slow and romantic theme song of the film, *Love Story*, followed by a gunshot and then faster dance music. Immediately after listening to this track, however, Jake firmly rejected it, arguing that the gunshot sounded good but that the tune did not seem to go with the gangster film genre. When she was asked to give her opinion, Susan pointed out that the *Love Story* tune could remind the audience of the film in which it originally appeared and thus would not go well with the gangster film genre but that, nevertheless, the group should decide on the soundtrack after comparing it with what Jake might bring. In response to this comment, however, Kat argued that they could 'break the gangster conventions', as she put it, 'by using this rather unusual music for the genre' because they were not making a classic, Italian gangster film trailer but making a modern gangster film based in the London urban area. Perhaps strategically, Kat's argument blurred the boundaries between the two different matters of choosing the right music for the trailer to get a certain effect and of being original by breaking the conventions. At this stage, however, the teacher could only tell the group that decisions should be made 'democratically', based on 'concrete

evidence' rather than abstract discussion, and thus that Jake also should bring his own music to the group.

In fact, the disagreement about the soundtrack lasted until the last minute of the editing process. Interestingly, it was resolved only when John intervened in the group to provide some grounds on which they should discuss the effects of the music. In fact, Jake did not manage to compose the soundtrack, perhaps because he was 'too ambitious' for the tight schedule of the project, as both the teachers and the other members of the group told him later. Nevertheless, he brought a piece of rock music, which was much faster than Kat's track. Later in the interview with me, John explained, how he engaged with their discussion, as follows:

[Extract 7-6]

1. I think I gave them two different ways of breaking down the music in terms of the
2. audience. I think the first thing I said was the emotion from the music – how they
3. feel when they listened to it and how they would describe both pieces of music
4. [Kat's music and Jake's]. And then I asked them what was more appropriate for
5. the video in terms not only of the emotion but also of the style. Then they said
6. they liked the gunshot from the music the girl [Kat] brought but it was very slow.
7. And then wanted they all agreed the pace of the video to be fast. So then we talked
8. about the other one [the piece Jake brought]. They agreed that it was stylistically very
9. little to do with the gangster movie, but emotionally it felt very fast and exciting
10. and energetic. Then I walked away [so that they could decide on their own]. So
11. what I did was to create two opposite ways of breaking down the two different [pieces

12. of ] music and then I said, "I mediated your discussion so far. But now it's not my

13. role to mediate any more. Now your own dynamics of the group have to decide

14. one." I think personally, through the tone of my voice, I think I stressed the

15. emotional quality of the [second] song. You know, one always does. But I tried

16. to keep the distance as much as possible. I know I would've gone for the song

17. but I didn't push it.

Here, John perceives his role as 'mediating' the discussion (12-13) between the students rather than 'pushing' his own preference (17). As he points out, John provided the students with the *grounds for negotiation* or the analytical language with which they could think about the possible effects of the two pieces of music on the audience of their trailer. By analysing the two different pieces of music that Kat and Jake brought in terms of the 'emotion' and 'style' (5), therefore, the students were finally able to reach a compromise between Kat's and Jake's ideas about the soundtrack. The final version started with the sound of the 'gunshot' taken from Kat's music (because the group agreed that it was suitable for the 'style' of the gangster film genre) and this was followed by Jake's music (because they agreed that it would make the audience feel 'excited').

As such, the students were able to compromise between the two different ideas suggested by Jake and Kat, on three different grounds. Firstly, there is a 'theoretical' ground that the students agreed upon: the soundtrack needs to reflect the conventions of the gangster film genre rather than reminding the audience of the tragic romance film, *Love Story*. Secondly, there is a 'democratic' principle: Jake and Kat needed to be able to compromise on their

ideas rather than simply rejecting the other's suggestion. Lastly, such 'theoretical' grounds and the 'democratic' principle, which Susan mentioned above, worked more effectively when the students were able to analyse more *practically* the effects of the two different pieces of music on the audience of the trailer. Subsequently, the students learned how to combine *technically* the two different pieces of music, using the computer-based 'non-linear' editing equipment, which enabled each member of the group to practice this particular technique *in turn* and repeatedly.

Thus far, I have discussed how the teachers divided the students in order to make them work in small groups for their productions and how this might reflect the *implied pedagogy* aimed at 'personal development' and 'learning from others'. Drawing on both my own observation and the interviews with the teachers and the students, I have argued that 'personal development' needs to be discussed in relation to how individual students with varied background knowledge might learn in a group. In doing so, it seems that the teachers needs to intervene in the group process in order to ensure more constructive discussion between the students and to provide them with *fairer* opportunities to learn about media production by participating more equally. Building on such discussions, I would now like to discuss the role of the teachers in relation to the knowledge and positions that characterise the various communities of practice that are related to media education.

## 7.4. Theory, practice and teacher's knowledge in media education

While the integration of theory and practice or criticism and production is important in media education, it needs to be discussed in relation to the knowledge and positions of the teachers, which are constrained both by the social and institutional contexts within which they work (such as those of the school and the youth project) as well as by the particular discourses about media education that inform their classroom practices. In this respect, it is important to look at how the teachers in the school (Susan and Claire) and John, the 'media expert', as the teachers called him, worked collaboratively, in order to empower the students both as critical readers (critics) and as creative writers (producers).

In fact, the collaboration between the teachers (Susan and Claire) and John was arranged almost entirely at an institutional level rather than on a team-teaching basis. Although the teachers were present in the classroom, for instance, when John came to their lessons to teach the students how to use the camera or to evaluate their productions, they did not intervene in his lessons except to draw the students' attention to John's teaching. Particularly during the editing sessions which took place in the editing suite in the youth project for the entire two days, it was impossible for the teachers to stay with the students because they had to go back to school for other lessons. Therefore, the theory and the practice in this context were actually implemented in separate lessons.

John was invited almost as an 'industry practitioner' to teach the technical side of media production, as he described his own role in the interview. As such, he worked with the students for three purposes: first, teaching them how to use the camera, second, helping them to edit their production, and lastly helping them with the 'technical' side of evaluation, as both the teachers and the students called it. Firstly, just before the shooting started, John brought the digital cameras to the school and explained to the students how to handle them in accordance with health and safety rules, and how to get a particular shot with a particular camera angle, as he did in the youth project discussed in Chapter 6. While the students had already been using the video camera for experimenting with possible shots that they wanted to include in their trailers during the pre-production process, as I discussed earlier, their discussions and experiments were based on fairly *implicit* knowledge already held by individual students. In this respect, John provided the students with the actual production knowledge (or the writing side of *media literacy*), which the teachers in this particular context provided only in the form of handouts.

