

Seven conditions and no more deciphering

« *If I no longer teach them to how to decipher, what can I do ?* » Desperate teachers ask us.
« *We have an answer for them, - it is not necessary to focus on this problem but they have to work as far as possible and simultaneously with each condition that allows a way to enter into writing. Don't worry about deciphering ! It will decline as they progress. This is only because you put into place new conditions that children can create a specific system, so different from "grapho-phono" strategies and it's not because the teacher's decision is to remove this part from his teaching program that makes it coherent.* » So, Jean Foucambert in "**Actes de Lectures**, n°19, 1987" introduces the characteristics surrounding for a new pedagogic situation. These situations exist and they try to support the following conditions...

1. The mix between different aged children in a same class.

The "AFL" advocates "working with cycle", that means to mix different aged children in the same class. As they are confronted with each other, it is observed that they neither have the same experiences, nor the same knowledge, and that they feel neither the same doubts nor the same certainties. Children, constantly, have to discuss, discover, test, and prove new knowledge.

Written documents account for this diversity. Every one can explore these texts alone, or with help, or helping each other, it depends on whether or not these texts are known, unknown or very well-known.

2. The necessity is "living together"

If we have a 5-8 year old children in the same class, it's not to separate them for specific activities, but to make them live/experience (together) the same things. So, life goes on without the absolute truth and every one understands the world in his or her own way. Learning is elaborated in a state of permanent doubt because they have to situate them themselves among multiple truths.

3. To be familiar with Writing

We know how to walk when we are able to move forward on any type of ground presented (whether it be flat, stony, slippery, or steep). We know how to read when we are able to read everything : when the type, the organisation, the form of the text is no longer an obstacle. So, it is necessary that, at school, all sorts of written documents co-exist, all different in their presentation, origin, style without any kind of modification reason because complex texts are the best learning supports. There's nothing more natural, in any way, than associating authentic meetings with authentic texts...

- *Class projects associated with outside events/outings guarantee the presence of written documents about the environment, in class.*

- *The observation of these different kinds of written documents make clearly constants variations, missing elements...*

- *Communication worry makes you using again new rules you found out when you want to write to external reason.*
- *We regularly use familiar texts as a source of inspiration, reference points, construction materials because we need to correspond through writing.*

4. Frequenting real texts

Text is the easiest unit to approach because its organisation, as a whole, is significant. From the start, children have to be in the presence of complete texts, not special written documents for beginners but texts which are chosen for their increasing interests.

All technical conquests are justified if they clearly identify the acquisitions and gaps that are necessary to deal with literary texts, scientific, poetic or journalistic ones... If they have their own significance, texts become richer in content when you connect them with each other because they question and reply to each other: when you know that and when you use it, you can work on the process with your own writing culture, that is useful when you need reading or writing.

5. Reading as an obligation

Reading is useful if it helps you to do, to think, to imagine, to understand and to communicate. Reading has to be a transparent activity, situated between two experiences : one is because when you have question, you need written documents, the other one is because you use again parts of your readings to go on action and thought. The best evaluation technique for a teacher every evening is to ask him/herself : « *How many times today have the children had to read something so that they can continue to work ?* » The frequency of questions and research for answers in written documents justifies an improvement in one's investigation methods.

6. Thinking about reading as a habit

Children have to be used to thinking about what they are doing or not when they read, thinking about their own strategies, comparing these with other ones. Little by little, they pass from « *What can I do to find the meaning in/of this text ?* » to « *How can this text work to make me look for the meaning ?* » Next, comes the necessary and successive dislocation, transformation, work on the text and this is supported by numerous exercises.

7. Frequent writing use

Reading and writing are evidently connected but reading comes first because a reader has to use his/her own reader's experiences if he wants to be read. So that, writing reflects on reading: reading mastery helps you enter into a better writing process. Writing is not at stake « *How can I write what is said ?* » but « *How can I write what is read ?* » At this time, is it necessary to specify that writing needs a technical ability only if it is a useful practice.

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