

Chapter 82

Mobile Technologies and Web 2.0: Redefining New Literacy Practices

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores changing definitions of literacy that build on the key concepts of New Literacies and existing Web 2.0 practices such as blogging, social networking, and other shared and collaborative media spaces (Davies & Merchant, 2009). The chapter also describes concrete examples of mobile-based literacy ideas that build on such a framework. The focus on teacher education, and literacy education in particular, examines and considers new definitions of literacy practices with connections to mobile technologies. Although mobile technologies offer possibilities for multi-modal and collaborative literacy practices, it is suggested that we should also stay grounded in some of the principles of print literacies (the prerequisite skills of the reading and writing processes), while also fostering Web 2.0 and New Literacies (as defined and discussed by Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2006). Specific examples of Web 2.0 technologies that can be implemented with mobile tools are shared and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Building on technology tools that are interactive, hyper-connected, and participatory (O'Reilly, 2005), this chapter provides a theoretical framework for literacy practices that use mobile technologies, re-conceptualizing current and future literacy practices, while also building on Web 2.0 literacies (e.g., as defined by Davies & Merchant, 2009). This reconceptualization provides a strong rationale for moving towards integration of mobile technologies and tools within literacy instruction, both at the elementary and secondary school levels as well as within literacy teacher education. Additionally, this broader definition of literacy is grounded upon the concept of multi-modal literacies as defined by the National Council of Teachers of English (2005). I also draw upon the definition of New Literacies as defined by Lankshear and Knobel (2003; 2006).

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The ideas in this chapter provide a conceptual framework that suggests that mobile technologies should be integrated into the definition of what it is to be literate in the 21st century. Within this overarching framework, I suggest several concrete uses and possibilities for implementing mobile technologies into the literacy education preparation teachers and teacher candidates receive at the university level. These ideas can also potentially be shared in online teaching contexts, for instance, through the strategic use of professor-authored videos, screenshots, tutorials, links to websites and applications, and real-time synchronous teaching such as videoconferencing where use of mobile tools is modeled. The ideas and demonstrations of use provided for teacher educators and teacher candidates can also function as paradigmatic models for teacher candidates and teachers to use in their own classroom settings with their own current and future students.

NEW LITERACIES: REDEFINING LITERACY AND NEW LITERACIES

Historically, the subject of reading and literacy instruction itself (e.g., Chall, 1967; Snyder, 2008) has been subject to intense and polarized debate over the years as to definitions, purposes, and teaching methods. These debates surrounding literacy instruction continue with changing definitions and shifts from more traditional notions of literacy instruction towards broader definitions of literacy known as multiple literacies (e.g., Cole & Pullen, 2010) or New Literacies (Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2006). Prior to the introduction of new literacies, the ongoing debate within literacy studies has traditionally centered on the phonics versus whole language debate and how to determine the best methods to teach beginning reading (Chall, 1967; Snow & Juel, 2005). However, the newest version of the debate still continues with a different focus than just on the specific building blocks or sub-processes of reading. Educators and teacher educators need to be grounded in the varying definitions and purposes of both print and digital literacies (e.g., as described by Snow, 2006).

The term New Literacies encompasses a much broader definition of literacy than alphabetic text on the printed page; New Literacies can be conceptualized as “post-typographic” literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 17). Lankshear and Knobel state:

Established social practices have been transformed, and new forms of social practice have emerged and continue to emerge at a rapid rate. Many of these new and changing social practices involve new and changing ways of producing, distributing, exchanging and receiving texts by electronic means (2003, p. 16).

These concepts of New Literacy practices, such as the use of emerging digital tools, have also been integrated within national learning standards, which contain a specific focus on incorporating digital tools into the literacy curriculum in particular.

To highlight the shifting definitions of literacy away from print literacy and towards inclusion of digital literacies, we can examine several prominent documents and set of standards from the United States, for instance, that emphasize digital and multi-modal literacy practices. Current national standards and frameworks in the United States and elsewhere are supportive of integration of technology with traditional subject areas as learning goals. Such use of digital tools to facilitate learning shows the consistent move towards greater use of technology-based learning and digital reading and writing, in particular. Examples in the United States include ISTE’s (International Society for Technology in Education) National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS Project, 2002) and the Common

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