As such, John explained how to focus on an object by using 'zoom-in' and 'zoom-out', 'depth of field', how to record sound when shooting and in the editing suite; and how to handle the camera in order to get the shots that they wanted. In fact, the ways in which he taught these techniques (and procedural knowledge such as doing a 'paper edit' before the actual editing process) were not particularly different from the way he taught in the youth

project discussed in Chapter 6. However, the fact that these ideas were brought in, in

relation to the already-defined purpose of the students' productions (rather than as non-

negotiable rules to follow) seemed to make the meaning somewhat different.


For example, Group B wanted to get a shot in which someone's eye is closed up and there

was a reflection on the eye. John told the group that it would be possible, in principle, in

terms of the technology available but that, practically, it would take too much time beyond

the limit of time available for them. This helped them to decide to give up this plan. Group

A asked John how to get the best zoom-in shot when they wanted to use 'tracking' at the

same time (A-11 in the Appendix 5), and he suggested that they should 'keep the shot size

the same while the camera is moving'. Group C wanted to use a 'split screen' to indicate

conflicts between two gangster members, showing two people walking, one from the left

side and the other from the right side of the screen (C-5, C-6 and C-7 in the Appendix 5).

John told them that they could do this by editing two separate shots, but in order to do so,

they should film the two shots separately, making sure that one person should clearly

come from the left side of the picture and the other person should clearly come from the

right. Then, John reminded the students that they should return the equipment (including

the cameras) that they would borrow from the local youth media project after the two

days' shooting, but should collect the video tape, which he would make ready for each

group in order to do a paper edit (selecting the particular shots that they wanted to use for

the final cut with the number of the shot and the take) before they came back for the editing session.

When the editing session began, after filming and a paper edit had been completed, John firstly explained briefly how 'Premiere', the editing program worked. He then asked each group to transfer the shots that they had chosen to the computer hard disk with a time code, shot/take numbers and brief descriptions for each shot/take. He then gave the students a manual of the editing program and a handout about the procedure of post-production in general so that the students could read them while they were transferring the data in turn. [34] In doing so, John seemed to take two significant roles throughout the editing process, as a teacher and as a technician. On the one hand, he helped the students with 'technical support' when they had difficulties with the program and suggested particular effects that they could use and demonstrated the actual methods on the computer. He also taught them technical terms used in film and media production, particularly in relation to the editing process. On the other hand, he mediated the students' discussions (as I mentioned earlier in relation to Group A's soundtrack discussion), and managed the time in order that the students could finish their work in the limited amount of time available.

Naturally, the students seemed to find their experience of working with John very helpful, perhaps because they felt that there was a gap between what they had been taught about

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[34] In fact, this handout was the same one that John used in the youth media project discussed in Chapter 6.

the theoretical study of gangster films (conventions of the genre, more precisely) and more

practical knowledge that they needed to learn for production, as the following extract

suggests:

[Extract 7-7]

1. HS: What do you think you learned about the conventions of gangster films and

2. trailers before you started making your trailer?

3. Kalee: We watched loads of films and trailers.

4. Kat: Oh, it was boring. The thing is we watched classics and saw how things

5. changed from *The Godfather* to *Goodfellas*, things like that. I think it helped. I think

6. it helped to write essays about how gangster conventions were changed – things

7. like that. But it didn't actually help us to MAKE it.

8. Kalee: I don't know. I think knowing where something comes from is always

9. helpful, because at least you can know where you could start.

10. Kat: I understand where she comes from but I don't know …

Here, Kat describes what they studied before entering into the production process as

'watching loads of films and trailers' (3). While she says that it helped them to 'write

essays about the conventions of gangster films' (6), she seems to regret that it did not

actually help them to 'make their own trailer' (7). In this instance, she seems to distinguish

rather clearly between two different kinds of practices that the students were required to

undertake in the classroom ('essay writing' and 'video production') and points out that the

theoretical study of the gangster film genre did not provide the actual production

knowledge for making their trailer, although it provided the students with ideas on 'where to start' (9) their project, as Kalee puts it, in terms of the construction of narrative.

In fact, in the above extract Kat seems to point to one of the fundamental issues in what Elliot terms the 'critical-vocational' approach (Elliot, 2000), although Elliot's arguments are based on practices in higher education rather than in schools. According to Elliot, the 'critical-vocational' approach tends to treat Media, Communication or Cultural Studies as the 'theory' meant to 'guide' media production, which is regarded as 'practice'. This is because such an approach is based on a narrowly defined way of thinking about practice which, by implication, does not regard theory as a kind of practice in its own right. However, as Kat rightly suggests in the above extract, 'writing essays' (or criticism) based on theoretical study of the gangster film genre is a practice in itself rather than a 'guide' for another practice, 'actually making a film trailer' (7). In this respect, Kat seems to point out the lack of support from the teachers in terms of providing more practical knowledge relating to production, perhaps prior to the pre-production stage. And perhaps this is the reason why most of the students appreciated that John's engagement in the technical support for the students' productions at a later stage was helpful in terms of enabling the students to actually 'write' their ideas on the screen.

As I shall discuss, the divide between theory and practice was reinforced by the arrangement of the two separate evaluation sessions (on the 'theoretical' side with the

teachers and then on the 'technical' side with John); and this in turn reinforced a

distinction between content and form. In their 'theoretical' evaluation of the students'

productions, the teachers emphasised that the students should focus primarily on how

correctly their audience might understand the overall narrative of their trailers as well as

the relationships between characters; how the gangster film conventions were represented

in the trailer; and to what extent the students kept to the conventions and to what extent

they broke or challenged them.

*In practice*, however, the discussions were often diverted to the question of whether the

intention of the trailer makers (which is to demonstrate their theoretical understanding of

the conventions of the genre) could actually be read on the screen. Coincidentally, none of

the three groups used voiceovers, credits or dialogue to indicate the characters and the

relationship between them, except in one shot in Group B's trailer. As such, they

concentrated more on visual communication. In the case of Group A, this was particularly

because they felt that adding a voiceover might make the trailers look 'less professional',

as they told the teachers, particularly 'if the tone of the voice was not as deep as in

professional trailers'. However, the teachers pointed out that it might be difficult for the

audience to guess the overall narrative and the relationships between characters without

clearer explanation about them, for instance, by using a voiceover or captions. Likewise,

the other students (outside Group A ) seemed to find it difficult to read the intention of the

makers (apart from the basic story line and what kind of representation the group wanted

to achieve through each shot), even when they already knew about this group's plot from the initial debriefing session. While this was partly because the trailers were based on bits of the narrative of the actual film, it also seemed to be because they were based on visualisation only (apart from the use of a musical soundtrack). As I have discussed, it was actually difficult to separate the two aspects of evaluation – theoretical and practical – insofar as the intention had to be communicated through visualisation on the screen, although the focus was on the theoretical point of view.

