Chapter 5
Metaliteracy and Multiple Literacies

ABSTRACT

In networked digital culture, individuals communicate through multiple literacies including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial ways of making meaning from information. Producing and consuming content requires new literacy skills and an ability to access and evaluate information in all modes to construct knowledge. Information is shared instantly through channels such as text messaging, blogging, social networking, videomaking, and podcasting. Processing information, in numerous modes, requires the metaliterate learner to utilize four domains (metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and affective). This chapter explains the emerging term ‘metaliteracy’, advocates the use of this new term in the metamodern age, and examines best practices of learning and communicating in participatory environments.

INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” ---Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize laureate

The transition from a traditional literacy-based world of reading and writing to the new age of networked culture happened quickly at the turn of the 21st century and picked up speed after smartphones and mobile devices came

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on the scene in about 2007. Scrutiny of the information seeking behavior of digital citizens, the evolving venues of digital communication, and the platforms through which a vast amount of information bombards us daily commands a fresh look at literacy. Onomastic processes make use of neoteric lexicon, helping us clarify new concepts with new words. This chapter aims to illuminate the need for revision of literacy theory which coincides with the pivotal milestone of our philosophical moment in history.

BACKGROUND

The nature of literacy is undergoing radical change due to information and communication technology (ICT). “Modern information and communication technologies have created a “global village,” in which people can communicate with others across the world as if they were living next door” (Christensson, 2010). The impact of ICT has issued a new era into civilization, an era in which literacy is deictic – full of changes that depend on context of identity, space and time.

Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, and Henry (2017, p. 5) profess, “The rapid transformations in the nature of literacy caused by technological change is a primary source for the deictic nature of literacy; new technologies regularly and repeatedly transform previous literacies, continually redefining what it means to become literate”. Validation of those rapid transformations means new discourse and nomenclature at the risk of coining a phrase or new term only to be discarded for a different one. Here, we tackle this problem with the proposal of the term metaliteracy, arguing for use of a sharpened and clear name.

The impact of the Internet on literacy, discussed in Chapter 2 is evident to anyone who communicates on a mobile device; however, the conceptual framework of literacy and even the basic definition is often misunderstood. “We believe that we are on the cusp of a new era in literacy theory, research, and practice, one in which the nature of reading, writing, and communication is being fundamentally transformed by the Internet (Leu, et al., 2017, p.12)”. Transformation in any organism or organization may be fraught with discomfort, confusion, or pain; but the change may be necessary or inevitable. Perhaps, as these researchers point out, literacy is amid a profound metamorphosis. “To be literate tomorrow will be defined by even newer technologies that
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