Expanded Territories of "Literacy": New Literacies and Multiliteracies

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Abstract
Facing the radical change in society in the 21st century, the conventional view of literacy and literacy education may no longer satisfy students' needs in working and social lives, especially beyond classroom settings. Therefore, expanded territories of literacy have been proposed to better support teachers' and students' literacy education and practices. This paper conceptualized two expanded perspectives of literacy that are important and useful to understand literacy and literacy education in the modern society, which provide theories and frameworks for scholars, educators, and practitioners in the field of education.
Keywords: literacy, New Literacies, Multiliteracies

1. Introduction

An important mission of teaching and learning literacy is to equip students with literacy skills so that they can fully participate in social and cultural activities in the modern world. The conventional view of literacy, however, is limited to the mastery of "page-bound, official, and standard forms of the national language" (The New London Group, 1996). In other words, the meaning of literacy is restricted to paper-based, formalized, and standardized forms of language that only reflects the dominant language and culture. However, along with the rapid change of technology and social life, the language skills needed to make sense of the world are also changing. The radical changes that occur in people's lives brought up new requirements for developing literacy skills that are much more complicated and various than before. Since the conventional view of literacy is too narrow to satisfy people's needs to fully participate in social and cultural activities, scholars attempt to broaden the scope of literacy so that the expanded understanding of literacy can better support researching, teaching, and learning. In this paper, two perspectives of literacy are introduced and discussed: New Literacies theory and Multiliteracies theory.

2. New Literacies

The theory of New Literacies emerged in the field of education as a response to the changing world, which changes dramatically from old capitalism (Fordism) to the new global capitalism (Gee, 2004; Hall, 1996). Significantly different from the old form of industry that is characterized by "centralized mass production, hierarchical management, and stable employment structure", the new form of industry is more about "rapidly changing information, distributed management and regulations, and unpredictable, project-oriented employment", due to the innovation and development of technology (Tang, 2015). Facing the dramatic change in economy, educators argue that the conventional literacy education may not be able to fully prepare students for the challenges in the modern working and social life (Gee, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Luke, 1998). Thus, as the world has changed, the definition of literacy should be broadened accordingly. The New Literacies theory is such an attempt to expand the definition of what literacy consists of.

The most important feature that distinguishes New Literacies from other literacy perspectives is that New Literacies emphasizes on "the epochal change in everyday technologies and its associated cultural practices" (Coiro et al., 2008). It extends beyond the conventional view of literacy as printed and written texts, and includes meaning-making practices using digital technologies (e.g., video games, weblogs, mobile texts, etc.), and explores the changes of beliefs towards literacy in the process of practices. Regarding the definition of New Literacies, there have been debates about what constitutes the "new". However, two constructs conceptualized in Lankshear and Knobel (2007) are widely accepted by scholars to characterize the "new" in New Literacies: the new "technical stuff" and the new "ethos stuff".

The new "technical stuff" includes the technological innovations and development in the modern society. Technology had been implemented in classroom teaching since the dawn of the 20th century, such as films, radio, televisions, and computers. However, comparing to the "old technologies", the "technical stuff" in New Literacies is "new" because of two significantly distinctive characters. First, while the "old technologies" mostly consist of simple forms of production, the new "technical stuff" is a "hybridization of multimodal media" that includes texts, images, music, videos, etc., which altogether create interactive and interconnected forms of production that can be retrieved conveniently (Lankshear and Knobel, 2007). People nowadays are able to get access to the Internet via mobile devices and gather information that consists of various forms of presentation.

Secondly, the new "technical stuff" allows distributed means of media production (Lankshear and Knobel, 2007). In the modern society, large amount of information online, such as YouTube videos, is not produced by monopolies but by ordinary people who only have cell phones or cameras that are connected to the Internet.

On the other hand, the new "ethos stuff" constitutes of the beliefs and practices of New Literacies. It refers to a new belief ("mindset") to see the world has changed fundamentally due to the utilization of new technologies, rather than using new tools to do the old work only in more "technologized ways" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Based on the new belief in literacy, the New Literacies are more "participatory, collaborative, and distributed" in nature, comparing to the "published, individuated, author-centric, and expert-dominated" forms of conventional literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). In summary, in the New Literacies perspective, literacies are viewed as participation in collaborative activities to acquire distributed knowledge and skills.

