

CRITICAL REVIEW OF NEW LITERACIES ON WIKIPEDIA: IMPLICATION FOR LEARNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to evaluate the Wikipedia article New Literacies and provide suggestions for its improvement, with implications for teaching and learning in the 21st century. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, we examined whether the article sufficiently elaborates on the concept. The results indicate that while the article offers a substantial amount of information, it fails to construct a balanced argument because it does not consider diverse points of view. The article demonstrates a bias by conflating new literacies with digital literacies

alone (e.g., media, internet, and computer skills), neglecting the ongoing role of print literacy. Consequently, it presents a monolithic view that fails to acknowledge the multiple modes and media constituting new literacies. This study concludes by recommending the inclusion of content on linguistic and cultural diversity to better align with the realities of the new communication landscape.

Key Words: Communication Landscape, Eurocentric, Multiple Modes of Literacy, New Literacies, Wikipedia.

INTRODUCTION

Wikipedia is a free, web-based encyclopedia that offers immediate access to information on a vast array of topics. Its open-editing model, which grants readers the agency to both consume and revise content, has established it as a prominent platform for the collaborative production and dissemination of knowledge (Benet & Ma, 2003).

Wikipedia's model of open, collaborative knowledge production, while successful in disseminating vast amounts of information, has also attracted significant scholarly criticism. A

primary concern is that because articles are editable by any user, they are frequently shaped by non-experts and inexperienced contributors, potentially compromising their authority. This very openness—its greatest strength—is thus identified as a core source of contention (Hu et al., 2007; Stein & Hess, 2007).

Critics note that the open structure can lead to the omission of critical information, negatively impacting article quality and reliability (Brown, 2011; Clauson et al., 2008; Infeld & Adams, 2013). Consequently, scholars like Denning et al. (2005) have argued that without more formal

procedures for expert review and content inclusion, Wikipedia "cannot attain the status of a true encyclopedia" (p. 152).

This paper, therefore, evaluates the Wikipedia article on *New Literacies* by assessing its quality and credibility across three key dimensions: (1) academic soundness, (2) inclusiveness and depth of content, and (3) structural formatting. The analysis begins by examining the article's academic soundness, focusing on its conceptual accuracy and clarity.

Subsequently, the scope of its content is appraised, including its coverage of key theorists, foundational ideas, and relevant research within the field. The discussion then considers the article's implications for teaching and learning in 21st-century classrooms. Finally, the paper concludes by proposing specific recommendations to improve the Wikipedia entry.

FORMAT AND LANGUAGE

The Wikipedia article *New Literacies* is organized into seven sections, including definitions, research, and *New Literacies* and the classroom, alongside standard Wikipedia categories such as see also, notes, references, and external links. This structure diverges significantly from conventional academic formatting, which typically follows a predictable sequence such as abstract, introduction, body, and conclusion.

An established format aids readability by allowing the audience to anticipate the logical flow of ideas

(Swales & Feak, 2012). The *New Literacies* article is thematic but disjointed organization detracts from its coherence and may hinder a reader's ability to follow its conceptual progression. Furthermore, the use of simplistic language further diminishes the article's academic tone and suitability for a scholarly audience.

The on *New Literacies* article employs an accessible style, which may benefit readers new to the field. However, this simplicity comes at the expense of scholarly rigor. The lack of specialized academic language diminishes the article's authority and ultimately compromises its standing as a credible source within academic discourse.

The scholarly limitations of the Wikipedia article on *New Literacies* extend beyond its format and language to a fundamental lack of argumentation. While the article introduces two dominant perspectives on literacy—as a cognitive skill and as a social practice—it merely presents them as competing distinctions without synthesizing these views or acknowledging the broader scholarly debate.

The descriptive approach in the *New Literacies* article treats the concepts as static, failing to establish a clear critical stance or inform the reader of the contributors' analytical perspective. Consequently, the article neither justifies its own purpose nor challenges the reader to evaluate the validity of the ideas presented.

The definitions in the *New Literacies* article are listed rather than connected through a coherent

argument, resulting in a fragmented narrative that lacks focus. This absence of a guiding thesis can disengage the reader, as the writer's central arguments remain unclear (Seligmann, 2012).

To address the deficiencies in academic style and format, we recommend the following revisions:

Restructure the article to align with conventional academic genres, including a clear introduction, a logically developed body, and a conclusion. This reorganization would enhance the article's coherence and predictive clarity for the reader.

Adopt a formal academic register to strengthen the article's scholarly tone and credibility.

Develop a clear argumentative position regarding the two competing perspectives—literacy as a cognitive skill versus a social practice. Rather than merely presenting these distinctions, the author(s) should synthesize them to establish a defined scholarly stance, thereby elevating the critical depth of the entry.

To strengthen the article's argumentative rigor, the author(s) of the *New Literacies* entry should adopt a clear scholarly position. This can be achieved by pursuing one of the following alternatives: explicitly advocating for the social practice perspective over the cognitive one, or vice versa. A more nuanced approach would be to synthesize the two perspectives, arguing for their integration.

This integrative model is effectively demonstrated by Hilary Janks (2010) in *Literacy and Power*, where she evaluates both approaches and

ultimately contends that literacy instruction must encompass both cognitive skills and social practices.

By adopting a defined position—whether one of opposition or integration—the author(s) would resolve the current lack of argumentation, thereby enhancing the article's clarity, critical depth, and academic credibility.

EVALUATION OF FIELD COVERAGE, INCLUDING KEY THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS

The author(s) of the Wikipedia entry for 'New Literacies' demonstrate a broad engagement with relevant literature, as evidenced by the extensive reference list. The article accurately identifies and includes several pivotal theorists in the field, such as James Gee, Gunther Kress, Marc Prensky, and Brian Street.

