

**The Enigma Machine:
How Legitimation Code Theory is helping students crack the codes of achievement
in education**

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Education is an enigma machine. It brings together different knowledges and diverse students in a large number of possible combinations. Cracking the codes of success at any particular level, discipline, kind of assignment, etc. is a tough task for which some students are better prepared by their backgrounds than others. Helping students meet this challenge is made more difficult by the 'knowledge-blindness' suffered by most approaches to education: they either explore generic processes of learning or aim to reveal the arbitrary social power behind practices. Thus research tends to address knowing or knowers rather than knowledge itself, rendering the very basis of education invisible. Further, where knowledge is explored, it is usually crudely categorised into static types that cannot embrace complexity or change. Legitimation Code Theory or 'LCT' is addressing this challenge by revealing the organizing principles of the diverse knowledge practices in which students must become adept to succeed. LCT is now being widely used to explore education at all levels, across the disciplinary map and in a growing range of national contexts. In this talk I discuss one dimension of LCT that is being rapidly adopted in research and teaching, particularly by applied linguists: 'Semantics'. To illustrate its usefulness, I focus first on a major project that highlighted the significance of 'semantic waves' for cumulative knowledge-building in classrooms. I then discuss how semantic waves are being shown as crucial to student success at assessments. Finally, I show how teaching is using these ideas from LCT, including alongside applied linguistics, to empower students by revealing the bases for achievement in different subject areas.