Now I would like to discuss how the teacher and the students evaluated the students' productions in more detail, taking my focus group's trailer as an example. The trailer starts off with a gunshot sound, which is intended to indicate the death of the character, Martin Carter. This is followed by the shot introducing Martin Carter's four cousins – two men and two women – who gather in the cemetery in order to attend their cousin's funeral (A-1 in the Appendix 5). To indicate that these four cousins get closer and become gangsters in order to revenge his death, shots of two cousins' handshake (A-2) and hugs (A-3) are shown. 'Individual profile shots' of the four cousins follow these shots, in order to show the 'equal status' between the four gang members (A-4, A-5, A-6 and A-7). Then there is a shot of the four cousins walking together (A-8), which is paralleled by a tracking shot of Jake walking (A-9), which is intended to demonstrate that the cousins and Jake are enemies. In order to demonstrate their understanding of the gangster film conventions, the group also used close-up shots of guns and drugs (A-13 and A-14). And in order to show

'female gangsters in action', the students inserted shots in which Kat (playing one of the two female gang members) is dealing drugs (A-22), slapping someone else in the face towards the camera, and calculating money (A-17).

When this trailer was shown in the 'theoretical' evaluation session, however, Susan (the teacher) did not understand the characters' relationship as Group A intended, although she was aware of the intended narrative. For instance, she thought that Jake was the head of the gang formed by the four cousins of Martin Carter, because she thought that Jake's 'mobile phone' shot (A-10) was used to indicate communication between Jake and four cousins (rather than between Jake and his henchmen). Although Group A's challenge to the conventions of gangster films by 'giving male and female gangsters equal status' was more successfully visualised in the four cousins' individual profile shots and the shots in which they were walking together in line, the fact that there are two rival gangs was not successfully communicated to the audience. Therefore, the teacher and the other students suggested that Group A should have been more specific in attempting to communicate their intention to the audience; they were told that they should reflect this in their written evaluations.

Despite some of problems raised, Group A's trailer was rated as the best among the three trailers made by the three groups. It was seen as much more coherent in terms of conveying and challenging the gangster conventions, by successfully visualising the

'equal status' between the four cousins as well as effectively using the shots of their actions and means of trade (such as guns and drugs). In contrast, Group C's project was regarded as failing in the visualisation of the 'female gangster head's power' on the screen as they had intended. Even though they claimed that they wanted to 'break the conventions' by challenging the audience's assumption about the conventional representation of women with the 'hidden female top-dog character', as they put it, there was only one scene to visually indicate their intention: the last shots of a 'female hand with a cigarette with lipstick on it' (C-8 and C-9). As one of the students in another group pointed out, the subversive intention of this scene seemed to be read perhaps only by the Media Studies students, who knew that the trailer should include at least one shot to indicate the makers' challenge to the conventions of the gangster film genre.

On the other hand, the evaluation of Group B's project suggests that the main focus of the theoretical evaluation was to assess the understanding of the conventions rather than the ability to write on the screen. While this trailer successfully visualised the overall narrative and the relationship between the individual characters – there are highly effective stylistic shots such as overlapping a shot of train (the place where the 'cross-fire' takes place) with shots of the four characters (who have reasons to kill each other) (B-5, B-6, B-7 and B-8) – it was criticised on the grounds that the narrative was 'too original' for the conventions of a gangster film, as I discussed earlier. Some of the criticism also included the point that some of the shots made the trailer appear to be a 'crime drama'

with elements of 'comedy' because they overused the shots of one character's (Junk's)

'funny behaviour' (e.g., B-2). In this respect, Group A's trailer was regarded as better than

the other two groups' trailers, considering that its visual communication of the

conventions of the gangster film narrative was relatively more successful.

Interestingly, the teachers gave a more personal, aesthetic evaluation of the students'

trailers during the interview with me, compared to their official emphasis on the

conventions of gangster films as criteria of evaluation for the classroom. For instance,

Susan related her criteria for evaluating the students' productions as follows:

[Extract 7-8]

1. I think the most important thing was that they understood that they were using the

2. camera to communicate something to the audience and that they understood that

3. they had a target audience, and that everything they did from soundtrack to

4. individual shots have been really carefully thought out and planned in order that they

5. were able to get across their sort of idea of, although trailers tend to use broken up

6. narratives, there is still an idea of narrative somewhere. (…) So I think the function

7. of the gangster trailer is sort of … I mean it is to cover various areas of the syllabus,

8. and it is to make sure that they are kind of getting opportunities to discuss something in

9. their exam papers as well as their practical work. But the KEY thing for me was,

10.  "Do you understand that nothing is wasted?" that, you know, everything is

11.  communicated and is done for a reason and contributed to overall effects, the

12.  narrative or shots or whatever is that they were trying to do. (…) I'm hoping in

13. their evaluation there will be evidence that it has been much more tightly

14. planned and they were much more conscious of the fact that they had used the

15. camera in a particular way and they really paid attention to everything about

16. mise-en-scene and everything like that. And thereby they haven't just got sort of

17. an interesting piece of work to watch but they've got an interesting piece to

18. textually analyse as well. (…)

In this interview, Susan emphasises that the production needs to be an 'interesting piece of work' (17) in itself, which 'uses the camera in a particular way' (14-15), in order to 'communicate to the audience' (1-2). Such an emphasis on audiovisual communication including 'mise-en-scene' (16) seems to make a contrast with her emphasis on exploring the conventions of gangster films and trailers in the classroom evaluation, which 'covers various areas of the syllabus' (7) and 'exam papers' (9). Her personal emphasis on the aesthetic side of evaluation is even more obvious when she responds to a question about her personal preference, as follows:

[Extract 7-9]

1. I know that I like Jake's and Kalee's work the most. I think it's because it grabs my

2. attention, you know, from the opening – the pace of it. I felt that it really worked

3. well. I felt that I followed, I could follow what was happening but still be intrigued

4. by what was happening. I felt that they've done the most imaginative stuff with the

5. camera and they had gone out to find the way sort of really amazing location in

6. Soho. I thought they really thought more about the kind of technical side of the

7. camera and dressing things in filming them. And I thought they made a good choice

8. of music and I felt they showed the convention of the gangster films but also did

9. something slightly different. I thought they showed, you know, the bits of it where

10. they echoed that very kind of Hollywood style of trailer that the four of them

11. walking through the tunnel and seeing each of them separately and (…) The

12. reason why I like Jake's and Kalee's is that it grabs my attention straightaway!

13. And it really got my attention straightaway! And the pace of it was, I thought,

14. exciting.


Here, Susan emphasises her emotional engagement with the trailer of Group A, which she also refers to as 'Jake's and Kalee's' (1), as Claire and John did, by saying that she was 'intrigued by what was happening' (3) in the trailer. She appreciated the good 'pace' (2), the 'good choice of music' (7-8), the 'imaginative' manner of using the camera (4) and the 'amazing location' (5), which 'grabbed her attention straightaway' (1-2; 12). While showing the 'conventions of the gangster films' (8) is still considered important, she seems to think that this group's trailer was 'slightly different' (9) in terms of its style. Like Susan, Claire also gives slightly different grounds for evaluation from those she used in the classroom in this later interview:


[Extract 7-10]

1. There's no question that I liked the most Jake's and Kalee's. Susan was quite

2. fascinated by that too. I immediately liked that one best. I thought it was well-paced.

