International Reflections on the Use of Photo-Elicitation and Visual Representation in Research and Literacy Instruction

Organizer and Chair: Veronica Richard, Concordia University Chicago, USA, veronica.richard@cuchicago.edu

Discussants: Dara Soljaga, Concordia University Chicago, USA, dara.soljaga@cuchicago.edu; Meg Noack, Lutheran Education Queensland, Australia, meg.noack@leq.lutheran.edu.au

Abstract

This symposium extends the thinking surrounding photo-elicitation and visual representation methods in research and educational settings. Building upon the idea of multiliteracies, the presenters highlight the various, complex meanings people derive from the many forms of social and work-related communicative texts (e.g., picture books, infographics, intertextuality). In this way, the presenters answer the call for responsive research and literacy pedagogy accounting for the combination of different modes of meaning making and meaning creation for people across three diverse locations.

Researcher-educators from Queensland, Australia share their work with Lutheran teachers, providing literacy professional development and ongoing instructional support. Researcher-educators from South Africa speak to their visual work with instructional technology college students in face-to-face and online settings. Researcher-educators from the United States share their work with pre-college and college learners and various teachers in the area of literacy development.

The symposium centers on experiences using photo-elicitation and visual representation through photo story to empower participants, to access prior knowledge and beliefs, to allow space for construction and sharing of meaning, and to promote the metaphorical possibilities that bridge meaning from participant to researcher. For educational settings, presenters convey how these methods enhance access to learner thinking processes, promote justification discourse, and move thinking from one's self to thinking in a more critical, global perspective. Finally, presenters extend the field of methodology in research and education by reflecting on the similarities and differences pertaining to the method, looking to move the process into the realm of culturally responsive research and teaching.

Paper 1

Photo-Elicitation: An Exploration of Literacy Teaching and Learning with Lutheran Teachers in Australia

Meg Noack, Lutheran Education Queensland, Australia, meg.noack@leq.lutheran.edu.au; Dominique Jacqueline, Lutheran Education Queensland, Australia, dominique.jacqueline@leq.lutheran.edu.au

In our capacity as curricular and instructional administrators for Lutheran educators in Australia, we have recently begun employing photo-elicitation with our educators both in literacy and religious training. In a pilot study, teacher participants in one group were exposed the photo-elicitation technique, while in another, we maintained traditional protocol and teaching practices (i.e., lecture format). We then conducted various interviews and observations of different groups overtime. Using thematic inductive analysis processes, our initial findings demonstrate that the group engaging in photo-
elicitation was more engaged, productive and expressed a greater likelihood of implementing the new content. We explore benefits and challenges to using this method in future settings in various contexts.

References


Paper 2

Photo-Elicitation and the Visual Representation of Photo Story: Rethinking Meaning Making and Story Telling

Richard Richter, Concordia University Chicago (South African Satellite), South Africa, richard.richter@cuchicago.edu; Helga Hambrock, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa, HambrockHB@tut.ac.za

Drawing on the power of storytelling, the researcher-educators share their experiences using photo-elicitation and photo story methods with technology college students in South Africa. Through numerous interviews involving semi-structured questioning and photographic think alouds, the researcher-educators capture rich data demonstrating participants’ thoughts and processes while they create and refine their visual story. Ten participants’ photographic stories or journalistic representations are detailed, combining the power of technology with telling one’s story. Initial findings include content language shifts and participant realizations. Areas of empowerment, metaphorical language, cultural relevance, and discourse shifts are explored.

References


After reviewing the literature on past and current trends associated with visual research methods, we detail three studies in which photo-elicitation and visual representation methods were used. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifact analysis; the researchers explore potential benefits and challenges using visual methods as data and as classroom teaching and learning practices. Over 80 participant experiences are captured in this methodological discussion, including adolescent students, college students, and teachers. We close by discussing the many possibilities and tensions that accompany the decisions to use alternative forms of data collection. The areas of decontextualized photo sets, cultural relevance, metaphorical language, and literacy empowerment are advanced.

References:


