Chapter 2

Engaging Learners With Digital Literacy Practices

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the ways two educators and their academic partners engaged young learners with digital literacy practices. In an educational environment dominated by print-based texts, the need to work with learners as both consumers and producers of digital text becomes integral. Drawing on theories of new literacies and multimodalities, the authors designed teaching and learning experiences to highlight the structure of digital text, and the complexity of the interrelationships between the language modes through deconstruction of live texts. The learners then demonstrated their understandings of these elements through their collaborative production of digital text. While this research was conducted with young learners, in this chapter the authors present important pedagogical considerations that can guide educators in their support of learners at all ages as they examine digital literacy practices for both text consumption and production.

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INTRODUCTION

I’m dreaming of a holiday… Who wants to come? When can we all get away? Where will we go? How will we get there? What will it cost? What will we do? So many questions.

I post on Whatsapp: Who’s up for a holiday?

😎

The chat fires back and forth among the group as we negotiate budgets, hotels, travel, sun v. snow, luxury v. economy:

Skiing? ❄️

Bushwalking?

Europe? Can’t afford that! 💰😭😭😭

Can’t wait to go shopping:) 🛍️👠👗👛

Ooooh let’s fly business class - I’ve got the points ✈️✈️💕💕😃...the excitement builds as we explore the possibilities.

And so, the planning begins, and it requires us to engage a range of complex digital literacy practices to get the gang to this European vacation safely, at the right time and at the right price. To start, we share our Outlook diaries, and after much negotiation, settle on travel dates. Next, a GoogleDoc to allocate jobs for each person, post itineraries, share ideas and give each other feedback about what’s possible and what’s Out Of The Question.

In the online environment, we conduct searches for everything from accommodation and flights, information about tourist destinations and best times to travel. We sift and sort through the multitude of hits from our searches, carving out our individual pathways to our goals. We are discerning in locating trusted sources of information and discarding others. We make connections between and among the different texts to start to build our understanding of the culture, accommodation, costs and the possibilities for a happy time.

Searches like these require the opening of multiple tabs on the laptop, flipping forward and back across the menu bar, we gather images, ideas, itineraries and bargains together for sharing on the GoogleDoc. Friends share tips in Whatsapp - Don’t forget to bookmark your sites so you can go back to them! Remember to check the conversion rate.

Slowly, the itinerary comes together. Bookings are made and paid for through secure gateways, contact details shared with providers, itineraries emailed and filed away into our shared Dropbox. And just for fun, we all install an Eiffel Tower shot as the wallpaper on our smartphones to keep the dream alive. As the departure date nears and the packing begins, text messages abound, complete with photos of potential outfits, requests for help, for opinions, advice and scrutinising of the train app so we get to the airport on time. One final check on the airline app and we’re off!