3. I was with it emotionally. I admired it. I thought it was really well developed, well

4. conceived, well planned, well, everything really. I felt hard pressurised to criticise it

5. actually. I mean, we did criticise it. I think it was just to help them with their

6. evaluation, to be honest. I feel it was really strong piece of work and I feel really

7. proud of it. I feel proud of them for having done it.

Claire says that she 'was with it emotionally' and 'admired it' (3) and even felt 'hard pressurised to criticise it' (4) in the classroom because she felt that it was 'really strong piece of work' (6). However, this personal evaluation on the part of the teachers, which appeared much more positive about the students' work, was hardly heard in the classroom, perhaps because the official critical discourse of evaluation made them focus on the conventions of the gangster film genre. Without hearing the teachers' personal appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of their productions, therefore, the students seemed to have felt that the teachers were somewhat negative about their project.

In this respect, John's technical evaluation seems to have provided the students with an opportunity to learn a different way of reading their work in film language, and thus made them 'feel more positive' about their own work, as Jake and Kat told me in the interview. Watching the trailers with the students together in his session, John gave a 'running commentary' on it, in order to give them the language to analyse the effects of the shots and the music that they used, as follows:

[Extract 7-11]

1. John: (watching Group A's trailer) OK, it dissolves the shot, fast pan, tilt down the
2. shot, close up, pan, zoom in, low angle shot, wide shot, (…) running towards the
3. camera, running away from the camera, high angle, low angle, zoom out, cut,

4. zoom out, high angle, cut, low angle, low angle, point of view, zoom in, (…) high

5. angle, point of view, low angle, close up, OK? Cut, slow pan and wide shot,

6. zoom in, high angle, (…) wide shot, (…) reverse running towards the camera,

7. running away from the camera, (…)

8. Kalee: (with laughter) I'm trying to make notes!

9. John: (with laughter) I'm doing this running commentary just like a very fast

10. football match commentary.

11. (Students all laugh)

12. John: (watching the trailer again) Point of view, cut, slow pan, high angle, low

13. angle, slow zoom in, (…) you could say that this shot of the policeman

14. picked up some conventions of documentary because it's jerky. It's fuzzy,

15. police in issue and also it was quite a contrast with other stylised shots. Lots

16. of running towards the camera.

17. Elisa: Oh, brilliant!

18. John: There is obviously a lot packed in there, isn't there?

19. Kalee: (proudly) Yeah!


While John was commenting on the shots using specialised film language in the lines 1-7

and 12-16, the students were busy making notes to use for their evaluation. This manner of

commenting helped the students to analyse why this group's trailer in particular 'looked

much better and much more planned' than the other groups' productions, as John told

them elsewhere (and in fact, as both the teachers and the students admitted), and thus

made the producer group (Group A) feel more 'positive' and 'proud' about their work, as

the members of Group A told me in the interview.

As such, the students seemed to benefit from this 'technical' evaluation in the sense that it enabled them to analyse how their own work could be read in terms of visual communication. The teachers also seemed to have benefited from watching how John evaluated the students' work rather differently from the technical perspective of media production. Therefore, it seemed to have made the teachers rethink the way that they had been lead to make the students think of theory/concepts/ideas and practice/technique/technology separately as a result of teaching the two aspects separately. As I shall discuss below in relation to the interviews with the teachers, they eventually seemed to agree that there is a need to overcome this simple division between theory and practice by rethinking the ways in which media literacy is conceptualised in the classroom.

However, the problem with this divide between theory and practice also needs to be considered in relation to the knowledge and skills that the teachers can offer students. When I asked about the difficulties of working in this way, Susan raised some broader issues about the teaching of practical work, which might not be specific to this case, as follows:

[Extract 7-12]

1. The funny thing is what they've done is fantastic and in some way I feel that I'm in
2. a funny position of assessing their work because I haven't seen their equipment
3. properly. I know that the big area of my weakness is the know-how. I know that my
4. ability to handle practical work and equipment and technology is weak. I suppose

5. that what I didn't discuss with them was the ability of confidently using the

6. equipment and more experimentally using that equipment. I think it just shows for

7. me how IMPLICIT that [technical] knowledge is yet I don't think I give enough

8. profile really. I think that there is definitely something, you know, what I mean is

9. media courses that I've been on and the media training that I have given in school

10. to the other people has definitely been about conceptual and theoretical stuff,

11. not been about how you handle equipment. The definite benefit from working

12. with John was that I feel they've got input from somebody who knows what

13. they're talking about technically AND who knows what they're talking about in

14. more CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE ways as well. John combined both.

Susan begins by describing her own position as 'funny' in that she has to assess the students' work when she has not even 'seen the equipment properly' (2-3). While she wanted John to complement her 'weakness' (3) in helping to 'handle practical work and equipment and technology' (4), she seemed to feel somewhat *dis*empowered by being positioned as almost an administrator during the process. In fact, while she spent quite a lot of time and energy in order to arrange the opportunity for the students to work with a 'media expert' and to use the more 'professional' equipment, she was not actually able to be with the students all the time when they were with John due to her other work in the school. However, as she points out, this is not an issue for her alone, considering that the practical aspects of production are not often included in media teachers' training (8-11) (see my discussion of this issue in Chapter 5). In effect, this leaves the students to implement productions based only on their *implicit* technical knowledge, and on the basis of trial and error.

In relation to this, when I asked Claire about her perception of working with John, she started by praising the personal efforts that Susan made to arrange this, knowing that students might need more input for practical work, as follows:

[Extract 7-13]

1. The thing about John was, I mean it was partly I was so self-consciously admiring

2. Susan, because I think she is one of these teachers who has given her, perhaps too

3. much of her life to making conditions for her students ideal. I think that what

4. happened was very much, we, especially Susan listened to Jane [another media

5. teacher who taught the Year 13 group's gangster film trailer project] from her

6. experience of last year. We looked at their trailers and we thought about what was

7. missing. And I think Susan had that completely under control. She knew the best

8. way for them to get the best trailers was to arrange the stuff from the youth project.

Despite her admiration, Claire makes it clear that Susan has perhaps 'sacrificed' her personal life too much for her students without sufficient and long-term support from the school. As such, there seems to be a danger that the integration of theory and practice in media learning can become a matter of an individual teacher's *personal efforts*, without systematic and institutional support for teachers to build their own confidence about their ability to deal with media equipment and technology.

## 7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed issues of empowerment in media education by exploring a context in which the students learn to become both critical readers and creative writers in the process of making gangster film trailers. In doing so, I have raised three interrelated issues.

