

# Literacy and the Spaces-in-between: Space and Scale as Mediators of Literacy Inequalities

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Debates on literacy inequalities have been powerfully advanced through Jan Blommaert's work which demonstrates the ways in which discourse forms can lose function as they are moved into different environments. Looking through a south-north lens, Blommaert maps this feature of loss of function against world-wide inequalities conceptualised through the centre-periphery models outlined in world systems theory. This paper presents work that I have done over a number of years on the concept of recontextualisation, examining at a micro-level (rather than a transnational level) examples of everyday print and digital texts which people produce and interpret as part of processes in workplaces and development projects in New Zealand and South Africa. The research then explores what happens to the fit between form and function when these particular texts are projected across contexts in the sequences of events necessary to 'make things happen'. I explore the implications of this shift in terms of the unit of analysis, questioning how the concepts of literacy events and practices can account for such shifting. I identify the resources that actors have access to and draw on in each event in these sequences, and in their ability to project beyond the local, looking more closely at the materiality of literacy. As people and/or their texts are recontextualised as part of such meaning-making trajectories, time and space become important dimensions of analysis: I explore the levels at which time and space can be analysed in these crossings, treating these levels as forms of scaling. The multi-sited, micro-ethnographic work involved in tracing these trajectories shows that function can be lost, but it can also be sustained and/or gained. The paper suggests that a shift is needed from the focus (evident in much research and teaching in language and literacy studies) on the production and interpretation of meanings within contexts towards a focus on the projection of meanings across contexts. This shift of focus can contribute to new understandings of the placedness of resources for meaning making, the notion of capabilities and the understanding of literacy inequalities.