Since the establishment and enrichment of the New Literacies theory, three research themes derive based on it. The first is the "New Literacy Studies", which emphasizes on the importance of recognizing cultural diversity and the need to study literacy as multifaceted sociocultural practices in diverse contexts (Gee, 1996). The second is the "youth literacies" study that focuses on diverse literacy practices performed by the increasing number of "shape-shifting portfolio" youths who participate in out-of-school literacy activities by using ubiquitous multimedia devices (Bortree, 2005). The third theme is the realization of expanded forms and multiple modes of meaning-making systems beyond printed and written language. The research of multimodality and multiliteracies is based on this theme (Jewitt, 2008; The New London Group, 1996). The Multiliteracies theory, emerged from the third theme, is specified in later discussion.

The New Literacy theory provides expanded insights into the ideas and scope of literacy and literacy education. From the New literacy perspective, literacy is not only about printed and written texts but should also take the new forms of representation of the target language portrayed by digital technologies into consideration. The language requirements and challenges in current workplaces are no longer restricted to reading and writing paper-based texts in native and other foreign languages, but have extended into recognition, interpretation, comprehension, and appreciation of languages and cultures in different forms and in diverse literacy practices. Therefore, the literacy education should address the corresponding issues in order to better prepare students to participate in social and cultural activities in the modern society.

3. Multiliteracies

The concept of "Multiliteracies" was firstly introduced in the New London Group (1996) as an attempt to enrich the definition of literacy to accommodate to new practices in peoples' working, public and private lives: The old "command-and-control" structure of work is replaced by "horizontal relationships of teamwork" and workers are required to be more "multiskilled" instead of "deskilled"; the old sense of monocultural and monolingual is replaced by the identification and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity; personal life is much more tightly connected to the public and the globe (New London Group, 1996). The utilization of new technologies and the emergence of new forms of social relationships produce new languages. People need to learn and become literate in different forms of languages in different contexts.

A major difference between Multiliteracies and the conventional view of literacy is that in Multiliteracies perspective, literacy is not restricted to printed or written forms of language but instead, it involves multiple modes of representation, such as music, gestures, and pictures (Perry, 2012; New London Group, 1996). In other words, although the printed and written literacy is important, it is only one kind of literacy that makes meaning in a narrowed area.

The view of literacy as multimodal is one of the characteristics defined by Multiliteracies scholars. Multiliteracies theory also contends that literacy is situated and has a social purpose (Olthouse, 2013). Literacy is situated because literacy practices are different in different contexts. For instance, an email written and sent to a friend is not the same as an email written and sent to the manager, and the uses of English are diverse in different countries by different cultural groups. Moreover, Multiliteracies theory claims that educating students to be able to "design social futures" is a specific purpose of literacy (Olthouse, 2013). The "social futures" refers to the achievement of meeting the requirements in ethical and practical challenges in the new era, which include participating in meaningful work and civic activities with people from diverse backgrounds (New London Group, 1996).

In the Multiliteracies framework, since literacy is multimodal, situated, and has a social purpose, it is needed to understand the notion of Design to develop competencies in multiliteracies. Design, defined as "a dynamic process of subjective self-interest and transformation" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008), comprises three components: The Designed, Designing, and The Redesigned. The Designed are the available resources that make meanings in specific social and cultural contexts (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). The linguistic written discourses are the Designed resources that people are familiar with, such as the lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and organizational structure in academic argumentative writing. On the other hand, Designed resources also contain elements in other modes, such as audio design, gestural design, visual design, etc. Secondly, Designing is "the

process of shaping emergent meaning which involves representation and recontextualisation" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Namely, Designing refers to how people interpret and comprehend the available meaning-making recourses. Since the meaning-making recourses are specific and contextualized, Designing is not simply a process of reflecting and repeating the Designed but rather transforming the available resources to make meanings in different modes and situations. The last component of Design is The Redesigned, which is the product of Designing. People make use of the available meaning-making resources, interpret and comprehend the resources, and transform the resources for personal usage. The Redesigned are the new meaning-making resources that are contextualized due to specific purposes. Being able to apply the Designed, performing Designing, and create The Redesigned, people become truly capable of "designing their own social futures" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