Firstly, I have argued that the *text-centred* notion of genre (as *given* textual structures rather than negotiated constructions) that the students learn as the theory in the classroom seems to limit the ways in which students can negotiate the ways that they produce their own media texts. Based on my observations, I have argued that the task given to the students (demonstrating their critical understanding of the conventions of the gangster film genre by making a trailer), which is intended to empower them as critical readers *and* writers, actually appears to make them work with a rather fixed notion of genres as sets of conventions that seems to limit the extent to which the students can be creative and original in their own productions.

Secondly, I have argued that the implicit pedagogy of group production aimed at the students' personal development and encouraging learning from others raises issues to do with the role of the teacher in providing them with *grounds for negotiation*. I have also argued that there is a danger that, without the teachers' intervention in order to provide

grounds for negotiation both in theory and in practice as well as establishing a general democratic principle, negotiation in a group can become a matter of chance – if you are lucky, you meet compatible personalities. Based on my observation of the soundtrack discussion in my focus group, in particular, I have also argued that the teacher's intervention in the group discussion may help to provide them with *fairer* opportunities to learn about media production, particularly considering that there are different levels of prior knowledge amongst the individual students.

Lastly, I have argued that while the attempt to integrate theory and practice or reading and writing in media education is important, such a project requires a rethinking of the ways in which theory and practice are actually combined. While theoretical study of the chosen medium may enable students to construct the narrative or the *content* of their productions, it needs to be taught in relation to how they can write on the screen in order to *communicate* an intended content to their audience. Based on my observation of the unique context created in order to integrate theory and practice, I have also argued that this issue of the relationship between reading and writing in media education needs to be considered in relation to the issue of the teacher's knowledge and position more broadly, in terms of the kinds of competence that the teacher can offer to the students. While there is a clear divide between the theoretical and technical aspects of media learning, this division needs to be considered in relation to how these two areas are constructed in a syllabus and to how media teachers are trained. Overall, the three issues discussed in this

chapter need to be looked at in terms of how we would like to empower students through

media education – in other words, what kind of media literacy we would like to teach. I

shall discuss this in the concluding chapter.

# Chapter 8.

# Conclusion

This chapter aims to conclude the thesis by providing a summary of the research findings and their implications for media education. Considering that the questions that I explored in this thesis originate from my own experiences as a Korean teacher and researcher (see Preface and Chapter 4), this includes some discussion of the implications of the research for Korean education. The discussion of the research findings, then, will be followed by some reflections on the limitations of this research and implications for further research.

## 8.1. A summary of research questions

As outlined at the end of Chapter 3, the main focus of the research was the actual implementation of pedagogic approaches in media education which aimed at empowerment. I discussed how different pedagogic models (the critical analysis, youth work and training) might be implemented in the classroom, based on two case studies conducted in a school (discussed in Chapter 5) and in a youth project (discussed in Chapter 6). The main questions explored here were: what kinds of knowledge and abilities might actually be legitimised as means of empowering students, whether as media critics (in the critical analysis approach), critical citizens (in the youth work approach) or media producers (in the training approach); and how the teachers and the students might engage

with the media in the actual situation of the classroom in relation to such knowledge and abilities. I explored these questions from a situative perspective, that is, taking the view that learners gain particular kinds of knowledge and abilities which are recognised as competence in particular communities of practice, for instance, as new members of the communities of media critics and producers (see Chapter 3).

From a situative perspective, a 'teaching curriculum', which is provided by the old timers of particular communities, is differentiated from a 'learning curriculum', which is constructed by learners through their participation in the practice as well as in the learning situation and their negotiation of the meaning of the practice. Learners' participation in the practice and in the learning situation is regarded as sociocultural in nature, and the ways in which teaching and learning are linked are seen not as a matter of 'cause and effect' but as one of 'resources and negotiation'. This means that learners need to be taught particular kinds of knowledge and abilities (which are provided by a teaching curriculum) as particular kinds of social practice whose meaning can be negotiated. From this perspective, I examined classroom talk, in particular, taken from a school (discussed in Chapter 5) and a youth project context (discussed in Chapter 6), focusing on how the teachers and the students might be situated and positioned in the classroom in relation to particular kinds of knowledge and abilities; and whether such knowledge and abilities might be presented as negotiable.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I deliberately attempted to focus on the issues specific to the teaching curricula of specific pedagogic models. However, I also wanted to consider the issues raised when these pedagogic models would be brought together. Therefore, I conducted another case study in a unique school context where the teachers worked together with a local youth project to bring theoretical, practical and social aspects of media education together. Here I set out to explore the following questions: How do the students become empowered to be media literate both as media critics (critical readers) and as media producers (creative writers) when theoretical and practical approaches are brought together? How do individual students with diverse background knowledge about the media, both theoretically and practically, come to learn and work together in a group? And, what are the position and the role of the teacher in terms of bringing theory and practice (or reading and writing) together? At this juncture, I would like to provide a summary of the research findings, taking the three case studies in turn.

## 8.2. Research findings and their implications for media education

## 8.2.1. Case study 1: a critical analysis approach

In my case study of the critical analysis approach (discussed in Chapter 5), I examined classroom talk taken from an A-level Media Studies classroom in which the students were

taught how to analyse critically the representation of women in women's magazines. My

analysis focused on the kinds of competence that students were required to learn in order

to participate in the practice of media critics, and whether and how such competence was

presented as 'negotiable', in the sense that it would provide them with opportunities to

reflect upon their existing personal experiences of the media. The findings were as

follows:

1. While a critical analysis approach may aim to empower students as media critics,

   there seems to be a danger that a particular *kind* of critical discourse might be

   legitimised as what I call *the* official critical discourse. This official critical discourse

   requires students to analyse the visual codes of media texts, following a particular

   analytical procedure, i.e., semiotic analysis, in order to make ideological judgements

   of them. While the two separate stages of critical semiotic analysis (analysing visual

   codes and making ideological judgements) are presented as a seamless process of

   discovery, ideological judgements of media texts are actually informed by particular

   kinds of critical discourses. In the case of my own observation, the ideological

   judgements about representation in women's magazines were informed by a particular

   kind of feminist discourse. This discourse did not in fact emerge 'seamlessly' from

   the analysis of visual codes, but from a body of academic literature which employed

   rather different methods.

2.  The official critical discourse defines proper and improper ways of talking about the media and thus attempts to position teachers and students as speakers of that particular discourse in the classroom. In practice, this can prove problematic because it does not seem to allow the participants to *negotiate* the meaning of media texts in terms of their lived experiences. In this case, the primary assumption of the discourse – that the audience is fundamentally the victim of the ideology of the media – seems to control the ways in which 'personal' discourses (both of teachers and of students) can enter into the classroom. The official critical discourse seems to overemphasise the negative aspects of the media (the ideological dimensions) and thus to simplify the ways in which the media operate in relation to audiences. In the case of my own study, more complex understandings of the representation of women's looks and bodies in women's magazines seemed to be ignored, insofar as a particular kind of feminist discourse (and a somewhat outdated one) was defined as the official critical discourse.