That said, *New Literacies* article's coverage exhibits a significant bias by conflating the expansive concept of new literacies exclusively with digital literacies (e.g., media, internet, and information literacy). The focus only on digital literacies is narrow and overlooks the foundational multimodal framework established by The New London Group (1996), which posits that meaning-making occurs through multiple modes beyond the digital, including the linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural.

By equating new literacies solely with digital technologies, the article presents a monolithic and reductive view of the field, failing to acknowledge

the diverse modes and media that truly comprise New Literacies.

To provide a more robust theoretical foundation, the author(s) of the *New Literacies* entry should contextualize the field's seminal shift from a singular concept of *literacy* to a plural concept of *literacies*.

This paradigm shift, first articulated by Street (1985) and later expanded by the New London Group (1996), argues that communication and text are no longer confined to the written word but are inherently multimodal, encompassing visual, spatial, auditory, and gestural modes.

This redefinition is further elaborated by Gee (1996), who states that the New Literacy Studies emerged from “the collapse of the old oral/literate contrast. Out of the deconstruction of this contrast come more contemporary approaches to literacy not as a singular thing but as a plural set of social practices—literacies” (p. 46).

Including this foundational context would significantly enhance the article's depth, allowing readers to understand the historical and theoretical impetus behind new literacies and paving the way for a discussion of its critical implications for contemporary pedagogy.

IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Wikipedia article *New Literacies* dedicates its final section to the application of new literacies in classroom settings. This section is notably well-developed compared to others, as it effectively

elaborates on the pedagogical use of digital tools—such as digital storytelling, video-game playing, and media remixing—and highlights benefits including the development of collaboration skills, multimodal text comprehension, and internet literacy.

The section, however, overlooks critical implications of the new communication landscape for literacy education. Specifically, it fails to address necessary shifts in teaching practices or the evolving role of the teacher within a multiliteracies framework.

To address these gaps, the article should incorporate foundational arguments from scholars such as the New London Group (1996), who contend that literacy pedagogy must adapt to equip learners with the skills to navigate the diverse contexts of 21st-century communication.

This includes recognizing, as Kress (2003) argues, that the proliferation of media technology has transformed the nature of text from primarily written to inherently multimodal, integrating visual, audio, spatial, and linguistic modes. Incorporating these perspectives would significantly strengthen the section's theoretical depth and practical relevance.

To enhance *New Literacies* article's theoretical and practical depth, it is recommended that the author(s) incorporate the framework of the New London Group (1996). This inclusion could be structured around three central questions:

What is the issue? The New London Group argues that technological advancement and globalization have transformed communication from a primarily written mode to a multimodal system. This shift profoundly impacts all aspects of modern life.

How to address it? Literacy pedagogy must evolve from a monomodal concept of 'literacy' to a broader framework of 'multiliteracies.' This approach equips learners with the skills to engage with diverse modes of meaning-making, enabling full participation in society as active citizens. What are the benefits? A multiliteracies pedagogy acknowledges and leverages the multilingual and multicultural diversity of 21st-century classrooms, making education more relevant and inclusive.

Furthermore, the article should explore the impact of new literacies on identity. As Pahl and Rowsell (2005) assert, "Literacy is bound up with our identities... who we are and who we are allowed to be is shaped in part by the way we use literacy" (pp. 3, 23). This perspective is critical for educators, as effective pedagogy requires an understanding of learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to navigate the new communicative landscape successfully.

To conclude, it is recommended that the author(s) expand the *New Literacies* article to include a clear pedagogical framework for teaching multiliteracies. The New London Group (1996) provides a foundational model for this, advocating

for instruction that integrates four key components: situated practice (learning through authentic contexts), overt instruction (explicit teaching of concepts), critical framing (interpreting texts critically within their social context), and transformed practice (applying learning to design new meanings).

This pedagogical approach focuses on providing learners with access to the distinct "grammars" or rules of various meaning-making modes—linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal—enabling them to both decode and design multimodal texts. However, teaching the design of multiliteracies is incomplete without a concurrent focus on critical literacy.

As Janks (2010) argues, it is essential to teach learners that language is not a neutral tool but is intrinsically linked to power dynamics. This involves demonstrating how texts and images work to position readers and viewers, making them aware of the ideological effects of their own design choices.

Ultimately, the goal of this integrated pedagogy is to empower learners not only to decode and produce multimodal texts but also to critique them, understanding whose interests they may serve. This develops a transferable skill set that allows learners to apply their literacy critically and effectively across diverse contexts for their own purposes.

REFERENCING APPROACH

The article *New Literacies* primarily employs the APA (American Psychological Association) referencing style, which is applied consistently in its final reference list. Furthermore, the author effectively utilizes digital citation methods, incorporating in-text hypertexts and a list of hyperlinks preceding the formal references.

As Landow (1997) explains, hypertext functions as an online reference marker within a digital document, while hyperlinks provide direct access to the cited sources. While these digital tools are appropriate for an online encyclopedia, it is recommended that the author maintain strict consistency with the APA format for all citations to ensure professional presentation and scholarly credibility.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the Wikipedia article *New Literacies* to assess its academic soundness and conceptual elaboration, and to provide recommendations for improvement. The analysis revealed that, while the article offers substantial information on the topic, it lacks a balanced consideration of differing viewpoints, thereby limiting its ability to construct a well-rounded argument. Specifically, the evaluation addressed the article's conceptual accuracy, clarity, coverage of key theorists and researchers, implications for teaching and learning, and referencing practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this review, the recommendations for improvement include refining the academic structure and writing quality, incorporating diverse perspectives from prominent theorists, strengthening argumentation, and supporting claims with scholarly evidence. These enhancements would improve the article's rigor, comprehensiveness, and overall credibility as an academic resource.

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