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Changing knowledge, practices and social relations in the digitized pedagogic space of the UK subject English classroom

This paper explores the relationship between technology, multimodal representation and knowledge in the UK subject English classroom. Specifically it discusses the implications of the introduction of Interactive Whiteboards (IWB) into UK schools for teaching and learning English. Through illustrative examples the paper will examine how the facilities of this technology have created new pedagogic spaces in the classroom as well as a portal to multimodal digital representations. Paying particular attention to the changing function of speech, writing, image, gesture, movement and the integration of these modes into multimodal ensembles it will show how technology changes the type of texts that come into the English classroom, as well as how these are mobilized, circulate, and inserted into the culture of the classroom. Increasingly in England, for instance, image now provides the starting point for the work of teachers and students in English lessons. This paper argues that these changes have significant implications for what is to be learnt – that is what counts as English, as well as what it means to be a learner and literacy practices such as reading and writing. The pedagogic practices of teachers for example the design of learning materials have also been changed by the facilities and multimodal resources of the IWB. In particular its potential to reconfigure the time and space of the classroom, and the opportunities for interactivity that the IWB can provide. Classroom practices and the social relations of the classroom can also be reshaped in important ways by the possibilities and constraints of a technology such as the IWB. In short, the use of technology - the shift from print to digital interactive technologies - has an effect on the textual landscape of the English classroom in ways that are central for knowledge, teaching and learning.