3.  The official critical discourse is often conveyed in a ritualised exchange between teachers and students. This has been termed 'normal classroom discourse' and is characterised as 'teacher initiation-student response-teacher evaluation'. This ritual seems to be accepted as 'common knowledge' in the classroom. However, while the official critical discourse is usually maintained in the classroom, the ritualised exchange is sometimes, if only temporarily, disrupted by students' humorous

communicative activity amongst themselves. In such cases, both teachers and students seem to speak more personally as members of the media audience rather than as teachers and students. The contrast between normal classroom discourse and the 'disruptive' discourse seems to suggest that the official critical discourse prevents teachers and students from having more dialogic discussions about the ways in which they engage with the media.

4. The ways in which the 'official critical discourse' represents a *reified* – and somewhat simplistic – version of a broader critical discourse also needs to be considered in relation to the ways in which it becomes teachers' knowledge. In the case of my own study, the reinforcement of the official critical discourse was related to the ways in which Media Studies teachers were trained (both through initial and in-service training) and how they worked together. More specifically, the structural problem of treating Media Studies as a subsidiary subject to English seemed to affect the ways in which Media Studies teachers gained their knowledge about the media and continued to develop their teaching resources. This seemed to reinforce the ways in which a reified and somewhat simplistic version of critical discourse was taught in the classroom.

In this context, it is important to acknowledge that forms of critical pedagogy based on textual analysis may well not empower students in the sense of making them any more

critical in terms of their understanding of the media and society more broadly. This form

of critical pedagogy represents a narrowly defined political project, which aims to define

the classroom as a community where the 'correct' critical discourse is spoken by every

member of the community; and its overemphasis on the ideological dimensions of the

media seems to result in ritualised and thus, perhaps, less personally meaningful

classroom talk.


## 8.2.2. Case study 2: youth work and training approaches


In my case study of the youth project and training approaches (discussed in Chapter 6), I

examined the classroom practice of a youth media project supposedly aimed at providing

youth with opportunities to learn hands-on skills and to produce their own television

programmes. Given the professed aims of the project, my analysis focused on the kinds of

skills and knowledge about the media that might be legitimised; how teachers and students

might engage with media production within a purportedly student-centred approach; and

whether the particular kinds of skills and knowledge on offer might be presented as

negotiable. The findings are as follows:


1. While the youth work approach and the media production training approach are

   frequently brought together in attempts to empower young people both socially and

   technically, there is a danger that the youth work approach can actually be

marginalised by a skills-based training approach. In this case, the broader aim of providing disadvantaged youth with a safe, cultural refuge seemed to be expected only as a side effect of the training.

2. In the case of the youth project that I observed, skills-based training was the dominant approach. It focused on teaching young people particular kinds of skills required for media production rather than on making them consider the content they produced. The skills included specified *techniques* such as pressing a particular button on the camera in order to achieve a particular effect; professional *norms* required in order to achieve seamless, realist television; and *procedural knowledge* such as preparing a storyboard or a treatment. These skills were all presented as fundamentally *non-negotiable* rules.

3. While the pedagogy of both the youth work and the training approaches may be viewed as student-centred compared with the teacher-centred approach of critical analysis (identified in Chapter 5), the actual pedagogy seems to be fundamentally authoritarian. In the case of the youth work approach, there is a danger that the teacher comes to speak *for* the young people, insofar as what the teacher wants the students to do is already decided, particularly in terms of the content of the production. In the case of the training approach, due to its overemphasis on teaching particular kinds of skills, and thus its lack of concern with the actual content

produced, there is a danger that the teacher does little more than encourage the students to make something with their own hands as an end in itself. In both cases, the exchange between teachers and students is again that of 'normal classroom discourse', which is characterised as teacher-initiated, less dialogic exchanges.

4. Despite the problems with the teaching curriculum that the youth project provides, students seemed to use it as a 'resource' in constructing their own learning curriculum, in order to meet their own needs such as gaining a first experience of hands-on production. On the one hand, the young people seemed to regard the youth work and training approaches as complementary to what they might learn about the media in school (which was mainly focused on theoretical understanding or critical reading of the media). On the other hand, they tried to negotiate with the given teaching curriculum, by parodying the teacher's political agenda (in their production) and by resisting the skills-based training system (in the members' meetings).

These findings suggest that it is problematic to bring together two different approaches to media education (social/political education and technical training) without clearly defining the fundamental aim of providing young people with opportunities to make their own media production in the first place. On the one hand, the youth work perspective effectively requires young people to speak with the 'voice of youth', that is on behalf of a disadvantaged or even oppressed social group. On the other hand, the technical training

perspective can result in making young people learn particular kinds of production methods and techniques in isolation from questions about content or communication. In both cases, young people do not seem to be allowed to *negotiate* the meaning of the particular kind of social practice they are engaging with.

### 8.2.3. Case study 3: issues of 'empowerment' in media education

Building on the case studies of these contrasting versions of media education (critical analysis, youth work and production training), I conducted another case study in a school where theoretical and practical approaches were brought together in order for students to make film trailers. I set out to explore how media education might empower students both as critical readers and creative writers; how it can function as a form of social education; and how teachers can intervene more constructively in the group process. The findings are as follows:

1.  While the integration of the 'reading' and 'writing' aspects of media education aims to empower students to become media literate both theoretically and practically, the actual practice can still be limited by the dominance of an official critical discourse which emphasises the ideological dimension of the media. In my case study, the given task was for the students to demonstrate their critical understanding of the conventions of a given genre (the gangster film) through their practical productions. In this case,

the official critical discourse seemed effectively to make the students focus on a rather rigid notion of genre as a set of 'conventions'. Therefore, it seemed to limit the ways in which the students could negotiate the meaning of the film genre based on their own experiences of viewing films, particularly in terms of constructing the narrative and the characters.

2. While group production is often encouraged in media education with the aim of developing students personally and socially, by making them learn with and from others, its implicit pedagogy needs to be considered in relation to the *differential* knowledge and skills that individual students may have. In other words, the development of individual students' confidence or social/communication skills cannot be considered separately from their knowledge about the media (both theoretical and practical) since it is partly on this basis that they negotiate their own ideas within a group.

3. Without teachers' intervention in order to provide *grounds for negotiation*, both in theory and in practice, as well as establishing a general democratic principle, negotiation in a group can become a matter of chance or of hoping to meet compatible personalities. Particularly considering that there are different levels of prior knowledge amongst individual students, teachers need to intervene in group productions in order to provide students with fairer opportunities to learn.