An example of the Design in modern Chinese language in Internet literacy practices is the transformation and recontextualization of the Chinese character "囧" (jiǒng). The conventional meanings of 囧 in Mandarin are "bright" or "bird flying" (the Designed), yet the usage and meaning of 囧 changed greatly due to the emergence and development of online communication and interaction in the 21th century. Based on the structure of the character, which looks similar to a certain facial expression of a person, Chinese Internet users began to use the character 囧 to represent a certain kind of feeling (e.g., awkward, embarrassed, speechless, etc.) when composing and/or chatting with others online in less formal interactions, such as writing a film comment and chatting with friends (the Designing). Gradually and interestingly, the transformed and recontextualized meaning of 囧 (the Designed) has become well-known and widely accepted by Chinese Internet users, while comparatively its conventional meanings become unrecognized. The 囧 example represents the dynamic development of language and language use in the new-technology-associated literacy practices in the modern society, which require students to acquire and develop additional literacy skills to effectively participate in diverse social and cultural activities.

The major difference between the notion of Design comparing to the conventional view of literacy in literacy education is its emphasis on students' variability and agency (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). In conventional literacy education, students are taught to embrace and adapt to the official and standard forms of the target languages; their diverse personalities, cultures, and language backgrounds are not relevant. The goal of literacy education is to "induct students into the standard written form through a pedagogy of transmission" so as to reproduce the established cultural and linguistic forms (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Comparatively, the notion of Design in Multiliteracies is built based on variability since the variability is the source of the Designed resources that serve diverse purposes in different social and cultural contexts. It also emphasizes on learner agency and subjectivity because each learner has his/her own background and experience with languages and literacy practices, purposes of utilizing meaning-making resources, ways of interpreting and comprehending the resources, and products by creating new forms of languages. Therefore, literacy education is not merely aimed to reproduce the existence, but also create the forms that never exist before, in accordance with social and cultural changes.

In addition to the recognition of the fast changing society and the expansion of the scope of literacy, the New London Group (1996) provided pragmatic pedagogical strategies to help students achieve competencies in the framework of Multiliteracies. The New London Group (1996) proposed that teaching and learning literacy should include four components: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice.

In Situated Practice, students participate in learning activities that are grounded in personal experiences and related to relationships situated in social lives (Westby, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Students utilize the available meaning-making resources embedded in life experience to solve meaningful problems. Successful Situated Practice accelerates the generalization of learned knowledge from specific to diverse social settings.

Overt Instruction involves teacher intervention and students' systemic and conscious understanding about the Designed resources. With the experts' help and scaffolded assistance, students develop metalanguage to describe the available resources, interpret and comprehend different modes of multiliteracies. The goal of Overt Instruction is to help students establish metacognition in order to be able to control their own learning (Westby, 2010).

Critical Framing requires students "to stand back from what they are studying and view it critically in relation to its context" (Westby, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Namely, students are to develop an understanding that no simple truth is universal and can be applied in all contexts. Instead, they are to realize the influence of social contexts to the selection and utilization of available resources, and critically select appropriate resources for different tasks. The Critical Framing enables students to understand what the design is for, what it does, and why (Westby, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

Transformed Practice includes activities in which students apply the learned knowledge in other

contexts. Depending on the tasks of the activities, students are to implement an established Design in a different environment, adapt a given Design so that it works in a new context, or create new Design that are congruent with new situations (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

4. Conclusion

In summary, New Literacies and Multiliteracies are the theoretical innovation in response to the rapid change in people's economic, social, and cultural life. Facing the dramatic shift in relationships among community members and languages, New Literacies and Multiliteracies broaden the scope of literacy, create new territories in literacy and literacy education that beyond paper-based reading and writing, and provide pedagogical frameworks for teaching and learning. New Literacies and Multiliteracies both suggest that literacy practices are no longer restricted to reading and writing printed and written texts in one official and standard form, but include multiple modes of representation in diverse cultural contexts and in various languages that are important in people's lives, for example, a Chinese customer reads a commercial advertisement presented in Japanese, an American listens to a Spanish song, and a Korean student watches the presidential debate between Trump and Hillary on YouTube. As the notion of literacy is broadened, literacy education changes accordingly, which is not merely pushing students to master the standard form of the target language without recognizing students' cultural and lingual differences. Instead, it starts with the utilization and appreciation of the diversity, cherishes students' agency in language learning, helps students develop the ability to critically select resources derived from their own life experience and appropriately implement in specific contexts, stimulates students' metacognition, facilitates the understanding of purposes and functions of the resources, and finally, enables students to generalize the learned literacy knowledge in different contexts.

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