4.  While the attempt to integrate theory and practice (or 'reading' and 'writing') in media education is important, it is important to consider the actual ways in which they are combined. In my case study, the integration of theory and practice seemed to happen at an institutional level. In other words, the students learned theory from their teachers and learned practice, particularly the editing process, from an outside media expert, rather than learning how to communicate an intended content (constructed on the basis of their theoretical study) to their audience.

5.  The issue of integrating theory and practice needs to be considered in relation to teachers' knowledge and position more broadly, and in terms of the kinds of competence that they can offer to their students. The continuing divide between theoretical and technical aspects of media learning may reflect how these two areas are constructed in a syllabus and how media teachers are trained, considering that many media teachers are initially trained as English teachers.

These findings suggest that, while the attempt to integrate 'theory' and 'practice' can get beyond some of the problems of the other approaches identified above, it also raises further issues. Questions about the role of teachers in group work, and the level and status of both teacher and student knowledge, need to be addressed. Now I would like to discuss some implications of these findings for media education.

## 8.2.4. Implications of the research for media education

Based on the discussion of the research findings, I suggest the implications of the research for media education as follows.

1. Media education needs to get beyond a text-centred approach, particularly insofar as this entails an overemphasis on the ideological dimension of the media and an assumption that audiences are potential victims of the media. Instead, media education needs to provide students with *discursive resources* with which they can reflect and understand the complex ways in which the media operate in their own everyday lives.

2. Media education needs to pay more attention to the social and cultural process of teaching and learning in order to make classroom discussion more *dialogic*. Teachers need to consider how the particular kinds of abilities and knowledge about the media that they draw upon (both theoretically and practically) position themselves and their students in the classroom. Such consideration needs to move beyond a fundamentally rationalistic and asocial view of the classroom community as one in which the participants are presumed to be able to reach agreement without conflict.

3. The practical production or writing aspect of media education needs to be taught not as a technical exercise, nor as an illustration of theoretical study or criticism, but as a specific social, communicative practice in its own right. This implies that aesthetic and stylistic aspects of production need to be taught in the classroom in terms of audio-visual communication rather than regarded as something that students implicitly know.

4. Group production needs to be considered in terms of its implicit pedagogy. This includes considering the consequences of the different levels of individual students' background knowledge about the media, both theoretically and practically. Teachers need to provide students with grounds for negotiation rather than assuming that working in a group can in itself automatically build students' social and communication skills or enable them to learn from and with others.

5. Media teachers need to be provided with systematic institutional support from schools in order to update their own abilities and knowledge about the media, both theoretically and practically, and to have space to explore issues raised in their own classrooms. Such support needs to include on-going training in connection with the academic community of Media Studies and the community of media practitioners, as well as the improvement of teaching resources and facilities for media production.

## 8.3. The implications for further research

The implications of the research discussed above are also relevant to Korean education, insofar as discourses concerned with media education in South Korea are similar to those informing the classroom practice explored in this thesis. However, if they are to be implemented in South Korea, we need to bear in mind the differences between the social contexts of the U.K. and South Korea.

For instance, media education in Korea also needs to avoid the danger of imposing a particular kind of 'official critical discourse', and providing students with a reified and simplistic understanding of the media. However, this issue needs to be considered in relation to how contemporary Korean young people engage with the media, both personally and socially, in their everyday lives. This remains a subject for further research. Korean youth projects also need to consider that there is a danger of romanticising the 'voice of youth' when they claim to empower young people by providing them with opportunities to express themselves. However, in the particular social and historical context of Korea, such youth projects seem to make a positive impact on the education system, particularly considering that Korean children and young people have hardly been given any space to focus on what they want to do. In this context, youth projects seem to play a positive role in terms of creating an educational space for young people to explore

who they are, perhaps as progressivism may have done in the U.K. in the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, the more specific implications of this research for Korean education need to be considered in relation to the role that particular discourses about media education may play in the particular social and historical context of South Korea. This is another subject for further research.

These implications for further research reflect some of the limitations of this research. It may be that the limitations result precisely from the fact that I chose to research *others'* educational experiences. Clearly, this was a theoretical choice, driven by the post-colonial perspective in Korean educational research: I wanted to avoid importing western educational theories and practices without considering carefully the social and historical contexts where those theories and practices developed. By conducting classroom research in the U.K., where media education has developed over a longer period, I have tried to explore how the so-called 'critical pedagogy' is actually implemented in the classroom, rather than simply importing others' educational practices as a model to follow. In doing so, I have identified the kinds of issues that need to be considered in the Korean educational context. Research specific to that context remains as a subject for further research.

# Appendix 1.

# Conventions used in the presentation of transcripts

(abc) Parentheses enclosing text contain notes, usually about contextual and nonverbal

information

[abc] Brackets contain explanatory words for the ones spoken by the speaker

ABC A capitalised word or phrases indicates increased volume.

(… ) Ellipsed points in brackets indicate omitted data

Conventional punctuation marks are used to indicate ends of utterances or sentences,

usually indicated by slight pauses on the audiotape. Commas refer to pauses within words

or word phrases.

# Appendix 2.

# The script of '*Speak Out: Sister Act*'

*Inside the studio*

Joy [presenter]: (Intro) Welcome to *Speak Out*. I'm Joy and this week's episode is '*Sister Act*'. Today we're going to be talking to the victim of an offender of an unusual crime. Now I'm going to be talking to Declan. (to Declan) Welcome to the show. How do you feel about being mugged by your younger sister?

Declan [victim]: (in a low tone and looking away) Well. I feel so ashamed. It shouldn't have happened because we've been brought up in a nice family. I felt so shocked that day when I realised that it was my sister.

Joy: (to Declan) Didn't you try to fight back?

Declan: (to Joy) Yeah, I did try to fight back but there were too many of them. I mean – what can I do? I was a single one.

Joy: (to Declan) What did they take from you?

Declan: (to Joy) Well, they took my mobile phone, they took my money – there was 5 pounds and two pence and they took my train pass.

Joy: (to Declan) Well, thank you for your time. Now we'll be talking to the offender, Dacia. (to Dacia) Didn't you realise it was your own brother?

Dacia [offender]: (shamelessly) Of course, I didn't! Come on now! I mean like ... If I knew it was my brother, I wouldn't have done it!

Joy: (to Dacia) Whose idea was it, in the first place?

Dacia: (to Joy) Well, it was like … we saw him there and it was dark. So we thought, "OK, it's easy picking." So we went and we just did it!

Joy: (to Dacia) Do you commit these crimes so often?

Dacia: No. Whenever we feel bored – I mean there is nothing to do. So we're like ... walking down the street, just hanging out and so forth, yeah, so "Why not?"

Joy: (looking stunned)

Joy: ('link') Now we'll be going outside to Cath who'll be talking to members of the
general public.


*Outside the studio*

Cath [presenter]: It's too cold down the street, so I'm here in this youth club to interview
some people. (to an interviewee) What do you think about one family member
mugging another family member?

Interviewee 1: (in a serious tone) I feel so glad to hear that because that's such a nice thing
to do.

Cath: Why do you think that?

Interviewee 1: (in a cynical tone) Cause you know, everyone can go and check their styles
some time and if it works in their family, then it will progress soon to all the
streets.

Cath: Thank you very much. (to Interviewee 2) What do you think about one family
member mugging another family member?

Interviewee 2: It must be the most bizarre thing that I've ever heard.

Cath: (to Interviewee 3) What do you think about one family member mugging another
family member?

Interviewee 3: I think that's bad. You know, I don't know.

Cath: (to the fourth interviewee) What do you think about one family member mugging
another family member?

Interviewee 4: (ironically) I think that's good, cause family members should stick together,
yeah?


*Back to the studio*

Joy: (Outro) So, there we have it. Crimes can be committed by anyone, even by your own
family. Until next week, take care.

## Appendix 3.

## The script of *'For Love and Money'*

A: Vincent Smith

B: Junior Smith

C: Monique Kight

*Scene One: Planning in a Room*

A: We're gonna hit this bank right Junior? Junior! Junior! (Raised voice)

(Junior is paying attention to a spider on the floor)

B: What did you say bruv?

A: What the bloody hell you lookin at? That's so important and you ain't listening to me.

B: I was listening. I swear I was.

A: So what did I say then?

B: You said we're gonna fir this tank Vince.

A: NO YOU IDIOT!!!!!! (Smacks him)

   Now listen to me again.

*Scene Two: Bank Robbery*

A & B. (entering bank)

A: EVERYBODY GET DOWN!

(A looks around and sees B on the floor.)

A: NO NOT YOU!!!!!! (Smacks him again)

(B gets up)

A: (Looks around the bank and sees C, who is working as a bank teller)

   IT'S YOU!!!!!!!!!!

*Flashback of this scene*

(A walks into house and approaches the door.)

A: Why is this door locked? And further more where is everybody?

(A walks towards door and hears voices and laughter.)

A: What's all the noise? Is someone throwing a party without me?

   Huh (smugly) I doubt it.

(Kneels down and looks through keyhole and sees B+C in a 'warm embrace' kicks off

      door.)

A: What's going on here then? Junior I think, (pause) I know you've got something to tell

      me. So get telling.

B: It's not what it looks like I swe........

(C cuts in)

C: Well talk about something being obvious

(A cuts in)

A: YOU!!!! can shut up for a start, cos I'm not asking you, JUNIOR explain.

B: I, we, we're just looking for her earrings, yeah that's what we were looking for her

      earrings, yeah.

A: Don't give me that. I'm not stupid. As for you (c) you better get out of here before I

      count to 10.

C: But.........

A: 1... 2... 3... 4... 5...

C: Let me explain ple......

A: 6... 7... 8... 9... wait you are still her on ten,

C: I am going. I am going. You (mumbling)

A: (hits B) What am I going to do with you now eh... you dunce.

B: (Rolling around the floor) I am sorry it just happened, I don't know what happened, I'll

make it up to you.

A: Sure bloody you will ......

*Voiceover*

C: Believe it or not I went from being the girl of a bank robber to a bank teller, can you

believe it.....

*Back to the bank*

A: Anyway as much as I would love to sit and talk about old times I got a flight to catch,

So bye babe, Junior shoot her.

B: WHAT!!!!!!!!!

A: So what you're deaf now I said shoot her and hurry up about it to, god I hate amateurs.

(under his breath)

B: I'm really sorry about this but I've got no choice.

(Gunshots)

B + C leaves bank together after B has shot A.

*THE END*

# Appendix 4.

# The titles and plots of the students' productions for Chapter 7

## 1. *R.I.P.* (Group A)

Martin Carter is killed by Vincent Wilson (*played by Jake*), a vicious drug dealer, because of an unpaid debt relating to Martin's own drug habit. His family and his shocked cousins (*played by other four people in the group: two female – Kalee and Kat – and two male students –Jamey and Ben*) finally meet up after a long time at Martin's funeral. They feel so angry about Martin's death that they decide to avenge his death. They realise that Vincent Wilson is in the big time and is well respected and protected. The only way for them to get to him is to play him at his own game. They work their way up through the rank of drug dealers and gangsters by hard work gaining the trust and respect of people above them. Vincent Wilson realises that he has competition and tries to find out more about the rival family. When he discovers that they are related to Martin Carter, he goes after them and one of the cousins is killed. They retaliate with a large scale attack on Vincent at his home. There is a shoot-out between the cousins, Vincent and his mean. Two of the cousins are seriously wounded, but one manages to kill Vincent.

## 2. *Passengers* (Group B)

Red (*played by Elisa*) and Mike (*played by Jorden*) are childhood sweethearts and computer banking frauds. Senise (*played by Florens*) wins Mike and turns him from computer theft into drug dealer. Red gives up on men and becomes a mad feminist. Senise changes Mike and then leaves him. Financed by new gangster, Senise gets Junk (*played by Mac*) dealing for her. He shoots more than he sells. Now they all want to kill each other: Mike wants to kill Senise because she dumped him; Red wants to kill Mike because he

dumped her; Senise wants to kill Junk because he is shooting more than selling drugs; Junk wants to kill Red because she rejected him. There is a cross-fire by all these four people against each other in the underground train. By accident, a man gets caught in the cross-fire, and he turns out to be another gangster (*played by Jered*).

## 3. *The Extreme Objectives* (Group C)

Ray Leon (*played by Maron*) realises that the only way to make it is as a gangster. His father is shot by Don Ferrerro, but Ray does not know that. All he knows is that they are close friends. The only other close parental figure he knows is in fact Don Ferrerro, who is his real father, yet Ray has no knowledge of this. Ray joins Don Ferrerro's gang and is acquainted with Georgio (*played by Arnie*), who is the known son of Don Ferrerro. Georgio becomes jealous of Ray because he is treated better by the Don, and he does not know that Ray is his brother, so he believes he has reason to be upset. Mrs. Ferrerro (*played by Kelley*) loves her family and accepts her husband's gangster career yet her career is a hidden mystery. Don Ferrerro is hot in his cellar by an unknown person. Due to the Don being shot in his domain, many suspicions arise, such as Georgio suspecting Ray of his murder. The two face-off. As they are about to settle their rivalry, a message comes from an unknown source called 'Mr. Man' who claims that Don Ferrerro was murdered by their orders. Ray and Georgio become a team in their pursuit of Mr. Man.

Appendix 5.

The selected shots from the students' productions for Chapter 7

5. *R.I.P.* (Group A)

6.  *Passengers* (Group B)

*3. The Extreme Objectives* (Group C)

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